



New partnership between DFAT and Global Compact Network Australia to drive business engagement in sustainable development

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A new strategic partnership between the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the Global Compact Network Australia (GCNA) was announced today by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Julie Bishop MP. The two-year partnership seeks to drive business engagement in sustainable development and the Global Compact.

2015 is a watershed year for the global sustainable development agenda. In September, the United Nations will launch the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which will set global development priorities to 2030 and apply to both developing and developed countries (replacing the Millennium Development Goals which expire this year). The SDGs are wide ranging, covering poverty, climate change, gender equality, water, education, sustainable cities and infrastructure, food security, sustainable production and consumption – among other issues.

“As the primary driver of economic activity, sustainable development cannot be achieved without business,” said Alice Cope, Executive Manager, Global Compact Network Australia.

“There is also a compelling business case for engagement. At its core, sustainable development is about addressing unmet needs – poverty, inequality, nutrition, education. There is strong alignment between addressing these issues and fostering stable enabling environments for business, creating more resilient supply chains and building new markets.”

“Many businesses are already taking significant action around social and environmental sustainability issues. With this new partnership, we hope to help scale up corporate sustainability as a key contributor to broader sustainable development challenges in Australia and across the region,” said Ms Cope.

Under the new partnership, the GCNA has established the GCNA Sustainable Development Leadership Group, which will provide a platform for business and stakeholders to engage in learning, dialogue and action around sustainable development and the SDGs. The Leadership Group will also provide an interface between business and DFAT, supporting the implementation of the Australian Government’s new aid policy, which emphasises private sector engagement and development.

“We are seeing through the growth of the Global Compact in Australia that Australian businesses are keen to both operate responsibly and actively contribute to the sustainable development agenda. The GCNA’s new Leadership Group will provide a platform to keep building on that commitment, including through collaboration with government, NGOs, academia and others to address development challenges,” said Megan Christensen, GCNA Director and Chair, GCNA Sustainable Development Leadership Group.

About the Global Compact Network Australia

The Global Compact Network Australia (GCNA) is the Australian business-led network of the United Nations Global Compact, the world’s largest corporate sustainability initiative. The UN Global Compact is a call to companies everywhere to align strategies and operations with universal principles on human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption, and take actions that advance societal goals including sustainable development. In Australia, the GCNA brings together over 60 Australian signatories to the UN Global Compact, including a number of Australia’s leading companies, non-profits and universities, to advance corporate sustainability and the private sector’s contribution to sustainable development. (www.unglobalcompact.org.au)

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