



## UNITED NATIONS GLOBAL COMPACT

### Communication on Progress

#### **Achilles Group Limited November 2006**

##### **Chief Executive Officer's statement**

Achilles signed up to the UN Global Compact because we firmly believe we all – as individuals and as organisations – have responsibilities when it comes to our social, ethical and environmental practices.

Much of the work Achilles does as a company now focuses on encouraging all those in the supply chain, from the largest buyer through to the smallest of suppliers, to work towards improving and sustaining corporate responsibility standards in whichever way is most appropriate to them. We believe these standards must also apply to the way Achilles conducts its own business.

Achilles Group Limited, including all its business units internationally, fully subscribes to the UN Global Compact principles and aspirations. Whether this is by ensuring we operate to the highest health and safety standards, apply a fair and transparent recruitment policy or dispose of paper waste in an environmentally responsible manner, Achilles endeavours to apply best practice and look for further opportunities to improve.

By signing up to the UN Global Compact we are demonstrating our commitment to what we believe are sound principles, and ones to which we shall continue to adhere as our business grows.

We have actively engaged all our senior management team members in discussion on our corporate responsibilities. I am proud to note their unequivocal support for the 10 principles within the UN Global Compact.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Colin Maund", is written over a white background.

Colin Maund  
Chief Executive Officer  
Achilles Group Limited



## **Principle 1**

### **Business should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights.**

Over the course of the last 12 months, Achilles has published its Employee Handbook, which among other areas, clearly defines what our staff should expect from the company as well as what the company expects from its staff. The purpose of the Handbook is to clearly state the company's policies on issues such as recruitment and disciplinary or grievance procedures, as well as disseminating our health and safety and environmental policies. The policies within the Handbook have been drawn up in consultation with employees who have been able to contribute their own ideas and suggestions to the way the company operates. All our international business units have a tailored human resources policy that complies with local legislation and over the next 12 months, these policies will be reviewed and aligned to the Achilles Group standard.

The nature of the services offered by Achilles means we are well placed to help promote human rights issues – not only in the supply chains of more than 500 of the world's largest companies and in eight industry sectors, but also in 27,000+ of their suppliers. We have seen a notable increase in the interest shown by these organisations with respect to their own corporate responsibility practices, and we will continually seek to engage them further in this area. During the last year we have begun to work with five different industry sectors to enable them to start incorporating human rights criteria, including labour standards, health and safety and environmental considerations, into their contracting and procurement practices.

Many of Achilles' services, such as the RePro supplier qualification service covering Spain, Portugal and Latin America, and UVDB, covering the UK utilities sector, have been refined to include more detailed questioning of suppliers, by purchasers, into their human rights systems and practices. We are actively trying to encourage the further implementation of CSR-based questions in the remaining sectors in which we work.

## **Principle 2**

### **Business should ensure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses.**

Achilles delivers information services via the internet, and as such we believe the potential to become inadvertently complicit in human rights abuses is limited. However, Achilles supports this second Principle and is developing its services to better enable our customers to support it wherever appropriate.



### **Principle 3**

**Business should uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining.**

Achilles upholds the rights of all its employees, worldwide, to freedom of association and collective bargaining. All our employees are free to join and participate with trade unions should they so wish.

### **Principle 4**

**Business should support the elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour.**

During the course of the last 12 months we have introduced within our Employee Handbook the specific statement that no individual will be employed by the company under anything other than free and fair contract terms, which all staff members choose to enter into and may terminate of their own volition.

The issue of compulsory or forced labour is one that many of our customers seek to clarify within their own supply chains. Achilles will continue to enhance its services, allowing purchasing customers greater visibility of their own supply chains, to enable them in turn to identify potential suppliers which take due account of Principle 4.

### **Principle 5**

**Business should support the effective abolition of child labour.**

Achilles firmly supports the effective abolition of child labour. While Achilles is not involved directly in manufacturing or production activities which are most frequently associated with child labour, we will continue to ensure that we do not employ child workers. Many of our services now aim to support other businesses in identifying and encouraging the abolition of child labour within their own supply chains, and promoting both best practice and the raising of standards in this area. This is of particular concern in some of the countries in which our customers operate or source their goods, services or raw materials.

### **Principle 6**

**Business should support the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.**

Achilles currently employs workers from more than 20 different nationalities and as such, has a number of policies in place that support the sixth Principle. Our Recruitment & Selection Policy confirms our commitment to equal opportunities and takes full account of both legal requirements and best practice to ensure we do not discriminate on grounds of race, sex, disability, sexual orientation, religion, belief or



age. Achilles' Equal Opportunities policy makes it clear that we aim to provide a working environment that encourages equal opportunity, diversity and personal growth. As would be expected, Achilles complies with all appropriate legislation within the countries in which it operates in respect of non-discrimination.

Our Employee Handbook states that we aim to create and maintain a professional and congenial work environment and seek staff that will treat one another with courtesy, consideration and respect. Existing employees are given as many opportunities as possible to apply for promotions or new roles, and we use internal mail and our website to advertise these vacancies.

### **Principle 7**

#### **Business should support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges.**

Achilles is committed to a policy of sound and responsible environmental management, leading to a sustainable use of resources and optimal management of waste. The company's policy emphasises that Achilles will comply with all appropriate environmental legislation, statutory guidance and codes of practice, and will seek to minimise its production of waste and use of energy and resources.

Whilst most of Achilles' operating units have environmental policies in place, which are reviewed and updated regularly, during the next 12 months we aim to establish a Group-wide environmental policy which will align individual countries' policies with a Group standard.

### **Principle 8**

#### **Business should undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility.**

Achilles is a believer in continuous improvement across all areas of its business, and the area of environmental responsibility is no different. Achilles employees have a strong commitment to this principle and many of the environmental initiatives in place throughout our offices originate from employee proposals.

A programme of internal training and joint consultation with all staff members will be put in place within 12 months to further reduce the company's environmental impact, and to encourage and promote environmental awareness and responsibilities amongst all employees.

In terms of our customer-facing services, Achilles provides health and safety assessment services in several of its services, enabling buyers to assess and encourage improvement of health, safety and environmental practices within their supply chains. An equivalent of this scheme has recently been introduced in the UK oil and gas industry, and Achilles will continue to encourage other industries to do likewise.



### **Principle 9**

#### **Business should encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.**

Within 12 months, Achilles will aim to analyse the environmental aspects of our business and its products and services, with a view to understanding how other environmentally-friendly technologies could be utilised more effectively within the company. By virtue of the collaborative services which we provide to customers, we believe we assist in the diffusion of these technologies by reducing duplication of supplier verification activities throughout the supply chain, such as minimising supplier pre-qualification paperwork.

### **Principle 10**

#### **Business should work against corruption in all its forms, including extortion and bribery.**

Achilles is a firm supporter of ethical business principles and expects all its employees to behave in a professional, ethical manner, whether dealing with colleagues inside the company, or with customers, suppliers or other external organisations and individuals. Achilles employees are aware of these principles in their daily contacts. A Business Gifts and Hospitality policy, which proposes that each business unit maintains a register of gifts and hospitality events, is currently being drafted.

A percentage of our business is conducted in countries where historically there have been problems with bribery and corruption. Achilles always strives to adhere to high standards of ethical business practice and would not enter into any agreements or negotiations where bribery or corrupt standards were applied.

One of the core purposes of the supplier management services we offer is to help remove such corrupt practices from the procurement cycle, and to enable suppliers and buyers to compete for and purchase supplies and services in a fair, transparent manner and, which leaves an audit trail of the procurement decision process. In particular, we provide a service in Norway aimed specifically at reducing corrupt practices within the construction industry there, and we will seek to develop this type of service into other industries as appropriate.