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Communication of Progress

Equitis Group of Companies LLP

Period Covered

From: 07 November 2013

To: 07 November 2014

Statement of continued support

To our stakeholders:

Equitis wholeheartedly supports the principles of the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC). This is our first year as a signatory and it has been a year of learning and of change as we have taken active steps to integrate the Global Compact principles into our business.

Equitis an organisation and as a team is personally and professionally committed to sustainable development. Our business promotes ethical practices, particularly for environmental and social responsibility in business but also more generally in the interest of international justice and human rights. We are committed to living out the principles as a business internally as well as with our work for clients and other stakeholders and reaffirm our support of the Ten Principles of the United Nations Global Compact in the areas of Human Rights, Labour, Environment and Anti-Corruption.

In this annual Communication on Progress, we describe our actions to continually improve the integration of the Global Compact and its principles into our business strategy, culture and daily operations. We also commit to share this information with our stakeholders using our primary channels of communication improving our actions and activities and aligning them with areas covered by the Compact.

Sincerely yours,
Dr Nigel Mehdi
Managing Partner





Our goal in preparing this Communication of Progress is to provide stakeholders with comprehensive and credible information about sustainability performance. We firmly believe that belonging to the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) is helpful to our business and we are proud to be part of such an important initiative.

The preparation of this Communication of Progress (COP) is itself part of that process, not just in terms of the formal commitment to report annually, but through its preparation the COP has advanced our own learning both as an organisation and as individuals.

We have made a commitment to make the UN Global Compact and its principles an integral part of business strategy, day-to-day operations, and organizational culture.

The COP seeks to demonstrate our progress in implementing the UNGC and it aims to meet the expectation that signatories are transparent and complete in the disclosure to our stakeholders of the policies we have put into place and that we are developing to implement the UNGC principles.

It is perhaps a cliché to state that sustainability is a journey, but it is nevertheless true. We have continued on our journey of continuous process improvement, using the UNGC as our guiding framework. This COP is our first report on progress, and it illustrates what we have done, what we are doing and where we are going.

Our central purpose through 2013/14 has been focussed on alignment of existing practices, improvement of our sustainability performance and learning and familiarisation with the principles of the Global Compact.

Mark Ward, COP Co-ordinator



Sustainability at Equitis

Background

Equitis focuses environmental and sustainability activities in two areas:-

1. Equitis's own operations that provide products and services to clients
2. Through the development and delivery of products and services that help clients to reduce their own environmental impacts and improve their sustainability.

Environmental sustainability is embedded into the service delivery methodology and approach taken by Equitis. The prior commitment this has been reviewed against the Global Compact provisions and we in this first year of commitment, we are undergoing a process of refinement and update to be completed over the first 24 months of our commitment.

Equitis places a strong focus on improving our client's environmental performance by providing them with opportunities to grow their businesses whilst reducing or mitigating their environmental impacts. We are in the process of developing advanced measurement tools that assist clients to measure their sustainability across a range of metrics, and to develop an improvement plan to improve sustainability performance.

Environmental Policy

We have had an environmental policy in place since 2010 and it has undergone several revisions. The goal is to ensure that staff and other stakeholders adhere to the policy which is designed to reduce our environmental impact.

Summary of Environmental Policy

to meet all the relevant statutory requirements related to environmental legislation;

recycle as much waste product as practically and economically possible;

discourage the use of non-renewable resources and dispose of waste that cannot be recycled in accordance with legislation and the policy;

carry out risk assessments in accordance with legislation and this policy;



Summary of Environmental Policy (cont...)

provide relevant training and instruction to all employees on environmental issues and the policy requirement;

record and investigate all environmental incidents.

This policy will undergo a review and alignment with the GC principles over the first 24 months of our commitment.

Targets that we set for 2013/14:-

Internal Engagement and compliance

To introduce the Global Compact and our commitment as a signatory to our staff, clients and suppliers.

To achieve the GC Active level by demonstrating our commitment to the GC principles, reporting across all four GC Issue areas, and meeting the expected standard for transparency and disclosure.

To adapt and develop our sustainability practices and commitments and align them with the principles of the Global Compact.

To select Key Performance Indicators in each of our main target areas to represent our progress against the Global Compact commitment and to begin measuring our progress towards these KPI's.

External Engagement and Service Development

To develop and launch our Advanced Building Carbon Footprint service for clients.

To review and re-launch our **Thinking about Sustainability** and out **Serious about Sustainability** training programmes for the ***Real Estate & Property*** theme with a new curriculum for 2015.



Selected Targets that we have set for 2013/14

Our website displays our progress and provides a platform for ongoing communication, reporting and monitoring. The relevant pages can be viewed at www.equitis.com/cop.

Below we set out some selected targets that we approached in 2013/14 are set out below, together with our progress and plans for the current year (2014/15).

Sustainability Training and Education

2013/14 Target: To implement a programme of Continuing Professional Development internally as part of our UNGC commitment and as part of our ongoing service development process.

Progress: In this period we have implemented a universal sustainability awareness programme, covering all staff whatever their role. This has also involved other stakeholders such as subcontractors and staff from one supplier.

2014/15 Target: Develop and deliver a second level programme to all staff and extend it by invitation to a wider range of stakeholders and other local businesses.

To offer all of our courses by online distance learning and measure the impact in terms of reduced carbon emissions.

Supplier Engagement

2013/14 Target: Work with one selected supplier to help them deliver their services or products in a more environmentally sound method and to promulgate the UNGC to that supplier.

Progress: We have identified a suitable supplier who welcomes the initiative. We have begun a consultation process with that supplier and involved them in our sustainability awareness training programme.

2014/15 Target: To introduce the programme and offer a familiarisation programme, available to supplier staff by online or face-to-face learning. To develop reusable resources for training and support in relation to the UNGC.



Green IT initiative

As an information technology solutions provider we recognise that our activities will have an influence on the environment and that we can influence our clients beyond our own direct impacts.

2013/14 Target: Develop a Green IT programme to raise awareness of the issue of Green IT internally and externally.

Progress: This goal crosses the 2013/14 GC reporting year.

2014/15 Targets: To seek and obtain the British Computer Society Green IT Foundation Certificate for relevant staff.

To develop our own Green IT programme and offer a familiarisation programme, available by online or face-to-face learning.

General Carbon Reductions

2013/14 Target: To introduce initiatives to reduce carbon emissions and improve the efficiency across the office. These include document scanning and storage, a review of the efficiency of IT equipment and other office equipment.

Progress: We replaced aging computer printers with energy efficient models,

Calculation of our Building Carbon Footprint, to show lifecycle carbon emissions, with a focus on operating carbon in the measurement period.

We have updated our EPC certificate to reflect the energy efficiency of new air conditioning equipment installed in 2013, and have projected reductions that can be achieved by changing to LED lights and upgrading the central heating boiler.

2014/15 Target: Replacement of ageing gas heating boiler with modern condenser boiler for provision of hot water and space heating.

Replacement of halogen lights with LED lighting across the site.

Review energy suppliers as contracts expire and switch to suppliers who deliver energy from renewable sources.



General Carbon Reductions (cont...)

2014/15 Target: Review of our digital carbon footprint and as hosting contracts expire, migration of our web hosting to a host so that all servers are powered by 100% renewable energy. Develop measurement metrics for calculating the digital carbon footprint more accurately.

Reducing Travel Carbon

2013/14 Target: Develop a clear travel policy that states which form of transport should be used for which purpose with the aim of reducing overall travel and greater use of low carbon methods

Progress: We have had a consultation with key stakeholders to gather information and data and we have now created a policy that has been communicated to all staff.

This includes the following specific actions:-

- Purchase of carbon offsets for business air travel where possible.

- Encouragement for staff to purchase carbon offsets for private air travel.

- Installation of secure pedal cycle storage.

- Encouraging cycling to work.

- Cycle purchase loan scheme.

2014/15 Target: We will strive to complete the following during 2014/15

- Installation of dedicated video conferencing equipment to reduce the need for travel and meetings.

- Introduction of improved emission standards on all company vehicles – currently under consultation.



External Engagement

2013/14 Target: Partner with and form alliances with relevant bodies that are themselves aligned with our sustainability goals or that deliver supporting services and frameworks.

Progress: During the 2013/14 year Equitis joined the Global Reporting Initiative as an Organisational Stakeholder and became a member of the UK Green Building Council.



We continued to engage with the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (a signatory to the UNCG) in our role as members of that organisation and have continued our ongoing contributions to the University of Oxford MSc in Sustainable Urban Development, where Dr Nigel Mehdi is Senior Associate Tutor in Sustainable Urban Development.

2014/15 Target: To continue to review other opportunities in this area and extend our external engagement by public speaking engagements in the field of urban and corporate sustainability.

Community Engagement

2013/14 Target: Develop a plan that encourages and enables all staff to complete three days working in the local community on a project of their choice.

Progress: This goal was not achieved in the 2013/14 GC reporting year. It was partially achieved in following month (December 2014) when some staff volunteered for Christmas homeless charities.

Time spent on contributing to local neighbourhood business association was also important in working towards this goal.

2014/15 Target: To achieve the goal of each staff member working three days working in the local community.

Discussion amongst staff has resulted in a decision to focus on a single local charity for both fund raising and volunteering, thereby maximising our impact and contribution.



Measurement of Outcomes

Equitis has selected Key Performance Indicators material to its business, and that will be of interest to Stakeholders. Our website displays our progress and can be viewed at www.equitis.com/cop.

Other dimensions of the UNGC

Here we discuss how we address the main themes of the UNGC, especially under the headings of Human Rights, Labour and Anti-Corruption.

Business Ethics and Anti-Corruption

Equitis maintains the highest standards of ethics, professionalism and business conduct and acts in compliance with the law at all times globally across our business.

We comply with the professional conduct regulations of the relevant professional bodies, and as a multi-disciplinary professional practice, this includes the Engineering Council, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, the Institution of Engineering and Technology and the British Computer Society.

All staff across the organisation receive mandatory training on the UK Bribery Act and its implications. This is supplemented by an ongoing training program for all staff and partners on data and information security.

Compliance

Equitis maintains high ethical standards in carrying out its business activities. Strict adherence to these supporting policies is a condition of employment and staff undergo training to ensure they understand their responsibility and the consequences of non-compliance. Responsibility for compliance is with individuals and at partner level. Practices of any sort that are incompatible with our principles and policies will not be tolerated.

Independence and Objectivity

Equitis staff are required to act in a way that is unbiased, and must not be subject to any influence financial or otherwise which may lead them to act in a way that favours any particular person or organisation. Other than the salary paid by Equitis, employees do not directly or indirectly accept any form of payment or material benefit from third parties for services they perform on behalf of Equitis.



Unethical Behaviour and Whistle Blowing

Equitis promotes a working environment which encourages all members of our team to express their concerns about behaviour or decisions which they perceive to be unethical without fear of reprisal and victimization. Any member of staff who needs guidance or advice on business ethics can speak to their manager or any level above. We have developed new materials explaining the circumstances and challenges around whistle-blowing.

Employment Policies

Equitis is an equal opportunity employer. We are committed to maintaining the highest standards of employment practice and to communicating our strategy and objectives to employees and acting on employee feedback received as to how the organisation can continuously improve. We fully support and promote the ethos and principles of equal opportunities and diversity in employment striving to create a culture where every member of our team is treated fairly with access to development and opportunity.

Suppliers and Agents

Equitis insists on ethical standards from its suppliers and aims to develop mutually beneficial relationships with its suppliers and agents based on mutual trust and fair dealing.

Equitis adopts procurement practices that are fair and above board, and which avoid any conduct which may be perceived as influencing judgement or impartiality or is capable of having an adverse interpretation put on it.

Our suppliers are expected to comply with up-to-date employment practices, fair wages and equal opportunity for all. The nature of our business means that we do not face the problem of an outsourced supply chain that crosses the globe, and requires meticulous monitoring for human rights and other abuses.

Balancing Transparency with Confidentiality

Equitis acts with transparency in all of its operations except where it is constrained by issues of confidentiality. We are registered under the provisions of the Data Protection Act in the UK and comply with the equivalent legislation worldwide.

Equitis has procedures and policies to ensure data security for internal and client data and is in the process of reviewing the feasibility of gaining ISO27001 certification.

The organisation strives to communicate clearly and succinctly in order to minimise complexity in our business dealings and communicate our strategy.



Conclusion of First UNGC Communication of Progress

Reflection

A professional services organisation, such as Equitis, is the sum of the individual team member and the learning process for any organisation and its members relies on reflection in order for the lessons to be learned and the benefits to be gained.

The first year has been challenging for Equitis, more so than many of us expected, and this in itself has provided an important lesson. Our business has more than one field of activity, but at its heart we are a consultancy and one strand of our consultancy services is to advise others on how to begin and travel the path towards a sustainable organisation. The process of embarking on a more formal framework of commitment, as defined by the UNGC, has provided us with many useful learning opportunities and has given us new insights into the sheer difficulty of changing organisational culture and deepening our established ethos of sustainable business operations.

We are already looking forward to further progress, to addressing new challenges and to implementing and embed best practices more widely over the coming months. We want to be part of a sustainable future, and with the UNGC as our guiding framework to make our contribution both within our own organisation and beyond.

Equitis Group of Companies LLP
January 2015

/End

