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RÉTTUR - AÐALSTEINSSON & PARTNER'S COMMUNICATION ON PROGRESS TO THE UNITED NATIONS GLOBAL COMPACT

*Réttur Aðalsteinsson & Partner's third annual report on the implementation of
the United Nations ten global compact principles.*



INTRODUCTION

During the last 12 months, Réttur has remained dedicated and focused in its efforts to implement the United Nation's ten global compact principles. Over the course of the reporting period Réttur reinforced these core principles through its interaction with its clients, employees and the community at large.

We are therefore pleased to contribute our third communication on progress, highlighting some of the most positive steps taken during the reporting period, with the aim of advancing the integration of the principles into our strategies and daily operations.

WHO WE ARE

Réttur traces its origins back to 1969 when Ragnar Aðalsteinsson, one of Iceland's leading attorneys started his private practice in Reykjavík. Today, Ragnar's partners at Réttur include; Supreme Court Attorneys Sigríður Rut Júlíusdóttir, Sigurður Örn Hilmarsson as well as District Court Attorneys, Kári Hólmar Ragnarsson and Friðrik Ársælsson.

Réttur is internationally recognized for professionalism and the highest quality legal services and is ranked as a first-tier firm by The Legal 500. Réttur is also ranked by Creditinfo in 2016 as one of Iceland's leading companies in terms of its strength and stability.

WHAT WE DO AND WHO WE HELP

Réttur's attorneys have extensive experience in litigation and have worked on complex cases in numerous areas of law. The firm remains true to the philosophy Ragnar Adalsteinsson, the firm's senior partner, started with; giving members of the public a fair chance to pursue their rights. We therefore work for company's and individuals alike.

Our main areas of expertise include; human rights law, immigration and refugee law litigation, copyright law, constitutional law, property rights law, insolvency law, tort law, competition law, company law and contract law.

For decades Réttur has worked in close cooperation with our highly knowledgeable counterparts in Scandinavia, the UK, Germany and the United States to provide our clients with appropriate advice regarding their legal situation in the respective country or region.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Company Name	Réttur- Aðalsteinsson & Partners ehf.
Address	Klapparstígur 25-27, 101 Reykjavík.
Telephone/website	+354-511-1206/ www.rettur.is
Number of Employees	15

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

Réttur has been a participant of the United Nations Global Compact since 2014 and is a member of the Local Network Nordic Countries.

Réttur is reporting according to the UN Global Compact “GC Active level” and describes herein how it implements the United Nations ten global compact principles.

This document furthermore includes a letter of continued support for the United Nations Global Compact by our CEO and Senior Partner, Ragnar Aðalsteinsson, Supreme Court Attorney.

“As a global citizen, Réttur - Aðalsteinsson & Partners firmly believes that advancing on our sustainability practices is essential to our growth and longevity. We have therefore taken various steps throughout the reporting period, 2016-2017, aimed at further integrating the Global Compact and its principles into our business strategy, culture and operations.”

Yours sincerely,

Ragnar Aðalsteinsson
Senior Partner, CEO
Réttur - Aðalsteinsson & Partners

IMPLEMENTING THE TEN PRINCIPLES INTO STRATEGIES AND OPERATIONS

A. HUMAN RIGHTS- PRINCIPLES 1 AND 2

- Businesses should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights
- Make sure that they are not complicit in human rights abuse
- Measurement of Outcome

As a leading law firm in the practice of human rights law in Iceland, we recognize and accept our role to advance the respect and implementation of the highest human rights standards within our own organisation as well as within our community. Recognising that the very nature of our operation is guided by the respect for human rights, we continued throughout the reporting period to proudly demonstrate our support for these rights and remained non-complicit with human rights abuse by utilizing every resource at our disposal.

In advancement of these objectives, we continued throughout the period to improve our efforts to integrate and disseminate the global compact principles in all areas of our operations and business strategy. In so doing, we placed significant focus on the enhancement of our best practices regarding how we contribute to the development of the best human rights standards in Iceland, regionally and internationally. Our main method of execution is through continued encouragement and support for the active participation of our employees in all initiatives aimed at maintaining and enhancing knowledge in the field.

- *Cooperation with law schools in Iceland*

As with the previous year, our team of professional and knowledgeable attorneys in human rights law, undertook various active roles as adjunct professors and taught courses at law schools and universities, namely Bifröst University, University of Iceland, Reykjavik University and the University of Akureyri.

Our team members also delivered guest lectures and public lectures at the same universities, including a lecture held at the University of Reykjavík in February 2017, entitled “Do new challenges facing the legal profession in Iceland call for changes in legal education?”. Our team members also held a public lecture in cooperation with human rights interest group, such as the Icelandic Artists’ Association, on the right of artist to wages.

In 2016, one of our team members and expert in refugee law introduced a new course in the curriculum at the University of Reykjavík Law School on refugee law, which is now being taught biannually.

- *Highlights from our main activities during 2016-2017*

Our team furthermore organized and participated in various other seminars, both in Iceland and in international forums, where they discussed legislative developments in Iceland as well as human rights issues.

During the period, members of our team delivered lectures at symposiums held in Catalonia, San Sebastian and Barcelona Spain, Edinburg Scotland, Ireland, Leuven Belgium, the University of Princeton, the University of Berkeley and Harvard University in the United States on Constitutional and human rights developments in Iceland. In addition, members of our team have worked closely with our counterparts in various countries, establishing and taking seats of committees, with the aim to disseminate our best practices in respect of human rights and constitutional law. These include, consultation meetings with academic experts at Princeton University for the project “International Panel on Social Change”, consultation meeting in Brussel in respect of the project “Culture Action Europe.” One of our team members also sits on the consultation committee of universities and interests’ groups on constitutional development in Barcelona Spain.

Further to the above, members of our team continued their efforts to advance human rights here at home, through writing numerous articles published in various law journals and taking active part in relevant public discourse. These include, but are not limited to articles published in the Icelandic Lawyer’s Association Law Journal in 2016-2017, entitled:

- “Lögrétta and Law Council – Innovations in Constitutional Review in the Proposals of the Constitutional Council”, article in the Law Students’ Legal Journal, Úlfjótur entitled “False promises of the Disability Association Case? Recent development of social rights adjudication”, cf. Art. 76(1) of the Constitution of Iceland no. 33/1944;
- A revised version of an article first published in the book – European Convention on Human Rights, entitled “The right to liberty and security of person pursuant to the European Convention on Human Rights. General Principle, implementation and influence on Icelandic law;
- An article currently under peer revision for publication in Úlfjótur and is based on the master’s thesis of one of our team members from 2016, entitled "Quantity Does Not Equal Quality - United Nations Constitutional Assistance and Human Rights Protection in Post-Conflict Situations" and;
- Another article currently under peer revision for publication in Úlfjótur, entitled “The Participation of Lawyers in the Development of the Law”.

In our continued effort to influence legal and policy reforms affecting human rights in Iceland, we have made various submissions to the Parliament in respect of bills or amendments to existing laws. For instance, we submitted comments to Parliament on the proposed amendment to the new Act on Foreigners no 80/2016 as well as on the draft regulation on foreigners.

- *Cooperation with the Icelandic Bar Association, governmental and non-governmental organisations*

Recognising that our contribution to human rights in all areas is valuable to our sustainability, we encourage and fully support other voluntary contributions by our team members to the human rights initiatives of both governmental and non-governmental entities both in Iceland and abroad.

Throughout the year, our team has sought to increase cooperation between our firm and the Icelandic Bar Association. In so doing, a historical resolution, owing to efforts by our team, was approved at the Association’s annual general meeting on 24 May 2017. The newly approved resolution rescinds a resolution from 2005 which stated

that it is incompatible to the role of the Association to take any position, at any time, in regards to political decisions relating to the human rights of citizens.

The newly approved resolution stipulates that, “The Annual General Meeting of the Icelandic Bar Association, dated 24 May 2017, resolves that it is and will always be the role of the Icelandic Bar Association to take a position on political decisions of the government at any time if it concerns the human rights of the citizens.”



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Photo by: The Icelandic Bar Association

Further to this development, several members of our team are a part of the Icelandic Bar Association’s Working Group on asylum seekers in Iceland. The working-group has been operating since the spring of this year, and is tasked with drafting a report which identifies legal issues affecting the human rights of asylum seekers in Iceland and propose recommendations. The group estimates that the report will be published before the end of this year.

Also, during the period a member of our team was selected to take part in an assignment at the refugee camp in Lesbos Greece. The project, “European Lawyers”, was coordinated by the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE) and German Bar Association, aims at preparing asylum seekers for initial interview, assistance with collecting evidence as well as family reunification.

- *Pro bono work, other voluntary contributions and recognition*

As with the previous year, during the year 2016 the Legal Aid Committee continued to reject applications for legal aid from asylum seekers. This made access to court practically impossible for those asylum seekers who sought to challenge a negative final decision at the judicial level. Despite these challenges, we continued our work in defending the human rights of immigrants and asylum seekers against the Icelandic authority on a pro bono basis.

We have also taken a number of pro-bono cases in other fields. A significant portion of these cases were in the field of criminal justice, as the team brought several tort cases for illegal searches, arrests and police brutality. Another important area has been the right to privacy, family life and opinions, the team having taken on cases concerning the right to non-intervention of the government into these spheres of freedoms.

During the period, a member of our team served as a legal consultant to the Icelandic Police in respect of their project, “The Police in a Multicultural Society” as well as took seat on the Representative Council of SOS- Children’s Village Iceland. Another team member was also elected as the chairman of the Icelandic Refugee Committee, which oversees the process of welcoming quota refugees to Iceland and works in close cooperation with the United Nations Refugee Agency, UNCHR. Further, another team member was elected vice-chairman of a newly established organisation “Lífsvirðing” (e. respect for life) which focuses on the right of individuals to voluntary euthanasia.

As with the previous years, our team members continue to garner recognition for their valuable contributions to the development of human rights in Iceland and have been invited on various occasions by local medias and international media to give their views from a legal standpoint where public discourse concerns potential human rights violations.

- *The rehearing of historical Guðmundur and Geirfinnur case*

During the period our team argued one of the most controversial public cases in Iceland’s history. The case concerns the Supreme Court of Iceland’s ruling in the case concerning the disappearance and assumed murder of Gudmundur and Geirfinnur in

1974 and the conviction of six individuals in 1980. Ever since the convictions, there have been loud voices that the case involved coerced confessions and other serious breaches of the defendants' fundamental rights and there is a general consensus in society about a real doubt as to whether those who were convicted in the case had anything to do with the disappearances. Ragnar Adalsteinsson, the firm's Senior Partner, never gave up on the case, since his first attempt in 1997 to have it reheard. Following an official investigation in 2013, the Ministry of Interior's Rehearing Committee concluded in February 2017 that the case shall be reheard by the Supreme Court. Leading the charge in these proceedings is Ragnar Aðalsteinsson, who argued successfully for the rehearing of the case, *inter alia*, on the grounds that the human rights of the convicted were violated by the authorities during the initial proceedings. The rehearing at the Supreme Court is pending.

A documentary about the case entitled "Out of thin air" was released spring 2017 on Netflix.

B. LABOUR STANDARDS- PRINCIPLES 3-6

- Businesses should uphold freedom of association & effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining
- The elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour
- The effective abolition of child labour
- Eliminate discrimination in respect of employment and occupation
- Measurement of Outcome

- *Our internal policy on labour standards*

At Réttur - Aðalsteinsson & Partners, we believe that to ensure the highest labour standards within our community, we must start at home. Thus, our internal policies are designed to guarantee for all our employees an equitable and respectful working environment.

Essential to our objective to ensure the highest labour standards within our own organisation we continue to promote teamwork, health and wellness, welcome diversity among our employees and hold equality as well as the respect for family life at a high standard. Further, we are committed to ensuring that all our employees have the right to freely join associations and undertake collective bargaining.

Further to the foregoing, we guarantee our employees' rights to compulsory and non-compulsory benefits which include, paid parental leave, paid leisure, paid scheduled family oriented leisure activities, year-end bonuses as well as annual appreciation items.

Resting on our belief that our continued success and growth is attributed to our corporate culture, we remain committed to ensuring a well-rounded and comfortable work environment for our team. We strive to ensure that wages and benefits meet or exceed legal requirements and/or applicable collective agreements. In addition, we endeavoured to provide financial support to employees, to the extent possible, for participation in continued education programs and research initiatives.

- *Our team members' contribution to our labour standards*

At Réttur - Aðalsteinsson & Partners we foster inclusion and employees are guaranteed a work environment free of any form of discrimination based on gender, race, gender identity, origin, background, religion, marital status, sexual orientation, disability or age. Our team is comprised of 15 members from various legal and cultural background. Our policy is to ensure equality with respect to recruitment, promotion and work conditions within our organisation.

Our small workforce continues to create a unique opportunity for employees, who each has an opportunity to influence and structure the company's policy in terms of our sustainability efforts. Réttur - Aðalsteinsson & Partners permits flexible working hours as well as remote work whenever feasible.

While we continue to be ambitious in our aim to provide the best labour standards, we recognize that we cannot achieve this objective alone. We therefore continue to encourage active communication with employees in respect of work conditions and or any other work related concerns. At Réttur - Aðalsteinsson & Partners, we regularly consult with employees on operational changes and or any internal decisions. We therefore welcome suggestions from our employees aimed at achieving this objective.

Our aim for 2017-2018 is to continue to improve our corporate culture. We believe that, improving on our firm's best practices is vital for our firm's outstanding reputation and in turn our longevity.

- *Our internship program*

Réttur-Aðalsteinsson & Partners have a long-standing relationship with the law departments of Reykjavik University and University of Iceland, and have through internship programs invited law students to work at our firm as paralegals.

During the reporting period, we invited qualified law students to work at our firm, with the aim of providing them with valuable legal training and experience in our main practice areas.

C. ENVIRONMENT- PRINCIPLES 7-9

- **Businesses should support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges**
- **Undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility**
- **Encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies**
- **Measurement of Outcome**

In our previous reports, we made a commitment to restructure our environmental policy with the aim of minimizing significantly our operational footprint. We are pleased to report that we continue to honour that commitment and take steps to meet our targeted goals.

Our goal for the next reporting period is to take further steps to expand on those commitments.

During the reporting period, we continued our efforts to encourage environmentally responsible and friendly behaviour among our employees by offering incentives, such as commuter stipends for use of public transport. We are pleased to report that more of our employees used public transport during the period than the previous year.

We continued to emphasize the importance of conserving energy, minimizing waste and its disposal. Furthermore, we discourage the use of disposable food and drink containers, and refrain from offering clients bottled beverages. By investing in a new online filing system and lap tops, we have been able to reduce the use of paper

significantly and continue to discourage printing unless strictly necessary. Further, we have changed the font used in our correspondence from Calibri to the more environmentally friendly Calibri light. We have special paper bins available throughout the office to encourage and make recycling more convenient. We have also utilized to an even greater extent electronic invoicing to clients as well as the safe storage and disposal of toxic wastes.

D. ANTI-CORRUPTION- PRINCIPLE 10

- **Businesses should work against all forms of corruption, including extortion and bribery**

As with the previous year, we remain dedicated to our commitment to work against all forms of corruption. At Réttur Aðalsteinsson & Partners, we have a zero-tolerance policy for any form of corruption, which applies in our own work, to our stakeholders as well as our clients. Recognizing our position within the community, as officers of the court who are held to a high legal and ethical standard, we strive to provide the best quality legal services to our clients in full compliance with all applicable laws, including but not limited to laws on anti- corruption and the Attorney's Code of Ethics.