



*Statement of continued support by the Chief Executive Officer*

I am pleased to confirm that Aequitas supports the ten principles of the Global Compact on human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption. With this communication, we express our intent to implement those principles. We are committed to making the Global Compact and its principles part of the strategy, culture and day-to-day operations of our company, and to engaging in collaborative projects which advance the broader development goals of the United Nations, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals. Aequitas will make a clear statement of this commitment to our stakeholders and the public.

We recognize that a key requirement for participation in the Global Compact is the annual submission of a Communication on Progress (COP) that describes our company's efforts to implement the ten principles and support any specialized UN Global Compact issue platform that our company may join at a later date. We support public accountability and transparency, and therefore commit to report on progress within one year of joining the Global Compact, and annually thereafter according to the Global Compact COP policy.

Dorothea Hodge  
Founding Director  
Aequitas

## *Human Rights*

*Description of the relevance of human rights for the company (i.e. human rights risk-assessment). Description of policies, public commitments and company goals on Human Rights.*

Respecting and supporting human rights leads to increased productivity, higher employee morale and retention, brand differentiation and access to new customers and markets. Having the foresight to anticipate and mitigate human rights risks as part of a company's overall due diligence process minimizes legal, reputational and financial risk in the long term. Companies must adopt a systematic management approach to identifying and addressing human rights impacts. Respecting and supporting human rights is also a moral responsibility tied to the company's social license to operate and is critical to creating an environment supportive of sustainable development.

In terms of the 'business case' for human rights, although the precise logic can vary between each business sector and country of operation, the following main benefits have been identified:

- Improved stakeholder relations
- Improved employee recruitment, retention, and motivation
- Improved risk assessment and management
- Reduced risk of consumer protest
- Enhanced corporate reputation and brand image
- A more secure license to operate
- Strengthened shareholder confidence
- More sustainable business relationships with governments, business partners, trade unions, sub-contractors and suppliers.

## *Implementation*

In 2019 Aequitas will explore the feasibility of the following:

- Participate on the Human Rights and Business Dilemmas Forum and solve issues together
- Be the subject of a case study for the Embedding Human Rights into Business Practice Series
- Attend events and webinars
- Sign the Open Letter calling on academic institutions to educate future managers and leaders on business and human rights

## *Measurement of outcomes*

The company will undertake a quarterly review of performance in regards to implementing human rights policies, addressing human rights risks and responding to human rights violations.

The company will also develop a specific human rights policy and implement it in 2019.

## **Labour**

*Description of the relevance of labour rights for the company (i.e. labour rights-related risks and opportunities). Description of written policies, public commitments and company goals on labour rights.*

Economic growth alone is not enough to ensure equity, social progress and to eradicate poverty, and often these values are ignored at the expense of economic growth. All employees around the world should have decent working conditions. However, child labour and forced labour persist today as global supply chains extend to distant regions. Hazardous workplaces continue to exist and discrimination remains a challenge. Although this may not seem a major issue for a company like Aequitas we need to ensure that we adhere to best practice labour standards and make sure our suppliers do the same. We must be aware of the environments of which we are operating in to ensure that labour standards are upheld across the board (not just at Aequitas).

Aequitas have already taken to steps to address labour issues in the environment in which we are operating, including campaigning for the introduction of the London Living Wage in the trust in which we operate.

## **Implementation**

*Description of concrete actions taken by the company to implement labour policies, address labour risks and respond to labour violations.*

The company are currently reviewing the labour rights policies and have identified the an example labour code of conduct from the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to implement in 2019.

Health and safety is taken seriously at Aequitas, with two staff members being fully trained fire wardens. We also offer our staff eye tests and ergonomic tests to ensure that the working environment is safe. In 2018 we introduced a range of staff benefits relating to health and wellbeing to promote wellbeing in the workplace.

## *Measurement of outcomes*

The company are committed to upholding labour rights and as such the Senior Management Team will review any issues arising concerning labour rights.

The Senior Management Team will also undertake a yearly review of the demographics of the company to ensure there is diversity in the company and in 2018 the company developed a diversity statement to promote diversity across the business.

## **Environment**

*Description of the relevance of environmental protection for the company (i.e. environmental risks and opportunities). Description of policies, public commitments and company goals on environmental protection.*

To prepare for this increasingly challenging landscape, the Global Compact's work on environment is designed to help companies develop a holistic and comprehensive strategy. It recognizes the growing linkages among various environmental issues – climate, food, water – as well as their connections to social and development priorities.

The Global Compact pushes companies to move beyond traditional approaches based largely on compliance and narrow risk assessments, asking business to actively address environmental risks and opportunities, and have major efforts underway with business in the areas of climate, water and food. The environmental aspects of the UN Global Compact are tied to principles 7, 8 and 9.

## *Implementation*

In 2018, Aequitas was awarded the International Public Relations Association Global Contribution Award for our work forcing the UK Government to address the impacts of a devastating hurricane in the Caribbean. The global campaign highlighted the impact of climate change on small island nations and forces governments to take responsibility for the impact and effects of climate change.

Due to Aequitas' small size, many of the clauses suggested by the UN Global Compact are redundant in our context; however, this does not negate the value of principles 7,8, and 9 for the business.

Aequitas is unable to implement many of the recommendations (for example, those aimed at manufacturers encouraging distributors to switch to sustainable products, which is not applicable to the services Aequitas offers). However, alongside championing environmental causes, Aequitas can implement a set of practices that are both environmentally and business-friendly.

Below is a set of practices that may be applicable to Aequitas and should be explored further in pursuit of greater engagement with the guiding principles of the Un Global Compact:

- Sign the Caring for Climate statement – we should explore this, engaging with the UN’s delegate for the initiative, so to align our internal practices with external messages.
- the Caring for Climate initiative recommends reporting publicly on climate change policies. Aequitas is certainly able to raise the profile of climate change policies, using our website and social media platforms to leverage these issues. Aequitas can produce opinion pieces on climate change and the environment to keep our clients and social media followers engaged on the issue and updated on changing policies.
- the Carbon Pricing Champion scheme aims to drive down greenhouse gas emissions. As a tenant of Somerset House, Aequitas is unable to manage our own energy supply. However, a secondary aspect of the Carbon Pricing Champion scheme is advocacy, and Aequitas is therefore able to participate through advocating the importance of carbon pricing. We are also able to engage with the Somerset House trust on the issue and to encourage greater participation on behalf of the trust to lower emissions of the trust and Somerset House’s remaining tenants. For instance, Aequitas are changing suppliers of stationery and couriers (two services which impact on the air quality in the already dangerously polluted Central London area) to zero emissions suppliers.
- Policy engagement: to fulfil the UN global Compact principles 7,8, and 9, policy engagement is viewed as a critical step in developing meaningful climate policy in which businesses are engaged. Aequitas is able to share experiences with the government and drive and lobby better environmental policy. A goal of Aequitas’s is to find ways to incentivise corporate sustainable business goals through collaboration with stakeholders in both business and civil society.
- A Call to Responsible Corporate Adaptation: Aequitas is able to engage with policymakers and relevant stakeholders to support national or local adaptation planning and implementation where the company operates.
- Lastly, simple changes to Aequitas’ use of materials can make a tangible difference, and count as a contribution towards our sustainability goals. This may include switching to eco-friendly paper (post-consumer waste ie recycled products), biodegradable cleaning products, and compact-fluorescent or LED lights. Aequitas could also have an energy auditor fitted to keep track of energy expenditure.

We also engage with the wider business community on a regular panel on enhancing sustainability within the Trust environment.

In 2019, Aequitas will undertake the following:

- Engage with the above delegates on specific UN global compact programmes to explore how they might be relevant to us

- Advocate for greater participation of sustainable practice within Somerset House and beyond and participate in already established programmes
- Raise awareness of the issues of climate change and climate policies through social media and our website
- Use ethical and sustainable suppliers, switching to environmentally-tested products such as LED lights
- Lobby the government on environmental policy

## *Measurement of outcomes*

We will undertake a yearly review of progress on the implementation of environmental policy at Aequitas

## **Anti-Corruption**

*Description of the relevance of anti-corruption for the company (i.e. anti-corruption risk-assessment). Description of policies, public commitments and company goals on anti-corruption.*

### *What does it mean?*

The tenth principle against corruption was adopted in 2004 and commits UN Global Compact participants not only to avoid bribery, extortion and other forms of corruption, but also to proactively develop policies and concrete programmes to address corruption internally and within their supply chains. Companies are also challenged to work collectively and join civil society, the United Nations and governments to realize a more transparent global economy.

### *Why should companies care?*

There are many reasons why the elimination of corruption has become a priority within the business community. Confidence and trust in business among investors, customers, employees and the public have been eroded by recent waves of business ethics scandals around the globe. Companies are learning the hard way that they can be held responsible for not paying enough attention to the actions of their employees, associated companies, business partners and agents

Businesses face high ethical and business risks and potential costs when they fail to effectively combat corruption in all its forms. All companies, large and small, are vulnerable to corruption, and the potential for damage is considerable. Business can face: legal risks: not only are most forms of corruption illegal where they occur but it is also increasingly becoming illegal in a company's home country to engage in corrupt practices in another country;



- Reputational risks: companies whose policies and practices fail to meet high ethical standards, or that take a relaxed attitude toward compliance with laws, are exposed to serious reputational risks. Often it is enough to be accused of malpractice for a company's reputation to be damaged even if a court subsequently determines the contrary;
- Financial costs: there is clear evidence that many countries lose close to \$1 trillion due to fraud, corruption and shady business transactions and in certain cases, corruption can cost a country up to 17% of its GDP, according to the UN Development Programme in 2014. This undermines business performance and diverts public resources from legitimate sustainable development;
- Erosion of internal trust and confidence as unethical behaviour damages staff loyalty to the company as well as the overall ethical culture of the company.

## Implementation

Description of concrete actions to implement anti-corruption policies, address anti-corruption risks and respond to incidents

*Aequitas is committed to principle 10 and actively supports via:*

Internal: As a first and basic step, Aequitas already has anti-corruption policies and programmes within their organizations and business operations and adheres to current UK regulations and global best practice. We undertake an exhaustive due diligence process with new clients before and during the onboarding process and appointment of new clients.

External: Aequitas will report on the work against corruption in the annual Communication on Progress; and share experiences and best practices through the submission of examples and case stories.

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