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STATEMENT OF CONTINUED SUPPORT

Dear Esteemed Stakeholders,

It is with pleasure that we publish Ahead of the Curve's third United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) Communication on Progress (CoP) report. This report covers our activities for the year 2019.

This report acts as an affirmation of our commitment to maintaining accountability and transparency, and to supporting the ten Principles of the United Nations Global Compact in the areas of Human Rights, Labor, Environment and Anti-Corruption.

In this Communication on Progress, we describe our continued efforts in integrating sustainability and Global Compact principles into our business strategy, culture and daily operations.

Sincerely,

Dina Sherif

Co-founder and CEO
Ahead of the Curve
Cairo, Egypt

ABOUT US

ATC is a social business dedicated to the promotion of sustainable management practice, inclusive growth and social innovation across growth markets.

MISSION

We aim to promote economically viable, sustainable and scalable solutions to socio-economic challenges in growth markets through responsible management practice, inclusive market growth and the proliferation of social businesses.

VISION

A world where growth markets are seen as hubs for social innovation and where profit has a purpose that is sustainable.

We work towards the fulfillment of our mandate through four main streams of work:

1. Knowledge Creation and Awareness Raising

We produce world-class knowledge pieces about regional insights and practices related to the areas of sustainable management practice, entrepreneurship and impact entrepreneurship, and inclusive economic expansion across growth markets, including women's equitable economic participation. We also continuously engage in raising the awareness levels of our different stakeholders around these topics.

2. Consulting and Training Services

We offer our clients and partners tailored consulting and training services, enabling them to integrate the principles of responsibility and sustainability into their company culture and day-to-day operations.

3. Entrepreneurship Support Efforts

ATC is committed to ensuring more sustainable and inclusive growth models in the region. We realize that groundbreaking efforts are needed for this to materialize. We have launched a series of support programs to enable the proliferation of social and inclusive business models across the Middle East and growth markets beyond.

4. Gender Diversity Efforts

Stemming from the belief that sustainable growth will only be possible if women are able to equitably access and advance within the labor market, ATC launched a stream of work that is focused on women's economic integration in 2014. This includes a women's network that connects, supports and celebrates women leaders from the region, as well as engages men around pressing issues related to women's equitable socio-economic participation.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 10 PRINCIPLES

ATC's mission and approach revolves around ensuring more sustainable societies through enabling businesses, civil society organizations and the public sector to create shared value by adopting responsible and inclusive management practices. We incorporate the principles of sustainability within our own operations by:

- Basing all of our core corporate functions on the achievement of more responsible and sustainable growth.
- Mainstreaming the principles of accountability and transparency within our corporation:
 - We have developed comprehensive bylaws to ensure effective board oversight.
 - We maintain an open work culture whereby employees and management openly communicate and are held accountable for any potential sustainability violations.
 - We integrate a comprehensive sustainability management paradigm overview in our employee induction trainings.
 - Our employee handbook addresses issues of corruption, human rights, non-discrimination, and integrity at large, and explains the company's zero tolerance policy for any violations.

Human Rights Management Policies & Procedures

ATC is committed to promoting human rights by reference to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights dated December 10, 1948, and adheres to the Ten Principles of the UN Global Compact. ATC not only promotes human rights internally through integrating human rights principles in the framework of the company, but also through providing services to private sector and civil society organizations to foster human rights principles within their organizations.

We have zero tolerance for human rights violations within our own internal operations. As per ATC's bylaws and employee handbook, neither the corporation nor its duly authorized agents shall discriminate against any individual or group for reasons of race, color, sex, age, marital status, sexual preference, disability, religion, or any other basis for discrimination. Our open communication culture allows for any such violations to be detected and addressed at an early stage; there have been no such violations to date.

With regards to supply chain integration, members of our supply chain are largely service-oriented. In support of ensuring more inclusive growth, we prefer locally-based suppliers that are small or medium sized (SMEs). We have zero tolerance for suppliers that violate human rights principles. While we do not have a formal supplier screening process, we cease dealing with any given supplier should we become aware of their engagement in violations of the principles of integrity and human rights.

With regards to advocating for the protection of human rights within the corporate sector, we have continued engagement in multiple consulting, training, and research activities around the topic.

PLANS FOR 2020

- We plan on continuing to engage in core business activities related to the promotion and protection of human rights within the private sector. This includes sector-specific engagement around sustainability in the finance and textiles sectors.
- Our upcoming regional mapping report focuses on the intersections between the private sector and the recent COVID-19 outbreak, and how private sector growth can better serve more prosperous and equitable societies.

Labor Management Policies & Procedures

ATC surpasses the national minimum wage and goes beyond labor laws to ensure that its employees are effectively engaged and fairly treated within the company. We have zero tolerance for child labor, forced or compulsory labor; and they are explicitly prohibited in our employee handbook.

Instead of contracting employees using letters of assignment, ATC initiated the issuance of formal contractual agreements for full-time employees.

We continuously invest in the growth and development of our employees by:

- Granting them full ownership of their work, allowing them to innovate new streams of work and unleash their leadership potential
- Maintaining a coaching system whereby the company's management team closely coach employees and employees coach each other
- Continuously offering our employees exposure and training opportunities that focus on developing their technical and interpersonal skills.

- Allowing core employees to take extended leaves of absence to pursue advanced degrees, and to rejoin the team once they complete their degrees.
- Offering young high-school and undergraduate students learning and training opportunities through internship opportunities.

ATC has flexible working conditions that allow employees to tailor their working hours to their needs and personal commitments, without sacrificing the quality of work.

Employees work in an office building that is equipped with safe evacuation mechanisms. The office's physical condition is well maintained to allow employees a comfortable and safe working environment. No employees have been subject to safety hazards as a result of working with the company.

ATC has not experienced any incidents of bullying, verbal or physical harassment or any unethical behavior.

PLANS FOR 2020

- ATC has experimented with life-insurance and pension programs that are suitable for small companies like ours. We are also exploring similar health coverage systems through innovative providers.

Environmental Management Policies & Procedures

Given the nature of our work, our environmental footprint is minimal. Many projects are desk-based with documentation exchanged electronically. However, we remain committed to maintaining an environmentally sustainable office. As of this moment, we have engaged in the following efforts to reduce our environmental impact:

- Designating a recycling paper station where unwanted materials are collected for continued use in printing or other projects
- Using double-sided printing and printing multiple pages on one sheet face whenever possible
- Reducing print publications by relying on digital publications whenever possible
- Re-using supplies and materials (including handouts, nametags, etc.)
- Encouraging employees to carpool; employees frequently travel from and to the office together
- Using reusable kitchenware in the office
- Installing a water dispenser to minimize plastic waste resulting from using plastic water bottles in the office.

- Segregating paper waste and donating it to a civil society organization that uses returns to support development efforts.

PLANS FOR 2020

- Digitizing training modules to minimize travel and printing requirements.

Anti-Corruption Management Policies & Procedures

ATC has a board of directors that is fully independent and does not derive any economic benefits from the company. Moreover, ATC's bylaws dictate that the board of directors must disclose upon election or appointment any relevant interest, financial or otherwise, which may pose a conflict of interest. In the event that any matter comes before the board in which a director has an interest, it shall be immediately disclosed to the board. Board members who have disclosed their interest are not allowed to vote in matter in question. To prevent confusion, interest is determined as the director deriving an individual economic benefit, either directly or indirectly, from the board or committee's decision on the matter.

Moreover, employees are carefully hired based on their commitment to ethical practices. Our employee handbook includes a dishonesty and plagiarism policy, violations of which would negatively affect an employee's standing. ATC encourages its employees to report any concerns they have about the company or its activities, to ensure transparency and minimal violations.

As planned during the year 2017, we have integrated anti-corruption clauses and monitoring practices into our contracts, and employee handbook, respectively.

ACTION IN SUPPORT OF BROADER UN GOALS AND ISSUES

ATC's main purpose is to ensure sustainable societies, and shared value creation across private sector, public sector and civil society organizations. The strong overlap between ATC's work, the UNGC principles, and the UN's development goals are described below.

Promoting a Comprehensive Corporate Sustainability Approach

Over the past two years, we have enabled three large corporations and a large foundation to conduct comprehensive sustainability diagnostics and issue sustainability reports conforming to internationally accepted standards. ATC has also engaged stakeholders worldwide in engagements related to gathering information for sustainability reporting. We have also worked with one of Egypt's Telecommunications operators on their social investment strategy, enabling them to launch a foundation that fosters shared value creation for the company and its stakeholders.

We also conducted a mapping and piloting study to explore the potential for launching a private sector coalition that would roll out sector-specific employability curricula in key sectors across Egypt through **UNICEF's Meshwary program**. The devised strategy is currently being piloted in close coordination with UNICEF Egypt.

One of our most exciting efforts during 2019 was organizing an insightful session in collaboration with the AmCham Entrepreneurship and Innovation Committee (EIC) around "**Driving Corporate-Startup Partnerships: Success Stories and Rewarding Opportunities.**" The panel was moderated by Dina H. Sherif, Co-Founder of Ahead of the Curve, and featured:

- Fadi Ghandour, Founder of Aramex and Wamda
- Alaa Hashim, Founder of Transcendium
- Habiba Helmy, MINT Hub Director at EGBank
- Mohamed Rahmy, Managing Director of Endeavor
- Ahmed Shalaby, Founder of Tatweer Misr

PLANS FOR 2020

- Sustaining our core business, which naturally supports UNGC's principles and the SDGs.

Supporting inclusive and social business

ATC is a regional actor in the impact enterprise development and employment creation space that has strategic partnerships with major private sector actors nationally and across the region. We are working on the proliferation of impact and inclusive business models and provide non-financial support to impact-driven businesses and to already existing large businesses that are willing to expand their vision to include the base of the pyramid within their business model. We have developed several flagship training boot camps, including:

- **'The Impact' (2015 - Present)**

The Impact was specifically designed to meet the needs of impact entrepreneurs in the region. Building on design thinking and collaboration principles, The Impact aims at supporting scalable impact innovation by providing participants with the knowledge and tools required to develop, implement, and scale their idea for social change. In 2019, we conducted an Impact Bootcamp in Sohag, which was attended by 40 young participants (18 women, and 22 men).

- **Thrive (2017 - Present):**

Launched in 2017 in partnership with Oxfam Novib's Work in Progress! Alliance, Thrive is a specialized program that offers tailored support to impact driven businesses to get them ready for investment and growth. It does so through capacity building training and one-on-one consulting in various fields based on our assessments of their needs. In 2019, ATC executed two rounds of the THRIVE Program, one sector-agnostic round in Cairo, and another sector-specific round in Sohag, which focused on entrepreneurs creatively using Agricultural by-products. The Cairo round was attended by 7 unique companies in the fields of Environmental Awareness, Recycling, Agriculture, Bio-technology, Arts and Culture, and Education. The Sohag round was attended by 11 companies that are creating added-value products using agricultural waste, and the by-products of the agricultural process. Participating companies, as well as Egyptian companies participating in other WiP! Egypt activities were also provided with the opportunity to win a financial award to support their excelling work; two of the Thrive Cairo cohort won awards totaling 30,000 Euro.

We also sustained a series of sector-specific challenges and competitions to enable large and multinational corporations to support and integrate start-ups and entrepreneurs into their value chains. These include:

- **EGBank (2018-Present)**

In September 2018, Ahead of the Curve and MINT by EGBank collaborated to launch the “MINT Ambassadors” program across Egypt. The program allowed university students, or “Ambassadors”, to participate in a 4-day training program addressing leadership skills, design thinking and business modelling, become a better and more effective communicator and develop a deep understanding of Egypt’s economy and the role of banks in building this economy. After the training the “Ambassador” were assigned to three separate “missions,” and the top students working on these missions would be eligible for an internship at the EGBank. Missions have included passing on the knowledge that they acquired through the training to other young Egyptians.

46 students from 14 different Egyptian universities participated for the training and the missions. The missions enabled us to reach another 500 Egyptian students.

- **Tatweer Misr (2017-2019)**

For the third year, Tatweer Misr and Ahead of the Curve held the Annual Tatweer Misr Innovation Competition. The competition seeks out youth-led innovations to challenges that Tatweer Misr presents to the contestants in the areas of Marketing and Architectural design. Out of the 7 finalists of this year’s round, two winners got awarded a free ticket to the Sharjah Entrepreneurship Festival.

- **Advisory Services**

Drosos is a non-profit organization focusing on promoting social and economic welfare throughout the world, through initiatives, such as support plans or projects, aimed at improving people’s living conditions. In Egypt specifically, Drosos and the ATC have collaborated in 2017 and 2018, for the development of sustainable business, through various programs, such as the Economic Empowerment Program. In 2019, we worked closely with Bassita, one of Drosos’ partners on the creation of a sustainable model and solid strategy for the launch of their Sustainable Innovation Lab.

PLANS FOR 2020

- Digitizing some of our content.
- Launching shorter training seminars to a wider network of entrepreneurs, and in collaboration with other entrepreneurship support organizations to accelerate and

spread out impact. These modules will include ESG performance for SMEs, Impact Measurement, Mindsets of Possibility, Circularity, among others.

- Continuing to expand “The Impact” program by implementing it in new countries/cities, increasing the number of engaged entrepreneurs, and empowering others to start and scale up their social enterprises.
- Continuing to expand our sector-specific offerings, enabling large and multinational corporations across the region to support and integrate entrepreneurs into their value chains.

Promoting Gender Equality

Stemming from our commitment to the inclusion and empowerment of women, we continue our efforts towards strengthening a women’s network that aims at creating a supportive, celebratory, and inclusive community for women in the Arab region, both in the formal and informal labor market. The network continued to implement its pioneering experiential leadership retreats with the goal of helping participating women find their unique strengths as leaders and to help participants develop leadership skills that resonate with their respective personalities and the specificity of their contexts with reference to their gender.

As planned in 2018, we have conducted a **women’s leadership retreat** between the 4th and 6th of July in La Hacienda Ras Sudr with support from Oxfam Novib’s Work in Progress! Alliance. Attended by 18 women, the program covered modules on self-leadership (values, human needs, fears, limiting beliefs, the iceberg), and leading with others (trust, coaching, impact relationships, leadership failures, aspirations and ambitions). Some of the testimonies received from participants included:

“The retreat helped me dig down to know my fears that stop me from pursuing my leadership goals, and I now choose to always be in the circle of control instead of the circle of concern. I will always remember that leadership is a journey not a destination”.

ATC joined the ANA HUNNA International e.V. Network as a founding member in 2017. The network seeks to promote women’s right to work, and women’s economic inclusion at large, and brings together partners from the following 5 countries: Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt and Germany. ATC is currently co-leading the Egypt network which aims to enhance the integration of women in the labor market through working with private sector companies, and strengthening the social and cultural acceptance for women’s right to work through working with civil society organizations. ATC attended the ANA HUNNA General Assembly and annual Board Meeting in Jordan in November 2019, at

which time ATC Co-founder and CEO Dina Sherif formally joined the Board, as the official representative of the Egyptian Partner.

We also launched an exciting partnership with the **Arab Women's Enterprise Fund (AWEF)** to foster women's economic inclusion in Egypt through the promotion of more gender balanced and sensitive media content. The partnership has entailed a series of creative interventions with this end in mind, including:

- **Content Creators' Workshops**

We designed a series of workshops with the objective of making content creators aware of:

- How media plays a pivotal role in shaping culture
- Gender-related basic concepts (especially unconscious bias)
- The business, economic, and social case for the positive portrayal of gender relations
- Existing examples of media portrayals and their impact on gender stereotypes

The interactive workshops will be implemented in 2020.

- **Ramadan Fawazeer (Riddle), namely 'Ana Malak'**

We produced a radio riddle and aired it on Al Shark El Awsat Radio Channel (89.5FM) at prime time 3:55pm Egypt time in Ramadan 2019 (June). During the series, a young woman is faced with a different situation highlighting adverse social norms that constitute obstacles to her economic empowerment. Ana Malak's average listenership was conservatively estimated at **500,000 listeners** (male and female) per episode.

We have also continued to offer our **training programs** that are specifically tailored for **women entrepreneurs**, including:

- **LEAP (2018-2019)**

With the support from Oxfam Novib, ATC designed a Women's Entrepreneurship Program called "LEAP" which is a leadership journey specially tailored for women entrepreneurs that aims to bridge a gap in the entrepreneurship ecosystem. It presents women entrepreneurs with the needed tools to grow their businesses and leap into their full potential. ATC conducted the second round of LEAP in 2019 with 17 women entrepreneurs completing the program.

- **SMB (2017 - Present)**

ATC was selected by Facebook to be its local partner and the manager of the #SheMeansBusiness campaign in Egypt since February 2017.

#SheMeansBusiness delivers the first of its kind training to women entrepreneurs on the use of social media platforms namely Facebook and Instagram to run, grow, and scale their businesses. In 2019, we have trained 770 women using the SMB methodology.

To tackle **diversity at the workplace**, we engaged in two main activities with support from Oxfam Novib's Work in Progress! Alliance, namely:

- **SME Gender Diversity Assessments**

In 2017 and 2018, ATC created and delivered two "Gender Diversity and WEPs" workshops. Each workshop spanned two full days and targeted 20 senior managers/HR managers from different companies and different sectors. During the workshops, ATC introduced the managers to the business case for gender diversity, and to the concept of unconscious bias. Afterwards, all the Women Empowerment Principles (WEPs) were explained, and practical discussions on how to apply the first four WEPs and the provisions by the labor law were conducted. In 2019, in order to maximize the impact of the program, ATC re-designed the program to include three phases that were implemented with 3 SMEs:

- 1) gender assessment of the company (SME),
- 2) gender diversity workshop with the management, and
- 3) gender sensitization workshops with the employees (in order to minimize resistance by the employees to the changes that the managers will lead on).

One of the main rationales behind focusing on SMEs was to enable them with the kinds of resources and support on promoting diversity, which is typically targeted at larger companies.

- **Senior Executives' Seminar: Adaptive Leadership for Gender Diversity**

One of the most exciting activities this year was the CEOs and Senior Executives' Seminar on Adaptive Leadership for Diversity. We conducted two days of the seminar, one of which targeted senior executives from large local and multinational companies, and another with the founders of LEAP & Thrive participants (2017-2019). The seminar conducted with senior executives, which featured three world-class facilitators, namely:

- Hanan Heikal, Diversity and Inclusion Expert, with over 25 years of experience with pushing diversity and inclusion agenda across the Middle East
- Dina H. Sherif, Co-founder of ATC, and MIT Faculty Member
- John-Michael Schert, U.S. Entrepreneur and Eisenhower Fellow who joined us from New York to deliver the session

The seminar kicked off with a session focused on gender inequality, which included statistics on gender equality and inequality in Egypt and the MENA region, which was facilitated by Dina H. Sherif. Next, Hanan Heakal, Diversity and Inclusion Expert, made a much-needed distinction between being diverse, and being inclusive, clarifying that inclusion is necessary for sustaining diversity. John-Michael Schert, founder and principal of JMS & Company and an instructor at The University of Chicago's Business School, introduced participants to the notion of adaptive leadership, clarified how diversity is an adaptive challenge, and ways by which the adaptive leadership framework can be applied to tackle the diversity and inclusion challenge. The main points that participants took from the session were that diversity and inclusion are necessities. They learned where their company really stands on these issues, which was different from what they believed. They found the frameworks provided by Hanan and the mindset of John-Michael to be very beneficial. Participants stated that the actions they plan on taking to enhance diversity and inclusion within their companies/departments include studying and accessing more data, investigating the culture, and taking steps to be more adaptive rather than technical, researching and eliminating unconscious bias and working with the Human Resources Departments to assess and measure diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

PLANS FOR 2020

- Launching additional programs that specifically target women entrepreneurs in Egypt.
- Fostering connections between all past program participants.

Corporate Sustainability Governance and Leadership

We are a small-sized company that employs 10 full time employees, in addition to seasonal interns, and a large roster of independent consultants sourced on an as-needed basis. We are governed by a fully independent Board of Directors, which does not derive any economic benefits from the company. Our Board of Directors includes some of the region's top thought leaders on sustainability.

Our Co-founder and CEO, Dina Sherif, is strongly committed to advancing the principles of sustainability within the company, and across other organizations through the company's core business. Our other Co-founder Mohamed El-Kalla is one of the foremost experts on sustainability management and inclusive business in the Arab World; he was involved in the creation of Egypt's UNGC chapter and other UNGC chapters across the region.

The Board of Directors is constantly engaged in enhancing ATC's operations and potential for reaching its goals of sustainable and inclusive growth. While ATC has not conducted a comprehensive stakeholder engagement exercise, feedback is always gathered after any project or activity undertaken by the company. Furthermore, ATC staff members provide and receive feedback from partners throughout partnerships, and conduct debriefing meetings following the end of a partnership.

As any new program or initiative is designed, relevant key stakeholders are engaged in the project design to ensure that the project is built on a participatory approach, is relevant, and thus will achieve sustainable impact. When it comes to employee engagement, ATC management maintains an open door policy for employees to discuss any arising issues, while ATC employees are also encouraged to provide feedback for each other.



Ahead of the Curve

124 Othman Ibn Affan St.

8th Floor, Apt. 82

Heliopolis, Cairo

Facebook: /atcposts

Twitter: @atctweets

Email: info@ahead-ofthecurve.com

www.ahead-ofthecurve.com