

COMMUNICATION ON ENGAGEMENT (COE)

British Council

Period covered by this Communication on Engagement

From: 21 Feb 2020 **to:** 20 Feb 2022

Part I: Statement of Continued Support by the Chief Executive or Equivalent

Please use the box below to include the statement of continued support signed by your organization's Chief Executive or equivalent.

2 March 2022

To our stakeholders:

I am pleased to confirm that British Council reaffirms its support to the United Nations Global Compact and its ten Principles in the areas of Human Rights, Labour, Environment and Anti-corruption. This is our Communication on Engagement with the United Nations Global Compact and we welcome any feedback on its content.

In this Communication on Engagement, we describe the action that our organisation has taken to support the UN Global Compact and its Principles as suggested for an organisation such as ours. We also commit to sharing this information as appropriate with our stakeholders using our primary channels of Chief Executive or equivalent.

Sincerely Yours



Scott McDonald

Chief Executive Officer

Part II: Description of Actions

Alignment and Promotion of the 10 Principles

a) Internalizing the UNGC and beyond

In our previous Communication of Engagement, we reported how British Council senior management has circulated awareness of the UNGC and its 10 principles amongst staff in our cultural engagement division. This division comprises colleagues in the UK and throughout our overseas network and numbers well over a thousand staff.

In mid 2021, we conducted a webinar with the UNGC UK to brief in the UK and overseas colleagues working on client funded contracts including those who deliver for UN, FCDO and EU. This two-hour webinar demonstrated the connection between client compliance, the desire to work in an ethical way and the intersection with the 10 UNGC Principles. Steve Kenzie from the UNGC UK office presented the UNGC and how it contributes to sustainable and responsible business practices. Internal corporate functions such as the environment, counter fraud and safeguarding teams showed how our business as usual work aligns with UNGC Principles. Over 100 colleagues attended. Outcomes included increased knowledge of the UNGC, a greater understanding of how our British Council work contributes to better business, and an improved ethical narrative. We hope this will serve us well in winning new business.

The next stage of the internal communications plan is in development. The aim is now to move beyond awareness of the 10 Principles to further embed or reinforce relevant aspects into business-as-usual. Outcomes will include tangible evidence of good ethical behaviour and transparency leading to greater client/beneficiary/stakeholder trust and confidence. This communications campaign is scheduled for the period march to September 2022.

We have sought to **apply the 10 principles** to our business as usual work. This has manifested itself through several lenses: for example, British Council is committed to only enter into business relationships with organisations who work to recognised ethical standards and have financial probity. Therefore, our due diligence processes are mandatory both for organisations as well as checking individuals against terrorism and money laundering sanctions lists.

We have significant counter fraud capability and expertise to help us support the Anti-Corruption principle. Our Counter Fraud policy and processes have been commended by our sponsoring body, the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).

Finally, as part of our commitment to safeguarding within all aspects of our operation, we support the Human Rights Principles by mandating all programmes to have a safeguarding risk management plan (including management of downstream safeguarding) and for staff to undergo regular refresher safeguarding training.

b) Attracting new Participants to the UNGC

We have sought to promote the UNGC with our downstream partners. An example of this is with one of our client funded programmes covering 6 different countries across the Western Balkans. This is a substantial programme encouraging the development of independent media and we have cascaded information regarding the UNGC and its principal aims to some 80 organisations. Many of these organisations are still developing so we are encouraging an early understanding and adoption of the benefits and responsibilities of ethical business behaviour to support their growth.

c) Join and Support Special Initiatives and Workstreams

The British Council has undertaken significant work in the area of human rights and particularly in the way we support disability rights and address racism. The British Council is a signatory to the Global Charter for Change on disability and development in which the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO, formerly Department for International Development) was a lead. We have made two organisational commitments to take action in support of the Charter for Change which are:

- The British Council commits action to support disabled people to increase their voice, skills and agency to influence others and shape change in their own lives, the lives of others and wider society. We will do this through the meaningful involvement of disabled people within our own workforce and in our programmes in Arts, Education, Society and English and Exams, seeking to identify and remove barriers to inclusion and create conditions that encourage and value diversity.
- The British Council commits to use the relevant parts of our international cultural and educational work to support the provision of good quality education for young disabled people and to enable them to shape and lead change for the benefit of disabled people of all ages. This supports our wider commitment to more inclusive education systems based on the principles of access, engagement, empowerment and enablement aimed at ensuring the highest quality of education for everyone

The murder of George Floyd has led to a serious self-appraisal of our own organisation's culture and practices. This reflection has led to an Anti-Racism Action Plan (ARAP) which covers all territories in which we operate and many thousands of staff. This is a long term plan to increase organizational learning on racism, seek to change our leadership culture and organisational culture as a whole, ensure our programmes operate in an anti-racist way, examine and make our Human Resources policies and practices appropriate and fit for purpose. We have a senior-led task force to oversee this initiative and also a worldwide colleague run challenge group to hold the Task Force to account.

d) Participate in Global, local, Regional Events

Members of staff attended local UNGC roadshows on climate action and anti-racism in 2021.

Promotion and Support to the SDGs

The British Council has had a substantial footprint in development work for many years. In this report, we wish to focus on highlights against the following:

- Goal 5 – Gender
- Goal 13 – Climate Action
- The Missing Pillar - our efforts to use culture and the arts to support a number of different goals.

SDG 5 - Gender Mainstreaming

British Council is committed to following the UK International Development Act which mandates the inclusion of a gender perspective in all activity. Our 15 flagship programmes are designed to make a significant contribution to Gender Equality by 2025. Each one will make a significant and measurable contribution to gender equality and several programmes go further and are designed to achieve transformational change from a gender perspective. We have introduced a nine-hour online gender training package delivered over 3 days which to colleagues and partners working on our programmes. Gender awareness commitments

are embedded into the subcontracts we use for our delivery chains and in all aspects of our recruitment policy and process.

We are pleased to attach a set of case studies illustrating how we seek to support gender equality through programmes addressing violence against women and supporting the economic empowerment of women.

SDG 13 – Climate Action

Protecting the environment is one of six strategic priorities for British Council as set out in our Strategy 2025. We are in the process of committing to be a carbon zero organisation by 2045 at the latest. We are also committed to delivering and reporting against the UK Government Greening Commitments strategy. We have an established global network of Climate Champions and coordinators to manage our response across our network of over 90 countries. Our Climate Connections global programme was showcased at the recent COP26 conference in Glasgow. Furthermore, as part of our social value commitments, we make efforts to ensure that tackling climate change forms part of content where it is feasible to do so. We share our environment policy with our delivery chain and encourage similar commitments.

The Missing Pillar

The British Council's 'The Missing Pillar' report explores the place of culture in the UN SDGs through research, policy and practice. Culture is the missing pillar that can support the SDGs and complement the social, economic and environmental pillars of sustainable development. The report analyses where arts and culture as a sector and as a creative process can fit within a number of goals, including their targets and indicators. Eleven British Council programmes provide examples of cultural initiatives around the world, tackling a variety of issues and cutting across sectors, such as sustainable fashion, creative inclusion, and cultural heritage protection. The recommendations from the report advocate for the SDGs to be more accessible to the cultural sector, for them to be embedded in the delivery of cultural initiatives based on local needs, and for their impact to be measured accordingly. The report recommends taking an inclusive approach, involving communities and local actors to understand cross-cutting needs and ecosystems to ensure sustainability. It also calls for a focus on digital technologies to raise awareness and a clearer response to the climate emergency from the cultural sector.

The Missing Pillar report was presented externally in several networks:

- the UK All Party Parliamentary Group on SDGs in December 2020
- the European Network of Institutes of Culture (EUNIC) Policy Dialogue in September 2020
- The UNESCO Art Lab on 10 December 2020
- The Voices of Culture EU civil society dialogue on Culture and the SDGs in February 2021

In January 2021, we set up an external working group to develop the [Missing Pillar Talks](#), a series of events on culture's contribution to Sustainable Development. The Missing Pillar Talks are commissioned by the British Council in association with the United Kingdom

National Commission for UNESCO (UKNC) and the Culture Committee of the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG).

Part III. Measurement of Outcomes indicators to measure the outcome of the activities described in Part II above.

Alignment to UNGC Principles

We are pleased to present below our monitoring results from our attempts to mainstream human rights and anti-corruption awareness within our staff and supplier over the past 2 years.

Fraud Awareness:

A total of 8,459 colleagues have attended counter fraud training in the past 2 years. Additionally, British Council took part in the fraud awareness week organised by the UK Charity Commission in October 2021. A total of 1,121 colleagues attended a range of webinars.

Sanctions checking

In the last 2 years, we have undertaken sanctions checks on 8,452 organisations and individuals and have discovered 16 cases that required further investigation.

Supplier Ethical Behaviour Checks

As part of our comprehensive due diligence of potential partners and suppliers, we undertook 869 ethical business checks in the last 2 years.

Safeguarding Awareness

A total of 8,302 colleagues have taken safeguarding training in the last 2 years with a further 6,160 undertaking specific child protection training.