



Communication on Progress UN Global Compact

2021-2022

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I. Introduction

To our stakeholders,

I am pleased to confirm that OCO Global reaffirms its 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 and ambition to continually improve the integration of the Global Compact and its principles into our business strategy, culture and daily operations. We also commit to sharing this information with our stakeholders using our primary channels of communication.

Sincerely yours,



Shalini Raste

Director, Consulting Services
OCO Global Ltd.

II. Who We Are

OCO Global is a recognised leader in International Trade and Investment. Founded in 2001, OCO supports its clients in building and executing successful plans to attract international investment and grow businesses in new markets. With presence in the key commercial centres in Europe, Asia, America and the Middle East, we employ a multi-national and multi-lingual team dedicated to delivering success. We are engaged with both companies and government organisations along all aspects of the international expansion journey. We also run a Business Intelligence unit which gathers global insights across key industries.



Headquartered in Belfast, Northern Ireland, OCO has over 140 professional staff and an overseas presence with offices in the US (New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles), Europe (London, Dublin, Paris, Frankfurt, Berlin), the Middle East (Dubai, Riyadh) and Asia (Tokyo, Shanghai). We also have a trusted partner network in key trade and investment markets.

III. Our Commitment to the UNGC

In January 2020, OCO Global signed up for the UN Global Compact programme. Signing up to the UNGC was one of the first milestones for OCO in developing and implementing a successful Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policy that will tackle issues related to labour, human rights, the environment and corruption.

In this report, we review what OCO's existing initiatives are that align with the Ten Principles of the UN Global Compact; we also review the different initiatives that we aim to implement in the future. To make sure that all our staff are engaged, we have also decided to set up a CSR committee which will be responsible for monitoring the existing initiatives and implementing future ones. In this regard, we conducted an internal staff engagement survey to drive our sustainability strategy at OCO Global.

COMMUNICATION
ON PROGRESS



This is our **Communication on Progress** in implementing the Ten Principles of the **United Nations Global Compact** and supporting broader UN goals.

We welcome feedback on its contents.

IV. Our CSR Policy

In January 2022, OCO Global conducted an internal survey to compile OCO staff opinions on sustainability and thus advance our CSR-related activities. The survey emphasized that 86% of our staff consider a CSR policy to be very important. In line with the survey results, OCO's top priority will be focused on **environmental sustainability and climate change** as well as on **human rights** and ensuring **equal opportunities**. Gender equality and being an ethical business were also rated by staff as high priorities.

IV. 1. Labour

OCO believes in providing good and flexible working conditions for all its employees, giving them the opportunity to freely express themselves and their individual needs. This is ensured through regular communication between management and employee groups through weekly/bi-weekly meetings and monthly staff calls. In conjunction with the survey results, OCO Global will continue to enhance internal policies for work-life balance, staff development opportunities and talent retention.

Wellbeing

Since the pandemic started, we have taken our employees' mental health very seriously. We continually organise voluntary confidential wellbeing catch-up sessions and held a webinar on mental health on World Mental Health Day. To advance mental wellbeing further, we will launch our own mental health week with webinars and voluntary confidential catch-up sessions with professional psychologists specialized in corporate mental health.

Despite decreased contact restrictions, we provide our staff with the flexibility to continue working from home besides being welcomed back in the offices. In addition, the work-life balance of our staff is supported by other flexible work opportunities including four months of full pay on maternity leave.

In the past, we hold an annual company away day which offers staff the opportunity to meet up in person with their colleagues to build greater cohesion between employees across our offices. With decreased contact restrictions, we are looking forward to coming back together in person this year.

Performance Management

We have formalised our performance management systems, providing a clear career path and guidance for consultants on expected core competencies at different levels within the organisations. In line with this, we have adapted our corporate structure implementing a Line of Business Manager for each business line and in every office. Since then, Project Managers report to and will be reviewed by the respective Line of Business Manager to ensure improved communication transparency.

Our Performance Management process includes formal bi-annual performance reviews. During the reviews, staff can discuss their performance, career aspirations and development need directly with their Manager. The Performance Management process is supported by OCO's Career Development and Training policies. For outstanding performance, staff can be awarded excellence awards to recognize their success.

Upskilling

At OCO, we are also committed to investing in our employees' learning and development by making training and development opportunities widely available.

Our employees can access both formal external training courses funded by the company as well as internally shared learning sessions conducted by both senior managers and their peers. Internally, we have worked on providing mentoring programs and regular training workshops, including through our FDI Academy to manage internal skills building. We have also provided upskilling opportunities externally through regular webinars and paid internship opportunities for university students.

OCO also offers its employees immediate access to an online training platform upon joining the company; it offers staff access to thousands of online training courses.

IV. 2. The Environment

Our impact on the environment remains limited given the relatively small size of our company and the nature of our intellectual capital-based business. However, we still consider ourselves responsible for reducing our carbon footprint and environmental impact.

CSR Strategy

OCO has formed an internal working group to develop a Corporate Social Responsibility strategy. This strategy identified a range of specific actions that improve our social, economic, and environmental impact. As a result of the survey results, human rights, responsible business and the environment will substantiate the strategic pillars. In this context, we are planning to expand the number of projects that OCO Global targets with an environment, social, and CSR focus. The internal working group will evaluate our performance against targets every quarter and the progress will be reported to the whole company every six months.

CSR Governance

On top of our CSR strategy, the Senior Leadership was tasked with Championing CSR within OCO from the top level, with accountability for the delivery of the CSR strategy. The CSR Leadership Team is responsible for leading strategy development, coordinating activities, and driving decision-making. However, the steering group with one representative in each office leads on delivery in local offices and coordinates activities with other OCO teams/initiatives (e.g., Women's Network, Social Committee, Human Resources, etc.). The group meets once per quarter to lead on suggesting and choosing activities to focus on within the CSR strategy. The Sustainability Champions Network is substantiated by local representatives in every office who help implement the strategy, activities and coordinate with local teams.

Action Plan and next steps

In FY2022-23, our sustainability strategy will be launched. The implementation includes agreeing on activities to deliver under the key pillars and the respective budgets. Afterward, our CSR plans and progress will be communicated externally. To evaluate the success of our activities, data will be collected, and external surveys of selected clients will be conducted.

Staff Engagement

According to the survey results, over 44% of our staff volunteered to participate in the CSR steering group or associated activities. To engage all our staff, we will introduce a competition between the offices in which each office has the chance to receive a prize for the most successful CSR performance. In addition, we will implement CSR in our bi-annual performance reviews and provide the opportunity for our employees to be awarded a specific CSR excellence award.

Code of Conduct

As part of our CSR strategy, we will develop and implement a code of conduct that will include measuring and reporting our carbon footprint to reduce our impact on climate change. Additionally, we will establish measures to reduce our GHG emissions through increased energy efficiency. Thus, measures including turning down electricity during breaks, printing only when absolutely necessary, reducing travel, implementing fair-trade coffee for all offices and no first-class travel will be implemented. In this context, our Dubai office purchased reusable bottles that we can refill to get rid of single-use plastic bottles. We are planning to continue developing such initiatives across all offices.

Sustainability Services

OCO Global has committed to implementing sustainability in its services portfolio. A first step will be the launch of a sustainability button on our website which ranks companies against their sustainability performance according to the UN Global Compact. This will set the starting point for a transformation towards an increased sustainability focus within our services.

Global Standards

We will also investigate the possibility of aligning our sustainability strategy with (or gaining accreditation for) internationally agreed standards (such as ISO 14001) to keep our organization on track with progress and accountable for our ambitions.

IV. 3. Human Rights

At OCO, we believe all our employees should be treated equally and should have equal access to opportunities, and we are fully committed to promoting gender equality and to empowering women within our company.

Responsible Business

One of the most significant pillars is to conduct our business ethically. This implies to expand the number of our projects that we target with social focus and continue to enhance our internal policies relating to ethics. Increased access to charitable giving programmes and volunteering opportunities will advance our contribution to our social environment further.

Equal Opportunities

At OCO, every new job offer advertises OCO as an “equal opportunity employer.” We are proud of having a diverse and multi-cultural workforce and having a recruitment policy based solely on merit. We aim to always promote a positive and harmonious working environment in which our employees are treated with dignity and respect.

The overarching objective is to ensure fairness and equality for our staff. In this context, we measure and implement policies to reduce the gender gap including at the senior level. Additionally, we will expand our existing equal opportunity policy. Employee training and awareness programs will ensure that equality is assertive.

We are also registered with the Equality Commission for the purposes of the Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order 1998. As such, we are obliged to monitor the community background and sex of our job applicants and workforce (this applies to Belfast based staff only). We are also obliged to review our employment policies and practices and the composition of our workforce every three years.

Women's Empowerment

We have launched the OCO Women's Network, comprising a steering committee of nine members with a representative from each office and the wider Women's Network Group. Every month, the committee organizes a topical webinar/presentation with inspiring women. As part of this network, we also host podcasts, knowledge sharing sessions and thought leadership posts. Our goal is to empower women within OCO, encourage them to extend and build a stronger network of women in business and aspire them to progress.

Initiatives with foodbanks

Our Belfast office has been running several fundraising events for charities over the past number of years through bake-offs, participating in marathons, etc. We have been wanting to create a more formal relationship with a charity which we can work with long term. The charity is called Foodstock – the Foodbank & Community Response Team and is located in West Belfast which is an area traditionally less well off. While speaking with the manager of the food bank, a real lack of people who could help deliver the food turned out to be the most significant need we were open to supporting. Over a space of three weeks, we then delivered over 150 food parcels.

Support for Ukraine

As an international company, our staff were concerned at the unfolding humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, and felt a responsibility to support the Ukrainian people and refugees in surrounding countries. To respond immediately, we initiated charity donations and company funding. In this context, we use our marketing channels to show solidarity and promote the work of the Habitat for Humanity charity to offer as much help as possible. In the longer term, we would like to offer physical support in terms of items and people-power. In addition, we would like to provide work and skills opportunities for refugees. As a first step, we brought a former colleague who has fled from Ukraine back to OCO Global.

Collaboration with Habitat for Humanity

Habitat for Humanity is a global charity with 70 offices around the world with a focus on providing aid and support to the most vulnerable in our society. With this partnership, OCO Global as a connected global community would like to contribute to offering support. First, heating in camps, basic skincare, emergency supplies and food & drinks will be provided. As an official partner of the Polish Government, solidarity housing in Warsaw will be offered to refugees. We will support with an immediate financial donation from the firm. In addition, we delivered a matched funding up to the value of £2.5k to help respond to emergency needs which is part of Habitat for Humanity's support strategy. In addition, we create awareness of Habitat for Humanity's charity and current work in Ukraine.

From a longer-term perspective, Habitat for Humanity is planning to respond to housing needs in host communities and provide affordable housing. Therefore, empty spaces for housing will be converted and permanent housing solutions in host countries for Ukrainian people will be created. To support this, OCO will continue our fundraising activities throughout the year and offer pro-bono support to Habitat for Humanity's local offices. Furthermore, we develop volunteering opportunities on the ground. In order to gain an appropriate reach and support throughout the world, we build awareness across our clients and partners.

Accreditations

We will also look into obtaining accreditation for international social responsibility and human rights standards such as ISO 26000. We have started discussions on this internally and will investigate it in the coming year.

IV. 4. Anti-Corruption

Finally, we are committed to fighting corruption and to adopting comprehensive anti-corruption policies and training. Our code of conduct will include anti-corruption measures which will help us prevent and combat corruption in our various sectors of activity. To show our commitment to the public, OCO will sign the “Call to Action Against Corruption,” which we hope will inspire other companies to implement similar measures. In addition, we will conduct a client survey on humanity to actively contribute to anti-corruption.



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COLLABORATE.

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