



United Nations Office in Belarus
Прадстаўніцтва ААН у Рэспубліцы Беларусь
Представительство ООН в Республике Беларусь

**Statement by Mr. Levan Bouadze,
Deputy UNDP Resident Representative,
at the conference
“UN Global Compact Initiative: Opportunities for Building Partnerships
of Government, Business Community and Civil Society”
on December 20, 2005.**

Distinguished participants:

The world we are living in today is constantly changing. As part of this change, governments, civil society organizations and businesses are learning how to work together more effectively. Growing numbers of companies are building on their market successes by integrating social and environmental concerns into core business operations, and by designing and implementing pro-poor and pro-development business models. Business leaders are recognizing their individual and collective interests in promoting the global development agenda across industries. Companies find their business operations cost less when they are conducted in peaceful, prosperous circumstances.

Business participation in the UN Global Compact provides such an example of the multidimensional role of the private sector as a partner in achieving international goals. At the Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum in 1999, Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General, challenged business leaders to support and implement a set of universally agreed 9 principles in the areas of human rights, labor and environment. Many corporations responded to this initiative by supporting the creation of the Global Compact in mid-2000. In 2004, its participants adopted a tenth principle aimed at tackling corruption.

The Global Compact's overall goal is to advance responsible corporate citizenship so that business can be part of the solution to the challenge of

globalization, working with other sectors to achieve a more sustainable and inclusive global economy. Participating companies are called on to mainstream the ten principles in their business activities around the world and to undertake actions in support of UN goals, such as the Millennium Development Goals.

The Global Compact has grown rapidly. Today it is the world's largest corporate citizenship initiative in terms of participant numbers and geographical reach. There are almost 3000 participating companies in 85 countries with national networks established in 50 countries.

What are the key benefits to business to participate? First, responsible business leads to positive public perception, brand protection and loyalty. The second reason is associated with higher competitiveness and better market positioning. It has also repeatedly shown that corporate responsible practices lead to cost reduction, increased productivity and reduced turnover. Committed companies have committed employees. And last, but not least, an increasing number of funds are now managed according to the principles of socially responsible investing. Thus, companies with strong CSR performance have increased access to capital that might not otherwise have been available.

The concept of the Global Compact is not yet very well known in Belarus, and an initial stimulus supported by a consistent strategy are needed to initiate a public dialogue around this concept and achieve its public acceptance. However initial steps have been undertaken to advocate the principles of corporate social responsibility. The core contribution has been made by the national initiative group titled "For Social Responsibility of Business" which brings together more than 50 enterprises, NGOs, representatives of government agencies and mass media. Several months ago, few companies approached UNDP with a proposal to set up a steering group for promoting the Global Compact and corporate social responsibility initiatives in Belarus. They actively participated in arranging this

conference. Taking this opportunity, I would like to express our immense gratitude to those companies - “UNITER Group”, Center of System Business Technologies “SATIO” and NGO “Economic research Education”. Particular recognition goes to the Ministry of Economy and leading business associations for their support of this conference as well.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that incredible complexity and acceleration of innovations in today’s globalized environment require new types of solidarity, partnerships and engagement to promote a sustainable and human development. The Global Compact is a framework to be able to help in this process. I look very much forward to having the GC launched in Belarus in the nearest future.

Thank you for your attention.