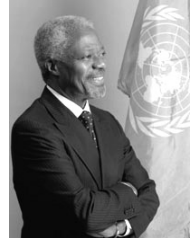


Foreword

Kofi Annan



When I first introduced the Global Compact at the World Economic Forum in Davos in January 1999 I warned that unless more serious consideration were given to social and environmental issues the global economy would grow ever more fragile. I called on business leaders to join a Global Compact as a vehicle for exercising enlightened self-interest: to embrace universal principles in the area of human rights, labour and the environment and to support United Nations goals to contribute to more stable and inclusive markets.

I am delighted to say that business has heeded the call to action. More than 1,200 companies from over 70 countries, as well as dozens of civil-society organisations and global trade unions, are learning how to work together through learning and dialogue. The Compact has inspired a range of new projects on the ground, and many corporations are addressing issues such as human rights for the first time. Business, labour and non-governmental organisations have discovered that co-operation is better than confrontation. And the United Nations itself has learned how to open up its doors and how to work with actors in the private sector.

Processes for change are never free of tension. Indeed, without tension, change may never happen. Nor can it happen without leadership. But let us also remember that behind every leader there are agents of change—individuals who believe in the mission and who have the courage and determination to make change happen, despite the tensions it might entail.

This book offers valuable examples, insights and lessons learned from the Global Compact experience. It also reveals how various expectations have characterised the growth of the initiative. For some, the Compact is primarily a value proposition and an ethical framework. For others, it is a framework for learning how to build alliances with other participants in support of common goals. This variety of perspectives represents a strength, not a weakness. It illustrates that values and principles, projects and initiatives are two sides of the same coin.

Above all, it shows us that the Global Compact is a constant work in progress. I hope this book will help stimulate the debate on how we can best move forward in the years ahead.

*Secretary-General
New York, February 2004*