



**Letter from Mary Robinson to corporate CEOs regarding public commitments to human rights  
(2009-10)**

Over the past ten years I have seen more and more business leaders make the connection between human rights and the success of their companies. Never before has the private sector had such influence and therefore so much opportunity to contribute to human rights.

As one business leader has said: “Not having a stand on human rights is not an option – it is necessary for risk management as well as reputational purposes.” It is also the right thing to do. Human rights are internationally-recognised standards. They provide a framework for companies to avoid harm and ensure they treat people fairly and respectfully, wherever they operate. And they cover a wide spectrum of issues, from workplace discrimination to health & safety; from access to water to security issues in conflict zones.

The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on business & human rights, Professor John Ruggie, has drawn attention to the responsibility of business to respect all human rights, stating that “companies need to adopt a human rights policy.”

Many companies are doing just that. Currently over 240 firms worldwide have adopted human rights policy statements. They recognise increasing expectations from investors, consumers and other stakeholders on issues such as how companies treat their workers and interact with local communities.

If your firm already has a human rights policy statement, I congratulate you. If not, I urge you to consider adopting one before June 2010 when I and others will give special recognition to companies that have made a specific commitment to human rights. This outreach will coincide with the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN Global Compact, an initiative with over 6000 participating companies that have committed to principles on human rights, labour, the environment and corruption.

Please notify Annabel Short ([short@business-humanrights.org](mailto:short@business-humanrights.org)) at the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre when your company adopts a policy statement or if it already has one, so that you can be added to the Centre’s growing list of companies committed to respecting international human rights standards.

Sincerely,

Mary Robinson  
President, Realizing Rights: The Ethical Globalization Initiative  
former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (1997-2002) and President of Ireland (1990-1997)

**Further information:**

Business & Human Rights Resource Centre: [List of companies with a policy statement & text of each statement](#)

UN Global Compact: [“Human Rights”](#)

**Realizing Rights – The Ethical Globalization Initiative**

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