

Text of letter from Mary Robinson to corporate CEOs regarding public commitments to human rights

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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 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 to ensure that they treat people fairly and respectfully, wherever they operate.

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. In his most recent report, he stated that “companies need to adopt a human rights policy.”

Many companies are doing just that. For example, over half the UK’s FTSE 100 firms 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.

This year, the 60th anniversary of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), provides an ideal opportunity for companies to express their support for human rights. If your firm already has a human rights policy statement, I congratulate you. If not, I urge you to consider adopting one before December when I and others will give special recognition to companies that have made a specific commitment to human rights.

Please notify Annabel Short (short@business-humanrights.org) at the [Business & Human Rights Resource Centre](#) when your company adopts a policy statement 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](#)

International Business Leaders Forum: [“Human Rights: It Is Your Business \[PDF\]”](#)

UN Global Compact: [“Help Mark the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights”](#)

Realizing Rights: The Ethical Globalization Initiative

271 Madison Avenue, Suite 1007, New York, NY 10016, USA. Tel: +1 212 895 8080 info@eginitiative.org

Business & Human Rights Resource Centre

1-3 Charlotte Street, 3rd floor, London, W1T 1RD, UK. Tel: +44 20 7636 7774 short@business-humanrights.org

See website for contact details in India, Hong Kong, South Africa, Ukraine, USA