

# UN Global Compact Policy on Communicating Progress

Updated 1 March 2013

## Overview

- The Communication on Progress (COP) is an annual disclosure through which a business informs stakeholders about its efforts to implement the principles of the United Nations (UN) Global Compact.
- As the central component of the Global Compact's integrity measures, the COP's main objective is to serve as a public vehicle for information on sustainability performance. At the same time, the COP can be an effective tool for stakeholder dialogue and the sharing of best and emerging practices.
- As a public document, the COP is an important demonstration of a company's commitment to transparency and accountability. Failure to submit a COP on the Global Compact website will result in a change of participant status and can eventually lead to the expulsion of a business from the initiative.
- The submission of a COP enhances stakeholder access to information about a participant's sustainability performance.
- The COP Policy applies only to business participants.

## COP Minimum Requirements

### 1. Business participants are required to communicate progress annually to stakeholders

A COP is a direct communication from business participants to their stakeholders. For this reason, participants are required to make their COP widely available. While the overall format is flexible, each COP must contain the following three elements:

- a. A **statement by the chief executive expressing continued support** for the Global Compact and renewing the participant's ongoing commitment to the initiative and its principles.
- b. A **description of practical actions** (i.e., disclosure of any relevant policies, procedures, activities) that the company has taken (or plans to undertake) to implement the Global Compact principles in each of the four issue areas (human rights, labour, environment, anti-corruption).

*Note: In cases where a COP does not address one or more of the four issue areas, it must provide an explanation ("report or explain").*

- c. A **measurement of outcomes** (i.e., degree to which targets/performance indicators were met, or other qualitative or quantitative measurements of results).

### 2. Business participants must submit their annual COP on the Global Compact website

Business participants must submit their first COP within one year from the date of joining the Global Compact. All subsequent COPs are due within one year following the previous submission.

- a. Business participants are required to submit an electronic version of their COP, including a PDF file and, if available, a link (URL) to the web page that contains their COP – to the Global Compact COP database ([www.unglobalcompact.org/admin](http://www.unglobalcompact.org/admin)).
- b. Participants must complete a brief self-assessment that summarizes the content of the COP.

## Differentiation

COPs will be classified as one of the following based on the self-assessment:

1. **GC Active:** The COP meets the requirements listed in section 1 of the COP Minimum Requirements above.
2. **GC Advanced:** The COP meets all minimum requirements and information is provided in the self-assessment on additional advanced criteria in the following areas:
  - Implementing the Ten Principles into Strategies & Operations
  - Taking Action in Support of Broader UN Goals and Issues
  - Corporate Sustainability Governance and Leadership

A criterion is met when a company communicates its implementation or planned implementation of best practices suggested under each criterion, as relevant.

Over time, participants are encouraged to implement all relevant best practices. In cases where a COP does not address a given criterion, the reason(s) for omission should be thoroughly explained in the COP (e.g. criterion is deemed immaterial to the business, legal prohibitions, privacy considerations, competitive advantage).

The best practices identified for each criterion are not intended to serve as a comprehensive list and therefore companies may choose to implement additional established or emerging best practices and indicate this in their COP self-assessment.

[View Advanced Criteria.](#)

## Consequences of Failure to Communicate Progress

### Learner Grace Period

- A business participant that submits a COP which does not meet the minimum requirements (see **Section 1 of the COP Requirements** above) will be given a **one-time, 12-month “Learner” grace period** to submit a new COP that meets all requirements. During that time, through the Learner platform, participants will receive support and assistance from the Global Compact Office and their Local Network, as applicable.

Note: This rule also applies to participants that are non-communicating at the time of their COP submission.

### Non-communicating status

- A business participant will be designated as “**non-communicating**” on the Global Compact website if it fails to submit a COP within the required deadlines (see **Section 2.a. of the COP Requirements** above).
- If a participant fails to submit a COP that meets all minimum requirements (see **Section 1 of the COP Minimum Requirements** above) within the Learner grace period, it will become **non-communicating** immediately following the end of the grace period.
- A business participant that has already benefited from the Learner grace period will become **non-communicating** if it fails again to submit a COP that meets all COP minimum requirements.

### Expulsion from the Global Compact

- If a **non-communicating** participant fails to submit a COP that meets all COP requirements within a year of becoming non-communicating, it will be **expelled from the Global Compact**. The names of expelled participants are listed on the Global Compact website.
- All organizations that have been expelled must reapply if they wish to rejoin the initiative.

## **Format and Language**

- To make the COP widely available to internal and external stakeholders and avoid duplication of efforts, a COP should be fully integrated in the participant’s main medium of stakeholder communications, including (but not limited to) a corporate responsibility or sustainability report and/or an integrated financial and sustainability report.
- In the event that a business participant does not publish formal reports, a COP can be created as a stand-alone document. A basic template is available to assist participants in the creation of such a document.
- COPs are welcome in any language and should be written in the predominant stakeholder language(s).

## **Modification of COP Deadlines**

- *Adjustment Request.* Business participants can adjust their COP submission deadlines to their reporting cycles by submitting an adjustment request to the Global Compact website, indicating the timing of the participant’s reporting cycle. Such a request will result in a **one-time** deadline deferral of up to 11 months.
- *Grace Period.* In case of a foreseeable delay in COP submission, business participants may request a grace period of 90 days from the COP deadline by submitting a grace request on the UN Global Compact website, providing a reasonable explanation for the delay and stating the date by which the COP will be submitted. Any grace period granted will reset the COP deadline (e.g., if the original COP deadline is 1 January 2014 and the grace period ends 1 April 2014, then the next COP deadline will be 1 April 2015).