

CALL FOR ACTION:

Management education, research and engagement for advancing the Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations General Assembly is in the process of formulating and articulating a new global framework and goals for sustainable development to replace the Millennium Development Goals, when they expire at the end of 2015. The decision to develop such Sustainable Development Goals was one of the key agreements reached at the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012. The Goals are likely to focus on issues including prosperity and equity, education, women's empowerment and gender equality, health, food and agriculture, water and sanitation, energy and climate, peace and stability, infrastructure and technology, and good governance and human rights.

Higher education institutions (HEIs), including business and management schools, are emerging as a core stakeholder in discussions on the required architecture for achieving the proposed Sustainable Development Goals.

- In his July 2013 report to member states, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon cited the need for partnerships, including academia, to achieve the Goals,¹ and in July 2014, he called on PRME specifically to play an active role.²
- In September 2013 in the document '*Architects of a Better World: Building the Post-2015 Business Engagement Architecture*,' business leaders cited reforming management and leadership education as one of the core building blocks to maximise the business contribution to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, and specifically called on management schools and the PRME community to work to reform curricula to provide current and future leaders with the necessary mindsets, skills and knowledge to lead organisations to more sustainable outcomes.³

As an essential part of the system, there is the need for management-related academic institutions and individuals to work together collaboratively to establish how best to respond to these calls and articulate a roadmap for how the management education and research community as a whole can best contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. There are clear roles for which this community is uniquely placed to play:

- Through education, by developing globally responsible leaders with the necessary capabilities and commitment,
- Through research and thought leadership, enabling business organizations to serve the common good, and
- Through engaging in the transformation of business and the society.⁴

PRME, as the leading network for responsible management education, in partnership with the Globally Responsible Leadership Initiative (GRLI), the Academy of Business in Society (ABIS), and other members of the PRME Steering Committee as well as affiliated groups, is well placed to develop a view to what the tangible commitments are required of HEIs to bring this roadmap to life and how to mobilize this work in collaboration with the United Nations and relevant stakeholders, such as the UN Global Compact and its business participants.

¹ United Nations (2013) *A Life of Dignity for All: accelerating progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and advancing the United Nations Development agenda beyond 2015. Report of the Secretary General*. United Nations, New York.

http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/68/202

² <http://www.unprme.org/news/index.php?newsid=307#.VDWmcfldVio>

³ UN Global Compact (2013) *Architects of a Better World: Building the Post-2015 Business Engagement Architecture*. UN Global Compact, New York. http://www.unglobalcompact.org/docs/about_the_gc/Architecture.pdf

⁴ 50+20 Agenda – Management Education for the World. http://50plus20.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/5020_AGENDA_PRINT_a4_English.pdf

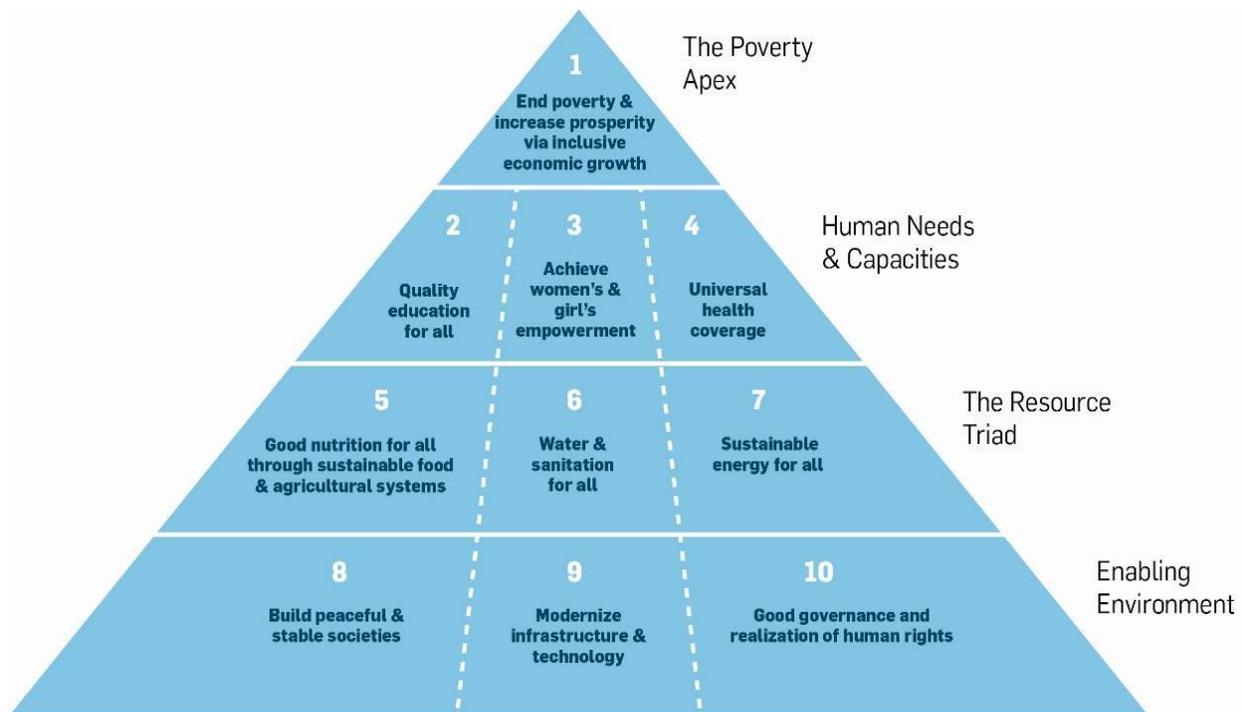
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Accordingly, participants of the Third Global Forum for Business as an Agent of World Benefit call upon the management education community, and specifically the signatories of the Principles of Responsible Management Education, to:

- Align their education, research, and engagement agendas with key global development issues as being articulated in the UN's new Sustainable Development Goals framework;
- Embed new content and transformative learning approaches, including experiential learning, throughout the curriculum in order to develop the competencies necessary for business to tackle our major sustainable development goals;
- Engage in new forms of action research around the major sustainable development issues we face and create new solutions to help business play a more effective role in multiple local contexts;
- Play an active role as public opinion leaders, advisors, solution providers and facilitators to help business become an effective agent of sustainable development;
- Act as impartial facilitators for and between business, government, and civil society.

This statement was affirmed by participants at the 2014 Business as an Agent of World Benefit workshop on Management Education and Action for Advancing Sustainable Development in Cleveland, Ohio, USA, on 15 October 2014.



Proposal for Sustainable Development Goals⁵

⁵ Suggestion by companies of the GC LEAD group, see *Architects of a Better World: Building the Post-2015 Business Engagement Architecture* (footnote 2) for reference. This set of issues was included as part of UN Global Compact's Post-2015 Development Agenda submission to the United Nations Secretary-General in June 2013.