



Dr. Manuel Escudero, Head, PRME Secretariat  
5 December 2008

Dear colleagues, welcome to the Global Forum for Responsible Management Education. And welcome to the United Nations.

With this Forum we are celebrating the first year of existence of the Principles for Responsible Management Education.

This is a historic opportunity on two grounds:

Historic opportunity, first because this is the first time ever that the UN houses an academic event of these proportions.

With 270 participants from 45 countries around the world

Out of which 55 Deans, 44 Directors and 20 Presidents, Vice-Provosts, Chancellors of academic institutions.

Welcome to all of them, and thanks for coming from all corners of the world to embark with us in this two-day experience.

Also, welcome to the 100 plus professors who are attending this event: we well know that you are the ones pressing and making possible the updating of management institutions with sustainability and social responsibility values.

Finally, welcome to the 250 students who are going to attend our plenary sessions during these two days: the support by Deans and Professors from the NY region and beyond has been wonderful and we are grateful and very glad of establishing these new links with all of them.

Historic opportunity, in the second place, because we are celebrating this event in the midst of a extraordinary economic situation, truly the most serious economic downturn in our lifetimes.

I would like to advance that if we, as educators, have learnt something from this crisis is that it has reinforced our view that business schools should educate future leaders on the long-term value creation of business.

The long-term viability and success of business will depend on its capacity to manage environmental, social and governance risks, that companies and on higher levels of transparency and accountability.

And this is, precisely what we are trying to place at the core of management education through the implementation of PRME.

In this sense, we could say that, precisely in these hard times, those, like you, trying to base business education on sustainability and corporate responsibility are, precisely, the forerunners of what all business schools in the world will be doing in the next decades.

Or in other words, in these troubled times, to base management education on sustainability and corporate citizenship core values is a competitive advantage that is probing to be very real and very pressing, precisely as a result of the crisis we are witnessing now.

I would like to touch upon our expectations at the PRME Secretariat concerning this Forum:

First, we expect that this Forum will be the opportunity to design the roadmap of the future development of PRME. And this will be done not by us, but by you: in this sense we have designed the Forum with



interactive plenary sessions, and breakout sessions where you are going to express your views concerning the future of the initiative.

Second, we expect that here we will have the opportunity of looking together at the Global Agenda, and, as business schools, we will be able to establish our willingness to give our own contribution to the solution of the pressing problems of that global agenda.

Third, we expect to establish in this Forum the mechanisms for recognition of your efforts in progressing along the PRME: one important output of this Forum should be a clear policy of public disclosure of the progress we make in each business school concerning the adaptation of our curriculum to the new horizon of business sustainability.

And here I would like to call your attention to one of the papers you have in your welcome package: it is called A CALL FOR PRME INITIATIVES.

We would like to strongly encourage you to read this Call carefully and, after reading it, consider the possibility of undertaking for next year an initiative (the creation of a Working Group, the organization of a Forum or Conference, or of a side event in other non-PRME Conferences).

At this moment, when we are reaching 200 participants as signatories of PRME. We are still small in number and, therefore, institutions which have adopted the Principles have a great opportunity to increase their public recognition and visibility by leading, organizing and sponsoring public activities around the Principles.

Two friends of the Secretariat, will be around to receive your comments: Sandra Waddock and Andreas Rasche. If you decide on a specific proposal, please contact Sandra Waddock or Andreas Rasche during these two days at the Forum and, optionally, your initiative will be highlighted in the Plenary Session "Building the PRME Community," tomorrow at 13:30.

So, to finish: welcome and we sincerely hope that tomorrow, when we conclude our meeting, we all will have the same feeling: that we have well spent two days discussing with our peers, as George Orwell would say, the shape of things to come, in the field of business education, and that we are the real actors in that story, not just with our words, but with our individual and collective actions.

As you know the PRME initiative is not managed by the UN Global Compact on its own. Rather, it is a broad alliance with some important international associations. I have with me some of the most important co-conveners of the initiative.

Let me introduce them to you Mr. John Fernandes, President and CEO of the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, AACSB International, Mr. Ray Van Schaik, Honorary President of the European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD), Mr. David Wilson, President and CEO of the Graduate Management Admission Council (GMAC) and Miss Judy Samuelson, Director of the Aspen Institute Business and Society Program.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the other co-conveners of the initiative, who make this initiative possible: The European Academy of Business in Society (EABIS), the Globally Responsible Leadership Initiative (GRLI) and NetImpact (the business schools students international organization).

I would also would like to welcome the presence of media professionals among us. Thanks for your interest in our initiative, and feel free to participate in all the sessions of this event.

Finally I would like to thank our sponsor, Media Consulta, a global communications group, whose support and expertise in the organization of public events has been crucial for us. And our supporting institution, The Levin Institute where we will have our official Reception today.

Thank you