

Address to Global Compact Launch
Zafar Shaheed
Karachi
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Mr. Soomro, Honourable Chairman of our National Senate
Mr. Tabani , President of the Employers' Federation of Pakistan
Mr. Brent Wilton, Deputy Secretary General of the IOE
Mr. Donglin Li, Director ILO, Pakistan
Ladies and gentlemen – including some trade union leaders in the room – CEOs,
the partners of the Global Compact and the ILO in Pakistan

Asalaam-aleikum

Today, we will be hearing a great deal about the Global Compact, the initiative launched by the UN Secretary General in 1999 – initially in Davos at the World Economic Forum where world business assembles every year. I would like, in these brief remarks to focus on the principles and learning encompassed by this Compact.

There are ten principles, relating to human rights, labour rights and to the environment. While the ILO considers all ten principles equally important, we may give particular attention to the four principles relating to labour, adopted by the Global Compact from the ILO, in particular from its 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

These principles and rights are freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, freedom from forced labour, from child labour and from discrimination.

These are key principles, found in different national and international documents. I should like to cite an eminent basic document:

- Every citizen should have the right to form associations or unions.
- All forms of forced labour and traffic in human beings are prohibited.
- No child [below the age of 14] shall be engaged in any factory or mine or any other hazardous employment.
- All citizens are equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection. There shall be no discrimination.

These are the labour principles of the Global Compact, these are the principles of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. I could have quoted those documents; but I chose rather to cite the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (Articles 17, 11 and 25). I feel this to be more appropriate on this national occasion, at a national launch of an international compact – graced by the Chairman of the Senate, an eminent body charged with applying the Constitution. I think it also illustrates how these principles are nationally embedded in Pakistan – so that adhering to them through a global compact is no more than giving fuller effect to what are national principles and rights.

These four principles work together, reinforcing each other. They work in turn with the other principles of the Global Compact, to produce a conducive environment for business, free of human rights abuse, labour rights abuse environmental abuse. Among these principles, perhaps the jewel in the crown is the one relating to freedom of association. The freedom to associate is closely linked to freedom of assembly and of speech, freedom of press and of the judiciary – without these freedoms, there can be no democracy, no good governance. And the employers of Pakistan, the enterprising women and men of business Pakistan, have an important task in building democracy and sound governance from the bottom-up, from the way that the enterprise is run, through applying the principles of the Global Compact – along with all the other principles of good business that you all know well.

This brings me to the other element in the Global Compact that I find of interest to us, that of learning. Learning focuses on how business can respect universal values with emphasis on innovative and creative solutions. The Global Compact is made up of enterprises that learn from each other's good practice. This is a good opportunity for Pakistani business to show its talent, its ability, its achievements, on a world platform that is the Global Compact. The members of the compact are called upon to show-case their good practice on the UN Global Compact Website.

The learning process is thus useful internationally for our business people. I think it is also useful nationally. As an international official, seeking good business practice from which to learn, I have often been struck by the fact that there is not enough good case-material on enterprise performance from developing countries. We can certainly learn from the good practice of Sweden and of Japan. But how much more valuable if we can have solid cases produced of good enterprise practice in selected economic sectors in Pakistan, and learn from them in giving effect to the Compact principles. Generating more case-

material of this nature should not be difficult, because we have good institutions of business administration here in Karachi and in Lahore. We have the EFP, and other organizations, that can bring enterprises together with researchers, to report on the effect given to the principles of the Compact. In this way, the research and teaching of our business schools will be improved, better grounded in enterprise reality, thereby preparing managers better trained to lead our businesses in meeting the considerable challenges of today.

It is most fitting that today we launch the Global Compact in Karachi – the industrial, entrepreneurial, vibrant hub of this nation. This is the center to which business gravitated in 1947 and thereafter, Muslim traders who became industrial entrepreneurs, created the industrial base of the country, and who are now wrestling with the challenges of globalization.

May I therefore end with a quotation from Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the Father of the Nation, addressing the Karachi Chamber of Commerce a year after the birth of the nation? This indicates an early recognition of the importance of business in Pakistan, and its social responsibility. [Mr. Jinnah used the term trader to refer to all businessmen – it was only subsequently that many traders would be transformed into industrial entrepreneurs.]

He said:

“Commerce and trade are the very life blood of the nation. I can no more visualize a Pakistan without traders than I can without cultivators... I have no doubt that in Pakistan traders and merchants ... in building up their own fortune, will not forget their social responsibility for a fair and square deal to one and all, big and small.”