



# HUMAN RIGHTS AT SEA

UN Global Compact  
Communication on Engagement  
April 2017



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**Communication on Engagement: Statement for Continued Support for the UN Global Compact**

12 April 2017

Dear Secretary General,

I am writing to confirm the continued support of Human Rights at Sea for the UN Global Compact and the ten Principles.

Since joining the UN Global Compact in May 2015 as a UK-based not-for-profit and independent maritime human rights non-governmental organisation established in April 2014, Human Rights at Sea has continuously promoted the Global Compact to its Supporting Entities and partners through its on-line platforms and in all appropriate investigative and guidance documentation. This included its profiling of the Global Compact membership at the inaugural International Maritime Human Rights conference held in London in September 2016.

As an independent charity, Human Rights at Sea is unique in sector for including the advancement of the 2011 UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights within its Constitution specifically in the maritime environment reflecting the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a specific charitable objective. We believe that this is essential to support the Global Compact's objectives and the Principles.

This first Communication on Engagement (COE) highlights the areas of our collaborative work, initiatives, delivery and profiling of the Global Compact with our official Supporting Entities and partners specifically in relation to the first two Principles covering Human Rights, while noting the four Principles covering labour rights and also being cognisant of the tenth Principle concerning our international work and the avoidance of corruption in all its forms.

On behalf of the Chair and Board of Trustees it is my pleasure to publicly express our continued support for the UN Global Compact initiative as a key tool in bringing about consistent systems and a principled approach to undertaking lawful and credible business throughout the maritime value and supply chains.

Yours Sincerely,

David Hammond  
CEO, Human Rights at Sea

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## About Human Rights at Sea

Before September 2013 there was no international co-ordinated on-line investigation, education and advocacy platform explicitly dealing with the wide and varying topics that comprise the subject matter of 'human rights at sea' in all of its guises across the global shipping, fisheries, and related business sectors, as well as investigating maritime humanitarian crisis and indigenous coastal communities suffering from and subject to human rights abuses at sea.

Today, the UK-based not-for-profit charitable organisation Human Rights at Sea, established in April 2014, is making every effort at the very least to profile as many forms of human rights abuse occurring in the maritime environment as possible and at best to investigate, educate and deliver initiatives which may have lasting effect in addressing effective remedy and impunity. This includes accountability by businesses operating in the maritime supply and value chains, backed by a collaborative approach through engagement with 'Supporting Entities' and formal industry partnerships.

It is recognised that such scale and scope of work is a huge undertaking for a small organisation, but we believe through our contributions over the last three years that we are starting to deliver tangible change in civil society, government and business environments through increased awareness of abuses at sea.

**Our Mission** is to explicitly raise awareness, implementation and accountability of human rights provisions throughout the maritime environment, especially where they are currently absent, ignored or being abused.

**Our Vision** is to become a leading independent maritime human rights platform.

**Our Founding Principle** is that 'human rights apply at sea as equally as they do on land'.

**Our Core values** are Transparency, Clarity and Accountability.

## Human Rights at Sea and the UN Global Compact

The charity joined the Global Compact in May 2015 as part of its continued transparent drive to build credibility in terms of governance for an emerging human rights' organisation operating in the maritime space.

The charity believes in complimentary soft-law and soft-instrument approaches to helping to tackling human rights abuses and highlighting the impunity from accountability that can surround unlawful business practices. As such, the charity believes that overt support and international profiling of the UN Global Compact Principles is a key tool in initiating positive institutional and generational change.

We believe that support and respect for internationally proclaimed human rights is a 'must have' for any credible business acting within the maritime supply and value

chains. The charity therefore intends to continue to advocate this view through our online platforms, educational tools, investigations and international advocacy.

## Highlighting Human Rights abuses in maritime business activities

The charity continuously profiles factual case studies and voluntary guidance publications in support of highlighting human rights abuses that occur in the maritime environment and providing, where able, support for those who have suffered or been affected by such abuse. The volume of such work is significant and it is on-going on a daily basis; the majority of cases originating from within business supply chains.

As previously highlighted, the charity is concentrating on promoting good business efficacy and voluntary alignment with the 2011 UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs). While this guidance is an internationally recognised and weighted soft-law instrument, in the absence of explicit hard law and a related Convention for enforcing business and human rights, we believe that this is the best international guidance and platform currently available.

Of note, in 2016 the charity produced a publication reviewing the UNGP's in the maritime environment for the first time looking across all the applicable industries<sup>1</sup>.

## Our Communication and Engagement

While being a small organisation, the charity takes every effort to communicate its position on membership of the Global Compact. This includes, at every opportunity, in terms of oral and written advocacy, demonstrating alignment with the applicable principles and the use of the officially supplied logo on our main publications and annual reports. It is backed up by dissemination through social media channels.

## Our Initiatives

In terms of supporting the first two Principles related to human rights, the raison d'être of our organisation is to encourage engagement within the entire maritime community for overt support and application of the protection and application of effective remedies towards internationally recognised human rights based on the Universal Declaration 1948.

As such, our initiatives are focused at a wide range of activities within the maritime environment and within its supply and value chains. These include, but are not limited to:

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<sup>1</sup> An introduction & commentary to the 2011 UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (2016)



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- Innovative and informative guidance publications including the first 'Code of Conduct for Search and Rescue Operations undertaken by civil society NGOs in the Mediterranean' (Mar 17).
- Awareness and profiling human rights abuse case studies around the globe.
- Delivery of the first international Maritime Human Rights Conference including maritime Corporate Social Responsibility and business and human rights initiatives from around the globe.
- Delivery of the first independent on-line database for missing seafarers and fishermen; the 'Missing Seafarers and Fishers Reporting Programme'.
- Delivery of a maritime human rights' Legal Research Programme aligned to NATO and academic research institutions and human rights clinics.
- Alignment and use of the International Bar Association's eyeWitness App for Atrocities at sea.
- International projects including Children's Rights at Sea with the Romeo Dallaire Foundation, an EU funded publication for the Deprivation of Liberty at Sea, incorporation of lawful Rules for the Use of Force at sea and frontline engagement with migrant rescue in the Mediterranean.
- Participation in the production by the British Standards institute for PAS 1550 concerning lawful supply chain activity on exercising corporate diligence against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing.



HUMAN RIGHTS AT SEA  
INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME



MISSING SEAFARERS & FISHERS  
REPORTING PROGRAMME



HUMAN RIGHTS AT SEA  
LEGAL RESEARCH PROGRAMME



Figures 1 & 2: Inaugural IMHR Conference 2016 with CEO Business & Human Rights Resource Centre

## Our work with Anti-Bribery Initiatives

All our international engagement is focused with a view to undertaking lawful and ethical activities that protect our work, our reputation, our Intellectual Property and the same for our chosen Supporting Entities and partners.

At all times we undertake all reasonable due diligence in order to identify any aspect of a partner's or Supporting Entities business and/or not-for-profit activities, including



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identifying obvious conflicts of interest or nepotism at Trustee or Board level which may lead to less than transparent activity. Those organisations identified as being in conflict with our core values are not engaged with.

Further, we have engaged with independent organisations such as the US anti-bribery and corruption organisation, TRACE International, as part of our governance policy to demonstrate our commitment to setting a standard for transparent and lawful activities alongside our Supporting Entities, partners and third parties.

### Influencing Partners

At all times, Human Rights at Sea seeks to positively influence our Supporting Entities and partners variously engaged in our charitable work, to encourage them to join the Global Compact, or at the very least to follow some or all of the ten Principles from a voluntary perspective. We also look for partnerships with organisations that are established members of the UN Global Compact.

Further, and when funded, the charity runs its own Internship Programme developing the wider experience of young people and young professionals in an NGO environment that advocates the position and ethics of lawful and transparent business activity. The aim is to shape the interns' attitudes and perceptions towards NGO activities, and to provide them with new life experiences so that they may use balanced consideration and judgement in their future professional work and lives.

### Conclusion

This first Communication on Engagement has been a very useful exercise in assessing and identifying current work strands that Human Rights at Sea is following and which embeds the concept and intent of the UN Global Compact in terms of its ten principles and specifically, the first two principles which expressly apply to the charity's work in the maritime environment.

The charity fully supports the UN Global Compact initiative and other such soft-law initiatives and instruments that promote an environment which helps to reduce abuse at sea towards individuals working in the global maritime supply and value chains, as well as those subject to deprivations resulting from global humanitarian crisis.

### Contact

For further information:

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# Independent research, investigation and advocacy for maritime human rights

**FACT** Abuses occur at sea

**FACT** Abuses occur out of sight  
and out of mind

**FACT** We are building international  
advocacy platforms to  
challenge these abuses



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