



# Corporate Social Responsibility:

International Strategic Framework

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# Corporate Social Responsibility: International Strategic Framework

The Government has an ambitious vision for Corporate Social Responsibility: to see UK businesses taking account of their economic, social and environmental impacts, and acting to address the key sustainable development challenges based on their core competences wherever they operate – locally, regionally and internationally.

Business has a critical role in delivery of many of the government's international objectives and commitments such as the **Millennium Development Goals** and others made or confirmed at the **World Summit on Sustainable Development** in 2002.

**This framework sets out the overall objectives, priorities, and main lines of the UK Government's approach** towards the important international dimension of CSR. Its aims are to:

- help ensure coherence and complementarity in the contributions across Government departments;
- signal to UK business and other stakeholders the Government's ambitions; and
- contribute to the policy debate and development of more effective action at the international level.

The framework should be read in the wider context of related work and policy debates across Government and other public policy fora aimed at supporting the development of CSR at international level. It is not the purpose of the framework to set out our detailed approach to the various individual aspects of the CSR agenda or to offer guidance to business on its approach – see *further information* on page 4.

The framework will be subject to periodic review in the light of progress and the evolving CSR debate.

# UK Objective for CSR internationally

The UK government will foster an enabling environment for responsible business practice to maximise the positive contribution that business can make to the UK's objectives on international sustainable development – including human rights, trade and investment, poverty eradication, environmental protection and corruption – whilst at the same time effectively tackling adverse impacts.

## It will do so by:

- Focussing on practical measures that make a difference on the ground
- Providing incentives and technical assistance;
- Working in partnership with business, its stakeholders and other governments;
- Seeking to mainstream CSR throughout the UK public sector and within individual businesses.

## How will we do it?

### By:

- increasing **awareness** among UK companies of the need to identify, and take action to address all of the impacts, positive and negative, of their operations across the world
- turning awareness into action by encouraging continuing development and application of **best practice** in CSR
- encouraging and facilitating best practice through processes and activities that foster the overall objective with a main focus on **improving existing processes**.



## Awareness

### We will encourage:

- A focus on specific measurable deliverables from business CSR performance.
- Increased and improved engagement and understanding of the “business case” for CSR by the mainstream financial sector.
- Exchange of information and experience internationally on initiatives to stimulate and facilitate improvement in CSR performance, including on the Government role in setting a policy and institutional framework, in particular intelligent regulation and fiscal arrangements, that ensures adherence to minimum norms and standards, and also fosters continuous improvement beyond these.

## Best practice

### We will encourage:

- An approach that takes compliance by companies with all relevant legal requirements wherever they operate as the base level of performance and CSR as action by companies that goes beyond compliance, integrating socially responsible behaviour, including ethical values, in their core values, in recognition of the sound business/economic/competitiveness benefits in doing so.
- Adherence by companies to internationally agreed standards, norms and guidelines such as the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises.
- Active engagement by business with host governments on action to identify and tackle obstacles to compliance with national legal requirements.
- Further development and diffusion of best practice, including in building skills and capacities, and tackling obstacles to its implementation.

- Carefully targeted approaches that add value, allowing and stimulating creativity and innovation by business in improving performance rather than broad “one size fits all” approaches
- Partnerships and active engagement between business and all stakeholders: civil society organisations, customers and suppliers, employees and their representatives, international organisations, national and local government – as well as shareholders.
- Transparency and effective information flows.

## Processes

### We will encourage:

- Careful assessment of possible governmental or intergovernmental interventions to ensure they are justified, well-designed, focused on a clearly identified issue or objective, effectively applied and have regard to better regulation principles
- A focus on improving the workings and synergies between existing activities and the core competencies of relevant international organisations rather than on creating new processes or institutions unless there is clear case that it will add value.
- Improved coherence between and streamlining of codes of conduct and guidelines.

### This will be done:

- **In the UK** by seeking to mainstream CSR understanding in relevant work of all departments, by ensuring that international considerations are adequately reflected in our overall CSR policies and activities and by using networks of UK contacts in companies, NGOs and other organisations to further our CSR objectives.
- **Multilaterally:** through the CSR activities of international organisations (including the UN Global Compact, the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, and the work of the ILO and OHCHR); as well as collaboration with EU partners; through other international initiatives aimed at promoting CSR; and by helping to integrate CSR considerations and action into the outcomes of other international fora, such as G8, the Doha Development Agenda and the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development in taking forward the WSSD Plan of Implementation, including delivery of the Millennium Development Goals.
- **Overseas,** with the support of the FCO's network of Posts and in the work of departments such as DTI, DFID, DEFRA and UKTI, to promote CSR principles to governments, companies and civil society and raise awareness of the role they can play in promoting sustainable development, and share UK experience of and expertise on CSR.

### Further information

The Government website – [www.csr.gov.uk](http://www.csr.gov.uk) – gives an overview of the Government interest in CSR with examples of how we are supporting the agenda both in the UK and internationally.

### Priority actions

- Establish a time limited expert advisory group to support implementation of the framework including how we can measure:
  - The business impacts on sustainable development objectives
  - The impact of HMG's approach
- Use UK Presidency of EU and G8 to drive the agenda
- Develop methodology for assessing:
  - the impact of the international CSR initiatives that the government supports;
  - progress towards delivering the government's overall objectives for international CSR.
  - the impact of the UK government's international CSR policies;
- Develop strategies for encouraging all relevant international and inter-governmental institutions to be actively engaged, applying their strengths and competences and avoiding duplication
- Examine options for incentivising businesses to contribute to international and developing country objectives for sustainable development and encouraging adherence to international guidelines for CSR, drawing on examples from other countries;
- Proactively support the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights' consultation process on the "Norms on the responsibilities of transnational corporations and related business enterprises with regard to human rights."
- Supporting CSR overseas through existing technical cooperation and poverty reduction programmes where it can contribute to the objectives of those programmes (eg by reducing corruption or improving supply chains).



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