



## Opening Address to the Sydney Peace Foundation's Annual Forum / September 21<sup>st</sup> 2012 / the Customs House, Sydney, Australia

Matthew Tukaki, Australian Representative, United Nations Global Compact

### **Speech background:**

This speech copy is embargoed until 8am on the morning of the 21<sup>st</sup> of September 2012. The speech is (was) delivered on the occasion of the 2012 United Nations International Day of Peace whereby the theme was "Sustainable Peace for a Sustainable Future". Mr Tukaki provided the opening address at the annual Sydney Peace Foundation Forum held at Custom House in Sydney, Australia. The audience included business, government, community and education leaders.

Matthew Tukaki is the Australian Representative to the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) with the UNGC being the world's largest corporate citizenship initiative. Mr Tukaki is also the current CEO and Executive Chairman of the Sustain Group in Australia, Director of the Board of the Australian Indigenous Chamber of Commerce, Suicide Prevention Australian and the Advisory Board of Deakin Universities Centre for Sustainable and Responsible Organisations. Matthew is previously the Regional Head of Drake, one of the world's oldest and most respected employment and human resources companies. He is also a former Chairman of the Government Policy Advisory Panel, the CIO Council and the Skills for Schools Program. For information or commentary about this speech please contact [media@sustainingroup.net](mailto:media@sustainingroup.net) or call Matthew Tukaki directly on 0415 093 137 in Australia or from overseas on +61 415 093 137.

### **Speech begins: (14 minutes and 10 seconds in length)**

Good morning ladies and gentlemen and thank you so much for that warm introduction. I'd like to begin by acknowledging the Indigenous owners of this land on which we meet today and pay my deepest respects to the ancestors and elders both past and present. It is indeed a privilege being here with all of you this morning and I'd like to acknowledge the words of both my colleague, Chris Woodthorpe and of course the message of peace and social justice he has conveyed on behalf of the Secretary General on this International Day of Peace. In the words of the Secretary General "peace is one of humanity's most precious needs. It is also the United Nations highest calling.

On the cusp of the new millennium former Secretary General Kofi Annan took a message to the Davos World Economic Forum where he called on business and industry to embrace, support and enact a set of core values in the areas of human rights, labour standards and environmental practices. It was a call to arms by the Secretary General and recognition that business should and must play a role in a world that is increasingly fragile, in various states of social and economic development, states of conflict of war, differences of opinion and intolerance. The United Nations Global Compact was born. Today, under our chief architect, Georg Kell, we have grown to more than 8,500 signatories across 135 countries that make up our planet's largest corporations, industry groups, union movements, micro enterprises and financial institutions. By 2020 we aim to have more than 20,000 businesses of all sizes and from all geographies involved. It is our planet's single



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largest corporate citizenship initiative. At our heart sit four fundamental and universal Principles whereby business must communicate their progress on each annually – Human Rights, Anti-Corruption, the Environment and Labour.

25 years ago former Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Brundtland, who later became the Director General of the World Health Organisation, presided over the World Commission on Environment and Development. In 1987 a report, widely known as the Brundtland Report was published and entitled “Our Common Future”. The Commission was one of the key driving factors for the establishment of the first Earth Summit in 1992 and what is known as Agenda 21. The first Earth Summit was held in Rio de Janeiro and for the first time the linkages between social, economic and environmental development were drawn. In many ways you cannot alleviate poverty unless you are also able to grow an economy and create jobs, you cannot address issues dealing with the environment and social justice unless you first empower the people not to be subservient but to be independent and in order to achieve a sustainable future you must establish the necessary governance structures to support people and an economy as they move from poverty to empowerment. In many ways you cannot achieve a lasting peace unless we properly and consistently address the fundamental societal issues that lie at the very core of many conflicts around the world. In June this year, 25 years later and again in Rio, the world again came together with a focus on sustainable development. This time the linkages between social, economic and environmental development were much clearer. In a report entitled “Resilient People, Resilient Planet” co-authors Jacob Zuma and Tarja Halonen made it clear that in order to achieve a sustainable world, a future we all want that any recommendation and flow on from Rio+20 would require commitment and action from citizens across all sectors of society, from Heads of State and Government and local mayors to business executives, scientists, religious leaders, civil society activists and not least, the leaders of the next generation, today’s youth. In a world post the global financial crisis, where a lot of work needs to be done to rebuild the economies of nations states and regions there was a general view that Rio+20 was not a success. I can tell you that is far from the truth. One of the key differences between the first Earth Summit in 1992 and Rio+20 in June of this year is the increasing role business and industry can and must play when it comes to some of the biggest challenges our planet faces, whether it is climate change, food and water security, population, education, health, poverty alleviation and the empowerment and independence of women, girls and indigenous people. As an equal partner at the table business and industry have, over these last 25 years, accepted more of the responsibility and accountability that participation brings. It used to be the case that civil society organisations and non-government operators were the main balancing actors in the debate and discussion. No more, another core outcome of Rio+20 was that fundamental and specific recognition that each of us play an important and equal role as symbiotic links in a chain just as there are links between the three pillars of social, economic and environmental development. Whether we operate here at home or a developing country abroad the very need to build and manage the business case for our social license to operate is fundamental. Governments demand it, communities require it, our shareholders want it, our employees want to live it and as a CEO and Chairman, Director of any number of Boards I want to ensure we deliver it. Put simply a social license to operate is where we engage with the local community to ensure that while there are obvious commercial imperatives that we provide the very social and economic



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support programmes such as jobs, education and health, that will in themselves assist local communities grow. Good business is not about a win for the company and a loss for the community – it must be a win win for both, a partnership of equity and equality – and as the United Nations has said, on this international day of peace, where our theme is sustainable peace for a sustainable future “There can be no sustainable future without a sustainable peace. Sustainable peace must be built on sustainable development.” – this is the cornerstone role business and industry can and must play, in partnership with others, to bring about that which we all want most.

Business and industry are and must be an owner and first responder when it comes to human rights both at home and abroad whether it be our supply chains in developing countries, the treatment of our employees or the very real influence we can bring to bear on nation states to improve their own behaviour – our business therefore must not only be about human rights, it is respect for the environment, ensuring we fight against corruption in all of its forms and provide assistance and support to some of the most vulnerable in our communities for in order to have a sustainable business we must execute our social licences to operate. This is what the United Nations Global Compact is all about. As the American actor Nick Nolte once said “peace is an inside job”.

Our inside job is to get on with the job by aligning social, economic and environmental development towards the new Sustainable Development Goals that will ultimately replace the Millennium Development Goals in the coming years. Today, business and industry have not traditionally been owners when it comes to the MDG’s, but that will all change in the post MDG world where we not only become contributors, we become owners. And, we are already responding. In communities around Pekanbaru and Perawang in Indonesia the parent company of Australian subsidiary Solaris Paper are doing remarkable things under the leadership of Aida Greenbury, Steve Nicholson and Darragh Brennan not just through direct employment of locals but investing in micro-financing projects that empower women into business, investing in skills based agriculture and horticultural production for kids between the ages of 15 and 18 and working with producers for the direct supply of goods and services as opposed to imports who’s net result is supporting small business to grow. Local Sydney furniture manufacturer Sebel, based in Padstow, who monitor supply chains across Asia and have some of the strongest best practice principles for a medium sized business that monitors things such as corruption and human rights abuses in the supply chain. Sebel’s Managing Director, Greg Welsh, accompanied the Secretary General to Burma in April where we have established our 101<sup>st</sup> Global Compact Office.

The work of the team at OilSearch on the ground in Papua New Guinea who are working with the community to fight HIV aids through the OilSearch Health Foundation, who are working to promote anti-corruption, skills and education development. The work of KPMG’s Director of Citizenship Catherine Hunter and her tireless efforts to promote development in Indigenous communities across our far north who also plays a global role in highlighting how those best practices can be shared with other peoples, communities and governments. The work of Jane Gronow who until recently has been instrumental with Rio Tinto’s community engagement program who has worked tirelessly in the extractives sector when it comes to women’s empowerment and indigenous development – having previously played a senior role with UNICEF in some incredibly challenging conflict zones. The work of Deakin University and Professor Nava Subramaniam who has been back and forth to India in



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the last few months gearing up for one of that country's largest sustainable governance forums, taking our message on the road. Finally the work of our very own Diversity Council of Australia and Business Professional Women – both organisations who recognise that diversity in the workplace is not just about breaking glass ceilings it is about the empowerment of women in our society who should receive equal pay for an equal days work, where we can do more to invest in small business start-ups for indigenous women and women from migrant communities. In that sense the work of BPW's Marilyn Forsythe, Freda Mirkalis and Irene Ross along with the Diversity Councils Nareen Young are a significant contributor to a debate that sometimes gets lost in the clouds and ivory towers of other representative bodies.

Each of these people has a face and don't just represent an organisation. It is also representative of the fundamental intergenerational shift that is occurring whereby we ourselves recognise that unless our behaviours change we will continue to face the same challenges day after day and year after year. I personally do not want to be known as a usual suspect.

So, on this day, of all days, I don't just want to stand before you and make yet another speech. I want today to be the starting point of a new call to arms where we work together, not in a piecemeal fashion, but with equal respect for our positions, philosophical approaches and ideologies because as I have learnt over a long period time we can in fact reach our common goal through the identification of our single common purpose.

What does this mean? Well today this is what I intend to do as a business executive, a member or chair of various Boards and as your representative to the United Nations Global Compact. I commit to growing the network and signatory base of the global compact in Australia and working with our signatories to establish our presence into Oceania and Pacific. I commit that we will double our target and efforts to sign business onto the Women's Empowerment Principles and, in collaboration with UNICEF and Save the Children Fund promote the new business and children's human rights principles. We will continue to monitor signatory performance when it comes to anticorruption and the environment, increase our number of leadership groups running here in Australia and increase our dialogue around policy and advocacy. As a member of the Board of the Australian Indigenous Chamber of Commerce I want to ensure that we shift away from a pure focus on social issues, important as they are, and increase our efforts on sustainable economic development – focussed on building initiatives that support financial literacy, small business establishment and entrepreneurship. I want our Indigenous people to not just be AFL footy stars and sportspeople – I want them to be doctors and nurses, accountants and principals of schools – I cannot wait for the day that one of our indigenous brothers or sisters becomes the Premier of one of our States or the Prime Minister or even Governor General. At the Australian Indigenous Chamber of Commerce we are working on building those programmes right now. We should aspire but we should and must invest. As a member of the Board of Suicide Prevention Australia I want every life to count, but I want to see better coordination in the sector, greater investment on prevention and more talk about the issues. In particular I want to ensure that whether your first language is English or not, young or old, your sexual orientation is different to mine or you live in a regional and remote community – you have the same access to the very services needed to keep you with us and not lost from us. Today, as I speak we are doing that right now. So as you can see business executives like me can and



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I hope do make a difference and increasingly we are stepping forward, with the support of initiatives such as the United Nations Global Compact to show you that what we do is in fact real. We are influencers of positive change and can in our own right use that influence for better outcomes for us all.

So how do we reach a sustainable peace? One path is through sustainable development with all of us sharing responsibility and working towards our common narrative. To close I could probably quote any number of well-known people and leaders such as Desmond Tutu who once said “each one of us can be an oasis of peace” or Nelson Mandela who said that “Peace is the greatest weapon for development that any people can have.”

I prefer to quote my own father who taught me the greatest lesson in life. He was a proud Maori and instilled, with my mother Margaret, not just values but a simple philosophy. In Maori, Middy my father gave me the following for my own life’s journey:

**“He aha te mea nui o te ao**

What is the most important thing in the world?

**He tangata, he tangata, he tangata**

It is the people, it is the people, it is the people

I draw no distinction between your or my ability to make a change and to make a difference. I don’t care if you are black or white, man or women, young or old, Christian or Muslim speak differently to me or not. I simply see each of you as a person and at the end of the day if we recognise that all people important that we can and will reach a sustainable peace. That is my message to you.

Stuart thank you for having me today and in your final year with the Sydney Peace Foundation I want to just add that If I was on the judging panel for the 2013 Sydney Peace Prize you would be the only greyhound in the race.

Thank you.

Speech ends.