

## BAKU: UN officials call on business leaders to help build inclusive societies

25 April 2016 – At a United Nations Forum under way in the Azerbaijani capital of Baku, senior UN officials today stressed the important role the private sector plays in creating inclusive communities, underscoring that companies cannot operate successfully in societies that fail.

Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, head of the UN Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), a body tasked with promoting harmony among nations, was among the main speakers at a business symposium ahead of tomorrow's official kick-off of the 7th Global Forum.

The Alliance's [Global Forum Baku 2016](#), will bring together nearly 3,000 participants, including Heads of State and Government, political officials, civil society representatives, religious and youth leaders, who will share their perspectives and solutions under the main theme on 'Living Together in Inclusive Societies: A Challenge and A Goal.'

Addressing business leaders today, Mr. Al-Nasser spotlighted the role of the private sector in dealing with, among others, interfaith issues, the refugee crisis, and the link between corporate diversity and business sustainability.

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"The private-sector contributions to interfaith understanding and peace can help unravel many political and economic tensions," he said, emphasizing the urgent need to raise the universal level of understanding and partnership amid the growing political and economic dissonance.

Interfaith models embrace four key items: tolerance, interreligious and intercultural dialogue, the culture of peace and combatting violent extremism, he said. The private sector and philanthropists highly contribute to promoting the values of peace and inclusive societies through partnerships with international organizations, governments and inclusive religious leaders.

Turning to the refugee crisis, he said that the private sector can provide humanitarian aid and support refugees in their resettlement and professional integration. Throughout Europe, the support of the private sector can help migrants get jobs.

Mr. Al-Nasser also said diversity and inclusion should be at the core of any corporate sustainability strategy as these values can drive greater results for corporations. Companies must build their culture based on such drivers.

### ***'Smart businesses understand success depends on success of societies'***

Also addressing the business symposium was Ursula Wynhoven, Chief of Governance and Social Sustainability of the [UN Global Compact](#), the world's largest corporate sustainability initiative to promote responsible practices and UN values to the global business community and in the UN system.

She said that although the main responsibility for political and social stability and addressing poverty and inequality rested with governments, the private sector can play an important complementary role in helping to build and maintain inclusive societies through their workplace, marketplace and the communities where they operate.

"Smart businesses understand that their success depends in large measure on the success of the societies where they operate," she said.

Recognizing that companies cannot operate successfully in societies that fail, fostering respect and understanding, embracing diversity and promoting inclusion are beginning to be understood as prerequisites for long-term business success.

"We call on business to act responsibly by respecting universal principles on human rights, labour, the environment and anti-corruption, as well as to look for opportunities to support UN goals whether through their

core business, social investment, advocacy and/or partnerships,” she said.