H.E.Mr. António Guterres
Secretary-General
United Nations
New York, NY 10017 USA

Friends of Europe’s Communication on Engagement to UN Global Compact
June 2021

Statement of Continued Support by the Secretary General

In light of Friends of Europe’s mission to “revitalise the European Project and build a more inclusive, sustainable and forward-thinking Europe”, I am pleased to confirm Friends of Europe’s continued support and commitment to the UN Global Compact (UNGC) and its ten Principles in the areas of Human Rights, Labour, Environment and Anti-Corruption.

Friends of Europe joined the UN Global Compact (UNGC) in April 2019. We are proud to be part of a global movement of stakeholders taking a principles-based approach to sustainability and taking shared responsibility for achieving a better world. The work we do aspires to meet fundamental responsibilities in the areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption. By incorporating the ten Principles of the UN Global Compact into our work we aim to uphold our and our partners’ basic responsibilities to people and the planet.

In the accompanying statement, we demonstrate Friends of Europe’s commitment to responsible business and programme operations, embedded within our working practices. We also reference our strategic objectives, values, approach and policies that ensure Friends of Europe’s work is framed around its own value-based guiding principles, as well as the Ten Principles of the UNGC, and describe the actions that our organisation has taken to support the UN Global Compact and its principles.

We commit to sharing this information with our stakeholders using our primary channels of communication.

Sincerely Yours,

Geert Cami
Co-founder and Secretary General
Friends of Europe

Friends of Europe is an independent think tank that connects people, stimulates debate and triggers change
EU Transparency register 99436366766-45
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In this Friends of Europe’s first communication on engagement, we demonstrate how our internal processes, operations and strategies are aligned with the ten universal principles in the areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption and contribute to advance societal goals including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

VALUES-BASED PRINCIPLES UNDERPIN FRIENDS OF EUROPE’S MISSION, OBJECTIVES, APPROACH AS WELL AS ITS BUSINESS AND PROGRAMME OPERATIONS. Friends of Europe is a Brussels-based, not-for-profit think-tank for analysis and debate. The organisation, established in 1999, has no political or national allegiance and is independent of the EU institutions. Friends of Europe aims to foster open discussion and to stimulate new thinking on the issues facing Europe and its citizens.

We, at Friends of Europe, seek to revitalise the European Project and build a more inclusive, sustainable and forward-thinking Europe. We believe an EU of partnership and solidarity matters, and we believe globalisation needs global rules to make it work for everyone. We think it’s time for a new 21st-century social contract based on peace, prosperity and sustainability. We support a multilateral world with cities, regions, states, supranational institutions, companies and citizens cooperating to solve common challenges, and we embrace European values and freedoms.

“Connect – Debate – Change” is our DNA and central to the way we work. Friends of Europe is passionate about good policy making and a driving force for debate. Our work adopts a whole of society, whole of economy approach, engaging critical thinkers, unusual voices and those that are ready to challenge the status quo.

We believe in social justice and equality. We work with stakeholders across Europe and the world to craft bold and innovative recommendations to revitalize the European Project. We believe that good ideas and good policies come from breaking down silos and building communities of trust between policy makers, business leaders, civil society representatives and citizens. This is how to catalyse change.

OUR VALUES. Friends of Europe does not represent any national, religious, political, corporate nor NGO point of view, and will welcome all sides of a debate to defend their points of view. However, Friends of Europe also stands for a basic set of values, and we will therefore not offer speaking slots or partnerships to political parties, governments or corporations that go
against the basic values which the EU stands for, and that we as an organisation strongly adhere to. Those values are included in article 2 of the Treaty of the European Union:

“The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.”

Friends of Europe plays a highly important role as a driving global force for debate and new ideas. Fundraising through partnerships and projects is of vital importance to ensure the strongest possible impact, participation and reach of our activities. By upholding these principles of ethics, transparency and operating guidelines as we secure our funding, we are able to maintain our integrity and reputation as one of Europe’s leading independent think-tanks.

**KEY APPROACHES** have been defined and contribute to achieving Friends of Europe’s mission and driving toward the vision.

**Partnership.** Effective partnerships are at the heart of our work. We believe that through nurturing mutual trust, learning and collaboration, partnerships bring innovation and influence.

**Sustainability.** We have joined the UN Global Compact and the global movement of stakeholders taking a principles-based approach to sustainability – upholding the essential responsibilities to people and the planet, and contributing to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals 2030.

**Inclusion.** Our programming embeds a whole-of-society approach aimed at opening up space to diverse and new voices including the “unheard” ones such as refugees, working across boundaries and silos, promoting social justice and inclusion, and challenging mistrust, polarisation and exclusion. A key project of Friends of Europe is the online platform “Debating Europe” which promotes a bottom-up approach by allowing citizens to share questions, comments and ideas directly to policy makers. Since its launch in 2011, Debating Europe has interviewed more than 3,000 policy-makers and experts from across the political spectrum and has received some 180,000 comments from citizens online, including from a growing 5.4 million strong community, and over 280,000 followers on Facebook and Twitter.

**Humour.** We believe humour is a human-centred value which brings connection and humility, open communication, creativity, positivity and inspiration – everything critical for healthy organisation and society.

**Creativity.** We cannot build a forward-looking Europe and sustainable world without tapping into our creative power, developing new ideas, being resourceful and innovative in our approach.

**Transparency.** A policy of openness regarding our organisation and its operations, including partners and participants in our activities and the financing of those activities. Friends of Europe adheres to the following basic principles: transparency; opposing views; editorial
independence. For more details, see our Fundraising Guidelines section available on our website.

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES.** Our strategic objectives drive what we do and the way we work.

**Promote New Leadership.** Increase connections, inspiration and skills for emerging leaders who can cross boundaries, break down silos and challenge polarisation. Promote and embed in practice a more collaborative, diverse and inclusive, intergenerational and impactful model of leadership.

**Regenerate Democracy.** Build trust between citizens and policymakers and improve civic literacy. Develop more effective models of governance including promoting a “new localism” – more citizen-centred, flexible, inclusive, networked, multi-stakeholder.

**Challenge Inequality of Opportunities.** Develop effective public and private measures to address social exclusion at the local, national and regional level. Promote and embed programming and policy-making which supports equal opportunities for individual citizens.

**Bolster A Green Transformation.** Support the scaling up of climate finance and increase incentivising initiatives for a just transition to renewable energy. Promote more sustainable food systems through systemic policy change at a national, regional and international level.

**Reframe Europe’s Role in the World.** Guide and increase the capacity of the EU to act as an effective partner in the international arena and with its neighbours. Promote a more outward looking EU external relations policy, built on enhanced policy coherence and mutuality.

**Description of Actions**

**ENVIRONMENTAL PRINCIPLES.** We are committed to minimising harmful emissions, waste and use of natural resources throughout our operations and have made a number of efforts in recent years to reduce carbon footprint and waste. Major actions include:

1. **An eco-friendly catering policy for all Friends of Europe’s activities**

   **No-plastic policy.** Suppliers are requested to refrain from using items made with plastic material and use glass, steel and porcelain instead. This includes all items such as plates and cutlery, bottles, drinking cups, individual biscuit wrappings...

   **Vegetarian-friendly food policy.** Food suggested privileges no fish, no meat and no derivatives, unless specifically requested in writing by Friends of Europe. The menu should also privilege local and seasonal products.

   This policy that entered into force in July 2019 has been applied for a dozen of activities so far, bearing in mind that most of our activities have moved online.
2. **Friends of Europe is located in a BREEAM In-Use certification building**

BREEAM is the world’s leading sustainability assessment method for masterplanning projects, infrastructure and buildings. It recognises and reflects the value in higher performing assets across the built environment lifecycle, from new construction to in-use and refurbishment. Friends of Europe’s office building has been certified BREEAM excellent.

We also recognise and encourage the provision of a range of travel options for the staff to promote the reductions in the environmental impact for travelling to and from the building.

3. **Environmental considerations are incorporated into decision-making processes for the necessity of travel and the mode of transport to be used**

Friends of Europe’s significant impact on the environment is through international travel undertaken in the course of delivering our activities. During the last months, with the COVID-19 pandemic, international travel undertaken by both Friends of Europe’s staff and stakeholders has reduced significantly and has been restricted to that considered essential. Friends of Europe has moved to online and hybrid models of activities. The current situation has provided us with the opportunity to reassess our delivery models, and going forward we’ll be strengthening our decision-making process on business-critical travel. Whilst recognising that 2020-2021 has been an exceptional year, we anticipate that the environmental impact of travel undertaken in the course of delivering our work will reduce from pre-COVID levels.

4. **Friends of Europe is adapting its fundraising guidelines to exclude partnership funding from coal and oil companies**

The transition to a climate-neutral society is both an urgent challenge and an opportunity to build a better future for all and Friends of Europe is committed to play its fair share. The problem the European Union faces, as most other developed economies, is that behind climate ambitions and political declarations, the numbers do not yet add up. Too much time and resources are lost in the attempt to go around a basic reality that only recently was clearly stated with no possibility of misunderstanding in the International Energy Agency’s new report, Net Zero by 2050 Roadmap: there should be no investment in new fossil fuel supply projects. Friends of Europe will, as of mid-2021, refrain from accepting partnerships with fossil fuel firms which are responsible for the biggest cumulative carbon emissions as ranked by the Climate Accountability Institute. We will further adapt our funding policy according to Client Earth’s 2020 report, Principles for Paris-alignment. This will allow us to look at the ‘Paris-alignment’ or ‘net-zero’ strategies of fossil fuel companies and determine whether they are underpinned by basic principles of reasonability, transparency and accountability. This funding policy is specifically applicable to coal and oil companies. Many decarbonisation scenarios predict a role for natural gas in the transition to a climate-neutral Europe by 2050, therefore we do not automatically exclude natural gas companies. A decision to work or not work with a company is not permanent, since we understand that a company’s ambitions and approach to Paris alignment may evolve over time.
**HUMAN RIGHTS AND LABOUR PRINCIPLES.** We are committed to defining and implementing policies that respect human rights at the workplace including the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states that “The rights of individuals at the workplace, are not to be infringed by any means”.

This is exemplified throughout the organisation: starting with the hiring processes which are based on equality, diversity, and inclusion; Friends of Europe hires the most qualified and competent employees in the labour market based on specific job criteria, without exhibiting acts of discrimination or biases based on religion, race, or gender.

Friends of Europe is committed to the safety of its employees, property, and equipment; ensuring the health and safety measures are in place and guaranteeing the protection against mechanical work, physical, and other hazards.

Embedded within Friends of Europe’s core principles is a no-discrimination policy. Prior to employment, all applicants go through the same employment procedures, without any bias related to gender, race, faith, or background. Following employment, discrimination between employees does not occur in any form as they all abide to the same policies and procedures.

Friends of Europe upholds an efficient and fair appraisal system to assess the performance of all employees, helping them identify their strengths and weaknesses, and for the General Manager to evaluate their training needs. Friends of Europe offers its employees training programs to further empower them, build their capacities and enhance their, as well as the overall productivity.

**PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY AT WORK AND WITHIN ACTIVITIES.** Friends of Europe is a strong advocate for women empowerment and gender diversity in the workplace (54% of Friends of Europe staff are women) as well as in its activities.

Our aim is to walk the talk on gender equality: through all our events, debates, panels, publications, projects, and in our staffing.

Our internal processes foster gender equality and diversity in our activities:

- When selecting speakers for our panels: gender balance (and diversity) is strongly encouraged with a minimum of 40% women.
- When setting up mailing lists for inviting participants to our events, we strive to get a gender balance and a good mix of nationalities and sectors represented.
- Friends of Europe is a partner of the Brussels Binder (https://brusselsbinder.org/) which aims to bring more gender diversity to the debates that impact policy-making and the lives of European citizens.

In 2020, the panels of our activities counted 160 men and 167 women.
**Friends of Europe’s Climate, Energy & Sustainability Programme.** This programme focuses on the crucial role of innovation, regulation, investment and competition to improve policy thinking and encourage action from all sectors of society.

Friends of Europe’s work in 2021 will promote inclusive climate action, explore the potential of the circular economy and look at how a Paris Agreement for biodiversity can become a reality. We’ll work to ensure climate change and the decline of biodiversity aren’t seen as standalone problems. We’ll make the links between energy and digital infrastructure, industrial policy, carbon pricing and green investment, ensuring that cities and citizens are central to discussions. Friends of Europe’s objectives in this arena are to bolster the green transformation, create space for new leadership, regenerate democracy, address inequality and encourage the EU to use its trade and geopolitical positioning to promote inclusive climate action at the global stage.

**Friends of Europe’s Africa Programme and the Launch of the Africa Europe Foundation in December 2020.** As Africa and Europe seek to revise and re-energise their partnership, Friends of Europe has been intensifying its work on Africa-Europe relations through the creation of the Africa-Europe Foundation.

The Covid 19 pandemic, causing devastation in both Europe and Africa, has made it even more imperative that Europe and Africa act urgently to modernise and revitalise their relations – and partnership narratives.

Africa and Europe have a shared interest in implementing Agenda 2030, tackling pandemics and the climate emergency, ensuring food security and better connectivity.

Together with the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, The African Climate Foundation, and the ONE Campaign, Friends of Europe has also created an impressive independent and informal platform to platform network, the Africa-Europe Foundation, which includes top-level African and European leaders who provide regular input and recommendations on improving relations between the two continents.

This High-Level Group is currently engaged in crafting recommendations on the different ways in which Africa and Europe can work together to accelerate health cooperation between the two continents and Africa’s green transformation.

Special attention will be paid to health questions, involving younger generations, SMEs, women, sustainability and climate change.

All these activities and publications have one common aim: to make an impact on ongoing decisions, meetings and conversations on boosting Africa-Europe ties through building inclusive networks and collaborative action to tackle our common challenges of the 21st century.

Building a truly modern Africa-Europe partnership is top of the agenda for the African Union, African governments and for Europe. It is also an important priority for Friends of Europe. We will ensure that these two tracks inspire and feed into each other’s work.
Activities relevant to the UNGC and its ten principles (April 2019 – May 2021)

1. Centred on climate, energy and sustainability

The Sahel Renaissance: Enabling a Just Rural Transformation – 12 May 2021
https://www.friendsofeurope.org/events/the-sahel-renaissance-enabling-a-just-rural-transformation/

Raising the bar for the Renewable Energy Directive – 5 May 2021
https://www.friendsofeurope.org/events/raising-the-bar-for-the-renewable-energy-directive/

EU-Africa Business Forum - Africa-EU Green Talks on "Accelerating the EU-Africa Partnership for Green Energy Transition in Africa" – 16 April 2021

https://www.friendsofeurope.org/events/africa-eu-green-talks/

Green Europe Working Group Meeting – 23 March 2021
https://www.friendsofeurope.org/events/green-europe-working-group-meeting/

The way forward: plastics in a circular economy – 28 January 2021

Change on the horizon: COVID-19 and the energy world – 17 December 2020

Towards the 2021 UN Summit on Food Systems: an enhanced Africa-Europe partnership on sustainable agriculture – 3 December 2020
https://www.friendsofeurope.org/events/towards-the-2021-un-food-systems-summit-an-enhanced-africa-europe-partnership-on-sustainable-agriculture/

Accelerating Sustainable Energy for All: Africa-Europe relations post-covid and in the face of the climate emergency – 2 December 2020

Changing citizens behaviour to tackle climate change – 24 November
Designing for inclusion: how urban planning can make or break a city – 10 November 2020
https://www.friendsofeurope.org/events/designing-for-inclusion-how-urban-planning-can-make-or-break-a-city/

Climate and Energy Summit – 26-28 October 2020
https://www.friendsofeurope.org/events/climate-and-energy-summit/

State of Europe 2020: the festival of politics and ideas to transform Europe – 12-15 October
https://www.friendsofeurope.org/events/the-festival-of-politics-and-ideas-to-transform-europe/

Shifting investments for a green recovery – 18 September 2020
https://www.friendsofeurope.org/events/shifting-investments-for-a-green-recovery/

In Conversation with Kristalina Georgieva on pursuing a green economic recovery – 16 September 2020

Creating a mutually beneficial partnership for Africa-Europe: Building a greener and fairer future – 10 September 2020
https://www.friendsofeurope.org/events/creating-a-mutually-beneficial-partnership-for-africa-europe-building-a-greener-fairer-future/

Healthy environment, healthy lives – 10 September 2020
https://www.friendsofeurope.org/events/healthy-environment-healthy-lives/

Forging an Africa-Europe Climate Alliance: green transition, sustainable energy and agriculture – 1 July 2020
https://www.friendsofeurope.org/events/building-a-sustainable-eu-africa-climate-alliance/

Localising Agenda 2030: how regions can help meet the SDGs – 24 June 2020
https://www.friendsofeurope.org/events/localising-agenda-2030-how-regions-can-help-meet-the-sdgs/

Beyond (carbon) borders: externalising the Green Deal – 8 June 2020
https://www.friendsofeurope.org/events/beyond-carbon-borders-externalising-the-green-deal/

2020: Aligning biodiversity with climate action – 25 March 2020
https://www.friendsofeurope.org/events/2020-aligning-biodiversity-with-climate-action/

People, planet and profit: the return of the triple bottom line – 20 March 2020

Shifting gears: achieving climate neutrality by 2050 – 19 February 2020
https://www.friendsofeurope.org/events/shifting-gears-achieving-climate-neutrality-by-2050/

The European Green Deal: target 2050? – 21 January 2020
https://www.friendsofeurope.org/events/the-european-green-deal-target-2050/

Energy for development: 10 years left to achieve SDG 7 – 2 December 2019
https://www.friendsofeurope.org/events/energy-for-development-publication-launch-10-years-left-to-achieve-sdg-7/

The future of food conference – 20 November 2019
https://www.friendsofeurope.org/events/the-future-of-food-conference/

Entering a new climate dimension with space – 19 November 2019
https://www.friendsofeurope.org/events/entering-a-new-climate-dimension-with-space/

World Energy Outlook 2019 – 18 November 2019
https://www.friendsofeurope.org/events/world-energy-outlook-2019/

Europe’s Climate and Energy summit: pathways are clear but there are obstacles ahead – 7 November 2019
https://www.friendsofeurope.org/events/europes-climate-and-energy-summit-pathways-are-clear-but-there-are-obstacles-ahead/

EYL Alumni meeting – Climate action: talking the talk and walking the walk
https://www.friendsofeurope.org/events/climate-action-talking-the-talk-and-walking-the-walk/ 18 October 2019

Transforming unsustainable land management – 25 September 2019
https://www.friendsofeurope.org/events/transforming-unsustainable-land-use-management/

Easing the energy transition for European industries: Creating a green industrial economy – 23 September 2019
https://www.friendsofeurope.org/events/easing-the-energy-transition-for-european-industries-creating-a-green-industrial-economy/

Sharpening EU leadership in plastics recycling – 14 May 2019
https://www.friendsofeurope.org/events/sharpening-eu-leadership-in-plastics-recycling/
2. Centred on human rights, inclusion and diversity

Turning a blind eye: the human cost of trafficking – 18 February 2021

Refugee integration through inclusion: a whole-of-society approach to fighting cultural divisions – 18 June 2019
https://www.friendsofeurope.org/events/refugee-integration-through-inclusion/

Women’s economic empowerment – a pathway for the Western Balkans’ future success? – 28 April 2021

Post-patriarchal security: inclusion and equity for the other 55% – 18 March 2021

Inclusive security forces: lifting the taboos – June 2021
https://www.friendsofeurope.org/insights/inclusive-security-forces-lifting-the-taboos/

Post-patriarchal security: inclusion and equity for the other 55% – 18 March 2021
https://www.friendsofeurope.org/events/from-conception-to-inclusion-20-years-into-the-women-peace-and-security-agenda/

From conception to inclusion: 20 years into the Women, Peace and Security Agenda – 17 June 2020

Feminism is not a numbers game, it’s about inclusion – 2 April 2020
https://www.friendsofeurope.org/insights/feminism-is-not-a-numbers-game-its-about-inclusion/

The benefits of intercultural inclusion in cities – 29 October 2020

Beyond borders: migration, mobility and good governance in the Africa-EU partnership – 1 October 2020

Health, welfare and prosperity: an EU-Africa partnership for a people-centred approach to human development – 24 October 2020
Measurement of outcomes

Friends of Europe’s and evaluation framework will help us track the outcomes of our engagements with the UN Global Compact. In addition, we’ll measure how many UNGC corporate members we engage with during the reporting period.