

## **CSR Lebanon and the UN Award Adnan Kassar for his role in founding the UN Global Compact**

**Beirut March 18, 2013.** UN Global Compact Executive Director, Mr. Georg Kell, awarded earlier today H.E. President Adnan Kassar, Chairman of Fransabank Group for his role in founding the UN Global Compact when, as the first Arab President of the International Chamber of Commerce between 1999 and 2000, he met the challenge of the UN Secretary General to create the Global Compact, which outlined the business actions in being good corporate citizens.

This came during the opening ceremony of the Third CSR Lebanon Forum held at the Phoenicia Hotel in Beirut, in the presence of key officials, over 30 internationally renowned speakers and over 500 leading figures from media as well as the country's civic community and its advocates.

Fransabank strategically partnered with CSR Lebanon for its Third CSR Lebanon Forum under the theme of Corporate Social Responsibility in Times of Uncertainty, held under the patronage of President of the Republic HE Mr. Michel Sleiman, who was represented by HE Mr. Vrej Sabounjian, representative also of House of Parliament President Nabih Berry, and Prime Minister Najib Mikati. The event was also attended by Central Bank Vice-Governor Dr. Saad Andari, the Executive director of the UN Global Compact Mr. Georg Kell, CSR Lebanon founder and UN Global Compact's focal point in Lebanon Mr. Khaled Kassar as well as a wide range of companies, banks and institutions, regional and international, as well as by global experts and ambassadors from Norway and France and many other key officials.

During the opening ceremony HE Mr. Adnan Kassar received the award from Georg Kell and the organizers for his role, as President of the International Chamber of Commerce, in the founding of the Global Compact with then Secretary General of the UN, Mr. Kofi Annan, in 2000. Mr. Kassar expressed his pride in receiving this prestigious award, thanking CSR Lebanon for its organization of this event and its endeavors to promote corporate social responsibilities strategies in Lebanon and the Arab world. He also shared his personal experience: "CSR, Corporate Social Responsibility, is now a fashionable term to use by business, but it is not new to me. In fact, about 14 years ago, as Chairman of the International Chamber of Commerce, the World Business Organization based in Paris, I was delighted to meet the challenge of then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's Global Compact which was established as a framework for companies that are committed to sustainability and responsible business practices in the areas of environment, human rights, labour, and anti-corruption."

He added: "In 1999, I saw the importance of CSR to demonstrate the good citizenship of companies, because it was at a time the talk of anti-globalization was fashionable. And so we, the world business community, met the challenge of the UN to demonstrate how we are good corporate citizens. I headed a large business delegation and met with UN Secretary General Kofi Annan in Geneva in 1999 to accept his Global Compact challenge for business to promote with the UN, shared humanitarian values. I was then joined by 50 of the world's top multinationals to New York in July 2000, to personally deliver to Kofi Annan the business statement to the UN Millennium Summit. This was the biggest gathering of CEOs and top executives ever to assemble at UN headquarters in New York. In that New York meeting with UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, I confirmed that there exists a great synergy between the goals of the United Nations – peace and development – and those of business – wealth creation and prosperity."

From then, the UN looked -with confidence- to business and knew that they have secured from corporate leaders an endorsement of the UN's calls and efforts to promote shared values in the areas of human rights, labour standards and the environment," Kassar elaborated.

Then Kassar commented on the role he undertook in his various positions as Chairman of Lebanese, Arab and international Chambers of Commerce, whereby he always called on companies to act as responsible citizens and confirmed that this was a winning strategy for companies enabling them to gain

the loyalty of their customers, the trust of their partners and shareholders, and the devotion of their employees.

He equally provided a retrospective on Fransabank Group's incessant efforts in playing an invaluable role in providing communities with the tools to achieve sustainable prosperity and promoting CSR in Lebanon. Fransabank CSR journey has been summarized in a CSR book that showcases Fransabank's own strategy and actions in CSR, demonstrating how we have, on various levels, given back to our society and our communities.

It is worth noting that Fransabank's efforts serve as an example to other players in Lebanon's banking sector and private sector, in general, on how they can win by being a responsible citizen. We documented our contributions and work to poverty reduction programs, Youth development, environmental causes, societal and humanitarian initiatives, culture and arts and valuing bank's human capital, amongst others.

Following Adnan Kassar's speech, HE Vrej Sabounjian saluted the efforts being undertaken by the CSR Forum organizers, and stressed on the importance of incorporating the CSR thinking in today's modern institutions to enhance productivity and performance of such institutions. He also stressed on the role of the Ministry of Industry through the LIBNOR project in implementing the ISO 26,000 standards for corporate social responsibility, which was initiated two years ago, and which third phase will be implemented this year.

Then UNGC Executive Director Georg Kell then thanked Adnan Kassar for his crucial role as President of the ICC in directing the worldwide business world in joining hands with the UN in founding the Global Compact. He then saluted Lebanese business persons for their efforts to invest in CSR as a way of not only impacting positively on society but also as a core practice to advance businesses and economic sustainability in general, bringing additional values to the corporate world. He also urged business leaders and officials to cooperate with young entrepreneurs to lay the foundations for a local network that promotes responsible business practices.

In his turn, the Central Bank of Lebanon Governor was represented by his Vice-Governor Saad Andary who explained how CSR is a main concern and utmost priority to the Central Bank of Lebanon which has been playing a crucial role in inciting Banks to provide subsidized loans to projects that bring societal and environmental added value. Such concern has been stressed upon further recently with the new initiative of the Central Bank to incentivize the financing of housing, education, production, industry, and environmental investments and which included two types of loans dedicated to encourage the advancement of research and development, knowledge and innovation.

CSR Founder and CEO Khaled Kassar praised Adnan Kassar's efforts as the first Arab leader to be engaged in setting the foundations of the UN Global Compact. He invited companies to take what Fransabank group has been undertaking at the CSR level as a lead example to follow, mainly in being transparent in their annual reporting of CSR. Then, he invited for a larger participation from the public sector in the adoption of the UN Global Compact's and its ten principles.

The forum addressed on the first day themes on environmental responsibility of companies, and the promotion on responsible business and investment in high-risk areas and the role of governments, and corporate social responsibility in education, and the social responsibility of entrepreneurs.

A professional workshop on CSR strategies and reporting entitled Green Cafe will take place on the second day of the forum.