

## A global initiative for all humanity

### BACKGROUND AND PARTICIPATION OVERVIEW

*By the close of 2011, the global population will have reached 7 billion. A world of 7 billion has implications on sustainability, urbanization, access to health services and youth empowerment – however, it also offers a rare call-to-action opportunity to renew global commitment for a healthy and sustainable world.*

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#### 7 Billion is a challenge

Already, too many people suffer from poverty, discrimination, and violence. Conflicts and weather-related disasters are forcing people to flee their homes. Climate change is exacerbating food and water shortages. As more and more people join those of us already here, solving existing challenges will become increasingly more urgent – and new challenges will arise that demand the best in each of us.

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#### 7 Billion is an opportunity

Never before has the world nurtured so many talented, creative, educated people. Never before has humanity been so interconnected. We are now part of a global community where actions taken in one country or region can have an immediate impact on other parts of the world. We have yet to realize the vast human potential among women and girls – who comprise half the world's population – and the energy and talents of some two billion young people.

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#### 7 Billion is a call to action

This milestone provides an occasion to recognize and celebrate our common humanity and diversity. It is also a time to demonstrate our shared responsibility to care for each other and our planet. Ensuring the well-being of current and future generations will require unprecedented global cooperation. Individuals can make a difference by uniting through social networks, popular culture and the shared values reflected in international agreements. In a world of 7 Billion people, incremental actions will create exponential results.

**7 Billion Actions is a platform for individuals, businesses, governments, NGOs, media and academia to contribute to a better world for all people. It is an opportunity to showcase stories, connections and actions. 7 Billion Actions will shine a bright light on the good works being done by many and encourage more to join. It also will serve as a springboard to generate collective actions that can make a huge difference for present and future generations.**

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## Context/Background

The status quo is not sustainable. We must evolve away from ever-widening income and consumption disparities towards meeting basic needs, reducing inequities, and shifting to cleaner energy and technology.

Many people are living longer and healthier lives, and couples are choosing to have smaller families. But 215 million women in developing countries who would like to plan and space their children lack access to effective contraception. Too many young people lack education, training and employment. Too many women are denied equal opportunity.

To create a sustainable and peaceful world, we must invest wisely. By investing in health and education and moving to a green economy, we can improve the well-being of people and our planet. As lives improve, population growth tends to stabilize.

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## Platform for Partnership

You are one of 7 Billion. Every individual and organization has a unique role and shared responsibility to address issues that affect us all.

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### **For Individuals, 7 Billion Actions is about shared commitment.**

We are all connected. We all must recognize, and embrace, our individual and collective capacity to change and improve the world. It takes individual action to produce institutional change. Each of us can commit, in whatever way we can, to address the challenges and pursue the opportunities that a world of 7 billion presents.

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### **For Government, 7 Billion Actions is about shared leadership.**

The challenges and opportunities of 7 Billion will be addressed by countries with skilled and healthy workers, strong commitment to research and technology and efficient ways to move people, goods and information. Government at all levels (national, regional and local), share responsibility to support organizations and individuals working to improve society. Governments can work together to guide and shape our collective understanding of what is important, to break down barriers that impede critical progress, and to enable innovation that benefits the world. Sound government leadership can propel human progress.

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**For Businesses, 7 Billion Actions is about shared value.**

Businesses can use their influence to create economic returns in ways that also create value for society. 'Shared value' is not just social responsibility or philanthropy, it is a new way to measure success by adopting sustainable practices and policies that produce value over the long term. Companies that create shared value enhance their own competitiveness while advancing the economic and social conditions in the communities in which they operate. Through financial contributions or in-kind donations, companies can become official Sponsoring Partners of *7 Billion Actions*.

**Key sectors for business in relation to 7 Billion include:**

**Health:** Health is everyone's business. Better health improves productivity. Major advances continue to improve public health dramatically, often at a very low cost. And corporate innovation and distribution systems have made a huge difference. But more progress is needed: 1,000 women still die every day from treatable complications of pregnancy and childbirth, millions of people living with HIV remain untreated, and there is high unmet need for family planning. Companies can work with government and other institutions to foster well-being for current and future generations. The benefits to individuals and communities will be immediate and sustainable.

**Food & Water:** Food security and access to clean water is everyone's business and the foundation for life. Yet one billion people today lack access to clean water. Together we can identify opportunities to improve the quantity, quality, and accessibility of the food we eat and the water we drink. By using our ingenuity we can meet the challenge to deliver healthy food and clean water for everyone.

**Technology:** Innovation is everyone's business. Scientific breakthroughs – from telecommunications and computing to advances in medicine, neuroscience and renewable energy – abound and are paving the way for social and economic transformation. But the wealth of ideas and technologies are not being harnessed as effectively as they could to improve human well-being and build a sustainable future. Together we can direct innovation to address global challenges.

**Education, Skills and Livelihoods:** In our competitive global economy, creating opportunity and increasing productivity is everyone's business. Developing better systems to educate adolescents and young people and develop their skills encourages healthier lifestyles and larger dreams for the future. Together we can equip current and future generations with the skills and confidence to build a sustainable society.

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**For NGOs, *7 Billion Actions* is about shared responsibility.**

NGOs can play a variety of roles in helping to improve the state of the world, including serving as a bridge between business, government and civil society; connecting the policy makers to the grassroots; bringing practical solutions to the table; calling their peers to account; and acting as the voice for the voiceless, who are often left out of decision-making processes. NGOs must engage, with other institutions and sectors, in practical projects that stretch everyone's visions and capacities. NGOs must bring their expertise in a range of areas and an understanding and connection to specific communities and audiences that other groups can't access.

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**For Media, *7 Billion Actions* is about shared perspective.**

Like NGOs, media play a critical role in holding institutions accountable to the public and elevating public discourse. The media has a responsibility to provide accurate, timely and relevant information about the world we live in. Solid information and analysis, from a multitude of credible voices, can build collective wisdom. The media can clarify issues and reinforce our understanding of interconnections and interdependencies that define today's world. 7 Billion presents a compelling opportunity for media to explore the complexities, contradictions and challenges of demographic trends, their impacts, and spur action.

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**For Academia, *7 Billion Actions* is about shared understanding.**

Education and research are fundamental to the success of efforts to improve society. The aptitudes and abilities that contribute to a sustainable world can be cultivated through formal and informal education. We can encourage individuals to share their insights and ideas, to participate in discourse and decision-making, and to raise awareness of the need for solidarity and social responsibility. Academia can spark ideas, conversations and actions related to a world of 7 Billion.