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## Sustainable Fashion Panel at the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual United Nations Forum on Business & Human Rights, 17 November 2015, Geneva

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(Geneva) – The Permanent Mission of the Netherlands, the International Trade Centre (ITC) and UN Global Compact (UNGC) will on 17 November host a panel discussion on ‘Sustainable Fashion: Empowering Women in Africa’s Fashion Industry’ at the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual United Nations Forum on Business and Human Rights in Geneva.

Speakers will discuss how fashion can be a vehicle for women empowerment: what’s working and what’s not. They will explore how the textile and fashion industry has become more active in promoting corporate social responsibility (CSR) schemes and how these align with the goal of respecting human rights – with a focus on women’s rights. Speakers will shine the spotlight on CSR initiatives that can contribute to improving women’s position in society and they will look at traceability and how the tracking of CSR schemes can help enhance the impact of policies and practices put in place.

The discussion will also explore initiatives aimed at empowering women through the fashion value chain in Africa, including initiatives by ITC, the Vlisco Group, Sindiso Khumalo and Lagos Fashion & Design Week.

The panel discussion will be preceded by a fashion show that will display the work of Dent de Man (Ivory Coast/UK), Sindiso Khumalo (South Africa) and Vlisco Group.

The seven participating international experts will be:

- **Ms Arancha González**, Executive Director of the International Trade Centre, Switzerland
- **H.E. Mr Roderick van Schreven**, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the United Nations and the World Trade Organization, Switzerland
- **Ms Elena Bombis**, Manager, Supply Chain Sustainability, UN Global Compact, United States
- **Mr Auret van Heerden**, Labour Expert & President and Founder of Equiception, Switzerland
- **Ms Omoyemi Akerle**, Founder of Style House Files and Lagos Fashion & Design Week, Nigeria
- **Ms Monique Gieskes**, Vlisco Group Director Brand Protection & Corporate Social Investment, Democratic Republic of the Congo
- **Ms Sindiso Khumalo**, Founder & Fashion Designer at Sindiso Khumalo, South Africa

The panel will be moderated by **Mr Simone Cipriani**, the Chief Technical Advisor of ITC’s Ethical Fashion Initiative.

### ABOUT

#### The United Nations Forum on Business and Human Rights

The United Nations Forum on Business and Human Rights is a space for representatives and practitioners from civil society, business, government, international organizations and affected stakeholders to take stock of challenges and discuss ways to move forward on putting into practice the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights – a global standard for preventing and addressing adverse impacts on human rights linked to business activity. The Forum was established by the Human Rights Council, and is guided by the United Nations Working Group on Business and Human Rights. The third annual Forum, which was held in Geneva from 1 to 3 December 2014, attracted around 2,000 persons from over 100 countries. Videos of sessions at the 2014 Forum are available at UN Web TV.

**Center for the Promotion of Imports from Developing Countries**

The Center for the Promotion of Imports from Developing Countries (CBI) contributes to sustainable economic development in developing countries through the expansion of exports from these countries. CBI is part of the Netherlands Enterprise Agency and commissioned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and supports export from 48 developing countries in 27 sectors by strengthening the competitive capacity of SME exporters and producers, focusing primarily on European markets. With information, training and coaching CBI helps to improve their market opportunities. CBI uses an integrated programmatic approach to contribute to the improvement of the business climate in these countries. CBI has developed specific programmes for the garment sector improving their image in the market, contributing to CSR compliance and ensuring capacity to make necessary investments in safety and social measures.

**ITC's Ethical Fashion Initiative**

The Ethical Fashion Initiative is a flagship programme of the International Trade Centre, a joint agency of the United Nations and the World Trade Organization. The Ethical Fashion Initiative enables artisans living in urban and rural poverty to connect with the global fashion chain. The Ethical Fashion Initiative also works with the rising generation of fashion talent from Africa, encouraging the forging of fulfilling creative collaborations with artisans on the continent. Under its slogan, "NOT CHARITY, JUST WORK." the Ethical Fashion Initiative advocates a fairer global fashion industry.

**UN Global Compact**

The UN Global Compact works with business to transform our world, aiming to create a sustainable and inclusive global economy that delivers lasting benefits to all people, communities and markets. The UN Global Compact and UN Women have developed the Women's Empowerment Principles "to implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women". One of UN Global Compact's mission is helping local African businesses - most often artisanal micro-producer groups - tap into value chains as suppliers of local and regional markets, can lead to the inclusion of marginalized groups, in particular women, in the labour market, to the improvement of their working conditions and to sustainable livelihoods.

**For more information:****Ethical Fashion Initiative**

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**Permanent Mission of the Netherlands**

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