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Survey shows ethics high on the business agenda, but there is a lack of practical impact

Eighty-four per cent of finance professionals believe that business has a moral obligation to help address global issues, according to a new report. In a global survey released by CIMA (Chartered Institute of Management Accountants) and the IBE (Institute of Business Ethics) today, (30 June), the importance of business ethics within organisations is shown to be a growing trend across the world. Over half of the respondents stated that 'environmental impact' is more important to their companies now than it was two to three years ago.

However, although this commitment to environmental and ethical business issues by organisations is encouraging, there appears to be a lack of practical action taking place with only one third of the organisations surveyed publicly reporting on ethical performance and CSR. Even fewer of the respondents (30%) actively collect ethical management information despite the fact that nearly half of those who fail to do so think their organisations would benefit from it.

Charles Tilley, Chief Executive at CIMA, comments:

"These survey results represent a welcome first step in the process of pushing ethical business issues far higher up the agenda. While it is heartening to note that management accountants across the world have grasped the bigger picture when it comes to realising the importance of business ethics issues, it is also clear that this area needs to be embedded in organisational strategy and reported on more thoroughly. Responsible and sustainable business is an area that management accountants are well placed to drive forwards and continue to influence."

Philippa Foster Back, Director of the Institute of Business Ethics, continues:

"I welcome the results of this survey. In particular, I am encouraged by the fact that nearly nine out of ten CIMA members said that their senior management is taking ethical issues seriously. The challenge now is to sustain this attitude at a time when business is becoming difficult. IBE research has indicated that companies who are explicit about their ethical values, may find they are the ones who ride an economic downturn best."

These trends are underpinned by the respondents' views on their job roles, with over half (59%) saying they contribute to their organisations' ethical performance, with 73% believing that ethical performance will become a

formal part of their role in the next few years. It is interesting to note that while a fairly high percentage of finance professionals see their role as already being linked to the ethical performance of their company, when asked for more detail, the majority of respondents say they contribute by 'upholding their professional code of ethics', 'ensuring the integrity of management information' and 'leading by example'. Only 16% believe they contribute via the analysis or collection of ethical management information, with even less (15%) saying they contribute by reporting ethical performance against their goals.

1300 CIMA members were surveyed from around the globe in order to capture this data.

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For press enquiries only, please contact:

Katie Scott-Kurti
Senior Press Officer, CIMA
+44 (0) 20 8849 2347
Katie.scott-kurti@cimaglobal.com

Notes to Editors

1. CIMA (the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants) is the only international accountancy body with a sole focus on business. It is a world leading professional institute that offers an internationally recognised qualification in management accountancy, focusing on accounting in business in both the private and public sectors. It is the voice of 164,000 students and members in 161 countries. CIMA is committed to upholding the highest ethical and professional standards of members and students, and to maintaining public confidence in management accountancy. For more information about CIMA, please visit www.cimaglobal.com.

CIMA is responsible for the education and training of management accountants who work in industry, commerce and not-for-profit and has more members in the public sector than any other UK based body. CIMA prides itself on the commercial relevance of its syllabus, which evolves continually to reflect the latest developments in global business. CIMA has been awarded superbrand status in the UK for a second year in a row this year and for the first time in Sri Lanka. According to independent research conducted by the University of Bath School of Management, CIMA's syllabus and examination structure are the most relevant to the needs of business of all the accountancy bodies assessed. See the CIMA Difference report for further information at www.cimaglobal.com/thecimadifference.

2. The IBE was established by business in 1986 to encourage high standards of business behaviour based on ethical values. It aims to lead the dissemination of knowledge and good practice in business ethics. The IBE helps organisations to strengthen their ethics culture and encourage high standards of business behaviour based on ethical values. Further information from: www.ibe.org.uk.