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Sustainability reporting: the Public Sector leads by Example

1st Issue of the Background Working Paper Series of the Group of Friends of Paragraph 47

November 18, 2014 – Sustainability reporting by state-owned enterprises and public agencies is an approach that provides a positive contribution to the improvement of the general sustainability reporting landscape. This is the result of the assessment of *Walking the Talk: Leading by Example through State-Owned Enterprise / Public Agency Reporting*, a publication of the Group of Friends of Paragraph 47 (GoF47).

Walking the Talk directly supports Paragraph 47 of the Rio+20 Outcome Document's call on governments to stimulate sustainability reporting through best practices. To this end, the publication provides an insight into the status of sustainability reporting within state-owned enterprises and public agencies, including an overview of key national-level initiatives. It builds on the experience developed by the members of the GoF47 and provides additional insight emerging from practices in other countries.



This is the first edition of the **Background Working Paper Series** of the GoF47. The series highlights various workstreams of the GoF47, in line with its aim to support the global agenda of sustainability reporting with a particular focus on the role of governments.

Walking the Talk: Leading by Example through State-Owned Enterprise / Public Agency Reporting is freely available for download [here](#).

The GoF47's publication on *Frequently Asked Questions on Corporate Sustainability Reporting* is also available for download [online](#) and will soon be available in French, German and Spanish.

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1. About the Group of Friends of Paragraph 47

The Group of Friends of Paragraph 47 was formed by the Governments of Brazil, Denmark, France and South Africa in June 2012 during the United Nations (UN) Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio +20), following the acknowledgement of the importance of corporate sustainability reporting in Paragraph 47 of the Outcome Document, *The Future We Want*. Since then, the Governments of Argentina, Austria, Chile, Colombia, Norway and Switzerland have become members. The Group is supported by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) in a Secretariat capacity.

The Group's Charter was published on 7 November 2012, the content of which reaffirms the Group's intention to contribute to the advancement of an international culture of corporate transparency and accountability. The key points are:

- The recognition that governments have a primary role to play in moving society towards a sustainable model of development given their access to soft and hard instruments that can positively influence corporate behaviour;
- The intention to bring governments and other stakeholders together to develop best practice examples of policy and regulation for promoting corporate sustainability reporting;
- That corporate sustainability reporting should become a widespread practice to allow for a transparent, well-functioning market economy and for the private sector to contribute to sustainable development;
- To promote the use of, and build upon, existing and widely-used sustainability reporting guidance, such as principles, indicators, and frameworks;
- That developing countries and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) will be given particular attention in progressing on sustainability reporting if needed.

The Charter is available for download [here](#).

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2. About UNEP

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is the voice for the environment in the UN system. Established in 1972, UNEP's mission is to provide leadership and encourage partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing, and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations. UNEP is an advocate, educator, catalyst and facilitator, promoting the wise use of the planet's natural assets for sustainable development. It works with many partners, UN entities, international organizations, national governments, non-governmental organizations, business, industry, the media and civil society. UNEP's work involves providing support for: environmental assessment and reporting; legal and institutional strengthening and environmental policy development; sustainable use and management of natural resources; integration of economic development and environmental protection; and promoting public participation in environmental management.

Website: www.unep.org

3. About the Global Reporting Initiative

The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) produces a comprehensive Sustainability Reporting Framework that is widely used around the world, to enable greater organizational transparency. The Framework, including the Reporting Guidelines, sets out the Principles and Indicators organizations can use to report their economic, environmental, and social performance. GRI is committed to continuously improving and increasing the use of the Guidelines, which are freely available to the public.

GRI, a multi-stakeholder foundation, was set up in the US in 1997 by CERES and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). In 2002, GRI moved its central office to Amsterdam, where the Secretariat is currently located. GRI has regional 'Focal Points' in Australia, Brazil, China, India, South Africa and the USA, and a worldwide network of 30,000 people.

Website: www.globalreporting.org