



GRI Conference web release 29 May 2013

The members of the Group of Friends of Paragraph 47 - including Brazil, Colombia, Denmark, France, Norway and South Africa - organized several meetings during the GRI Global Conference on Sustainability and Reporting held in Amsterdam 22-24 May 2013. This conference, focused on corporate sustainability reporting with over 1600 participants from 80 countries, provided the ideal opportunity to meet with many interested governments and stakeholders, as well as the foremost thought leaders on this agenda. The Group presented its objectives and activities to a large audience during the conference session “Shaping the World After Rio+20 - Governments Take the Lead on Paragraph 47” and held a series of internal working meetings.

Under the guidance of the Chair (France), the Group took this opportunity to consolidate its Work Plan for the coming months, to reach out to other governments and to interested stakeholders to exchange experiences on sustainability reporting policy and regulation, and to listen to suggestions during open discussions. Such discussions were attended by government representatives from Austria, Chile, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. Stakeholder groups in attendance during the Group’s discussions included the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), B Accountability, Carbon Disclosure Standards Board (CDSB), Institut RSE (CSR Institute in Paris), Stakeholder Forum, University of Basel, UNCTAD and the World Bank.

The Group’s Work Plan for the coming months was developed around five main goals:

- To promote the exchange of experiences with sustainability reporting policies and initiatives;
- To foster a process of continuous learning by all members of the Group aiming at enhancing the effectiveness of sustainability reporting policies, including by strengthening the quality of sustainability reports;
- To increase the number of Governments with policies or initiatives that promote corporate sustainability reporting
- To maintain and promote the sustainability reporting agenda within intergovernmental discussions, so that the positive momentum built during Rio+20 is strengthened; and
- To consolidate a multi-stakeholder platform for the promotion of sustainability reporting, building on the understanding that sustainability reporting is indeed a multi-stakeholder effort.

To achieve these goals:

- The Group will promote thematic ‘peer to peer’ discussions to analyze and discuss current and emerging issues associated with the sustainability reporting agenda.
- The Group will contribute to the organization of focused national and/or regional exchanges of experience, upon specific request by current or prospective members.

The Group will also continue its outreach to other interested Governments with a view to achieving a growing participation and ensuring a geographic balance. The members agreed to specifically focus on increasing the participation of Asian countries in the Group.

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The Group aims to maintain the momentum created during Rio+20 in the international discussion of the sustainability reporting agenda, and will be participating in the following events in the coming months:

- 26-27 June: OECD Global Forum on Responsible Business Conduct, Paris, France, participating in a session focusing on sustainability reporting scheduled on 27 June.
- 6-8 November: UNCTAD 30th ISAR Session, Geneva, Switzerland. The Group will be organizing its upcoming internal meeting at the margins of this Conference.

Recognizing that the promotion of sustainability reporting requires a multi-stakeholder effort, the Group developed a specific proposal for this collaboration that was discussed with interested stakeholders participating in the GRI Conference. The proposal envisages the engagement of stakeholders in concrete activities within the Group's work plan. Such activities will include:

- Co-organising side events at major relevant international conferences, including contributing background papers and speakers to explain stakeholders' perspectives on what should constitute best practice models for government promotion of corporate sustainability reporting;
- Peer reviewing/co-authoring publications developed by the Group;
- Co-developing activities aiming at sharing experiences with current and prospective member countries; and
- Supporting the outreach to potential new Government members.

During one of their meetings, the Group announced its first publication, 'Frequently Asked Questions on Corporate Sustainability Reporting', which is now available for review at www.unep.org/dtie until 7 June 2013 and will be published in the coming months.

The Group will meet again in November for the UNCTAD 30th ISAR Session in Geneva, Switzerland, and will once again invite interested governments and stakeholders to join them for open discussion. All governments and stakeholders interested in collaborating with the Group and who align with the principles set out in their [Charter](#) are welcome to contact the Secretariat on secretariat@paragraph47.org.

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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 this year following the acknowledgement of the importance of corporate sustainability reporting in Paragraph 47 of the outcome document of the 2012 United Nations (UN) Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio +20). The group is supported by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) in a Secretariat capacity, and its founding member governments are all pioneers in sustainability reporting practice and policy.

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:

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- 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
- 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](#).

Email: secretariat@paragraph47.org

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 and the USA, and a worldwide network of 30,000 people. Website: www.globalreporting.org

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