



Final web release – 13 February 2013

Norway joins group of leading governments to advance corporate sustainability reporting

On 31 January 2013, the Government of Norway was welcomed as a new member of the Group of Friends of Paragraph 47, an initiative established during the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in June 2012. Norway - like the founding members Brazil, Denmark, France and South Africa - has taken a lead role in establishing a culture of corporate sustainability and transparency through implementation of various national policies and initiatives related to this agenda.

The Norwegian Government requested to join during the meeting of the Group of Friends of Paragraph 47 at the Responsible Economy World Forum Lille.

In addition to Norway, the Governments of Argentina, Australia, Gabon and The Netherlands were represented in Lille. Several other governments – including those of Afghanistan, Austria, Benin, Honduras, Israel, Libya, Nigeria, Oman, the Vatican City State and Zimbabwe - expressed their interest in the discussions and outcomes of the meeting. Colombia, Ecuador and Tunisia have also expressed interest in the Group's activities.

The Lille event provided a valuable opportunity for interested governments and stakeholders to engage directly with the Group. Representatives of several important stakeholder groups - including Stakeholder Forum, the Association of Certified Chartered Accountants and the Climate Disclosure Standards Board/Carbon Disclosure Project - also met with the Group members in Lille. Their discussions concerned the development of an 'international stakeholder reference group' to enable a structured stakeholder engagement process and increased dialogue on the corporate sustainability reporting agenda.

The Group of Friends of Paragraph 47 welcomed this high level of interest from such a diverse range of governments and stakeholders. The group regards such engagement as key to achieving its objective: sharing best practices of policy and market regulation to fast track the global uptake of corporate sustainability reporting. Indeed, with the Norwegian Government now on board and several other governments having expressed interest, the Group plans to build on this momentum and provide further opportunities and platforms for exchanging best practices. These will include the sharing of the processes leading to policy development, as well as the results achieved.

The Group welcomes collaboration with all governments and stakeholders who align with the principles set out in their Charter. http://www.unep.fr/scp/communications/pdf/Final_Group_of_Friends_Charter.pdf -

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With the support of



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:

- 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 standard 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:

http://www.unep.fr/scp/communications/pdf/Final_Group_of_Friends_Charter.pdf

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