



Final web release – 24 April 2013

Group of Friends of Paragraph 47 welcomes Colombia, appoints France as Chair

The Group of Friends of Paragraph 47 consisting of Brazil, Denmark, France, Norway and South Africa and supported in a Secretariat capacity by the United Nations Environment Programme and the Global Reporting Initiative, met in Paris on 9 April 2013 to develop a plan for its activities for the year ahead and to review several candidatures received. The meeting was fruitful and delivered several notable outcomes:

- The Government of Colombia was welcomed as a new member to the Group following the review of a light assessment prepared by the Secretariat indicating the country's progress on corporate sustainability reporting initiatives. The remaining candidates being processed will be contacted by the Secretariat to follow up on the membership process included in the Group's Organisational Guidelines.
- The Government of France was appointed as Chair of the Group for a period of one year. The Chair commits to oversee the proper functioning of the Group and among other responsibilities will lead the coordination of the outreach process and coordinate representation and communication tasks.
- The Group agreed to meet at the occasion of various relevant international events throughout 2013, the next being the 2013 GRI Global Conference on Sustainability and Reporting taking place in Amsterdam, the Netherlands from 22-24 May 2013. At this conference, the Group will be involved in two public events and will lead a working session with both Governments interested in joining the Group and relevant stakeholders. Those interested in participating in the working session are welcome to contact the Secretariat for more information: secretariat@paragraph47.org. The list of other events where the Group intends to meet is [available here](#).
- The Group agreed to release a publication addressing the key questions on corporate sustainability reporting as a capacity building tool and aims to have the publication ready for distribution in May.
- The Group adopted their Organisational Guidelines outlining the functioning of the Group, the process for new members joining and how to engage with other organizations that are active in corporate sustainability reporting. The Organisational Guidelines as well as the Charter, can be found on the [UNEP](#) and the [French government websites](#).

The Group reiterated its commitment to engage with all governments and stakeholders who align with the values and objectives set out in their Charter, and to continue to provide further opportunities and platforms for exchanging best practices on the promotion of corporate sustainability reporting (including the peer reviewing of each Member's initiatives) and capacity building for governments engaging in this arena for the first time.

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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 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](#).

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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 and the USA, and a worldwide network of 30,000 people.

Website: www.globalreporting.org