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PARTICIPANTS

Present:

Name	Constituency
Daniel Ingram	Investment Institutions
Daniel Taillant	Civil Society Organization
Dwight Justice	Labor
Eric Hesenheide (Chairman)	
Hidemi Tomita	Business
Judy Kuszewski	Mediating Institution
Jürgen Buxbaum	Labor
Kirsten Margrethe Hovi	Business
Michael Nugent (Vice Chair)	Mediating Institution
Stiaan Wandrag	Business
Vadakepatth Nandkumar	Mediating Institution
David Russell	Business
Robin Edme	Mediating Institution (joined at 13h30 CET)

Apologies:

Name	Constituency
Sulema Pioli	Mediating Institution
Simeon Cheng	Business

In attendance:

Name	Designation
Bastian Buck	Director, Standards Division
Chelsea Reinhardt	Deputy Director, Standards Division
Jan te Roller	Reporting Standard Research Assistant
Katja Kriege	Manager Reporting Standard
Laura Espinach	Manager Reporting Standard
Magdalena Steijger	Standards Division
Pamela Carpio	Governance Relations Coordinator
Tamara Bergkamp	Manager Reporting Standard

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BoD	GRI Board of Directors	IOE	International Organization of Employers
DMA	Disclosure Management Approach	SRSs	Sustainability Reporting Standards
GSSB	Global Sustainability Standards Board		
ILO	International Labour Organization		

SESSION I WELCOME AND OBJECTIVES FOR THIS CALL

Eric Hespenheide, Chairman (henceforth 'The Chair') of the Global Sustainability Standards Board (GSSB), welcomed the members of the GSSB and present GRI staff to the meeting. The Chair called the meeting to order at 13h00 CEST and closed the meeting at 15h00.

The Chair provided an overview of the meeting's agenda and reminded the GSSB of the objective of reaching a decision on Items 01 and 02 and of providing a clear direction to the Standards Division on Item 03.

Revised timeline for the Transition to Standards project

Bastian Buck, Director Standards Division offered explanations on the two main changes to the Transition to Standards project timeline

- **Decision sequence revised:** the first set of draft SRSs will still be signed-off by the GSSB during the April in-person meeting; however the GSSB will be asked to agree upon the overall structure or format of the drafts during the scheduled calls during February and March. This earlier input is necessary to allow the Standards Division adequate time to develop the full set of consultation draft SRSs and supporting materials
- **21 April GSSB meeting will be cancelled and not replaced by another meeting:** the Standards Division does not foresee any mature contents to propose in between a close series of GSSB meetings in April.

Buck invited questions from the GSSB members but none were raised.



16 **ACTION ITEMS**

17 **Standards Division**

- 18 • The Revised timeline for the Transition to Standards project will be posted on the GSSB
19 webpages as part of the minutes of the present meeting.

20 **SESSION 2 TRANSITION TO SRSS – REVIEW AND APPROVE TEM-**
21 **PLATES FOR TOPIC-SPECIFIC SRSS AND GENERAL DISCLOSURES**

22 Laura Espinach, Manager Reporting Standard presented this session. Agenda Item 1 and Item 2
23 were circulated and considered as read.

24 As earlier feedback was received by means of a survey circulated to the GSSB, Espinach re-
25 quested specific feedback on the following:

- 26 1. Placement of “should” statements
27 2. Status of G4 Aspect-specific Disclosure Management Approach (DMA) guidance

28
29 *1. Placement of should statements*

30 Espinach requested feedback on the following two options after exposing their advantages and
31 potential pitfalls.

- 32 a) Moving ‘should’ statements to a separate section (e.g. ‘recommended methodology’). Espin-
33 ach explained that this appeared to be a preferable option but involving the addition of a
34 layer of information that could be perceived as complex by reporters.
35 b) Moving them to ‘Guidance’ sections. Espinach explained that this appeared as a simpler solu-
36 tion however with the potential risk of contents being overlooked.

37 The GSSB held a discussion relating to the status of ‘should’, ‘shall’, ‘can’ and ‘may’ statements
38 used in the Standards to assess the placement possibilities and ensure that the right indications
39 are clearly communicated to the reporters.

40
41 The GSSB requested the template to be updated so that within Methodology sections, all ‘should’
42 statements will be grouped together and will appear after the more prominently-featured ‘shall’
43 statements. This request was formulated by the majority of the GSSB although no full consensus
44 was reached.

45
46 Espinach informed that the Standards team would test this approach and would include this
47 change in the next version of draft SRSS to be submitted on the 11 February call.

48 *2. Status of G4 Aspect-specific DMA guidance*

49 The recommendation of the Standards Division to make all that guidance was largely supported
50 and remains the most desirable option from the Standards Division point of view, even after the
51 different options raised by the members of the GSSB through the survey were assessed.

52
53

54 The GSSB agreed that as a default option, the topic-specific DMA content should be included as
55 guidance in the SRSs. However, the GSSB requested that the Standards Division review this mat-
56 ter when developing the Standards and highlight for GSSB discussion any specific cases where the
57 topic-specific DMA guidance might warrant status as either 'shall' or 'should' statements.

58 ACTION ITEMS

59 Standards Division

- 60 • Update the next version of SRSs to ensure that all 'should' and 'shall' statements under
61 Methodology are included in the same section but grouped separately, with 'shall' state-
62 ments first
- 63 • In general, the Standards Division will transfer the existing topic-specific DMA content
64 into guidance text in the new SRSs. However, the Standards Division will highlight for
65 GSSB review any specific cases where topic-specific DMA guidance might need to be in-
66 cluded as a 'should' or 'shall' statements, rather than in guidance

67 SESSION 3 TRANSITION TO SRSS – REVIEW AND DISCUSS DRAFT 68 SRS 101: FOUNDATION STANDARD

69 Chelsea Reinhardt, Deputy Director of the Standards Division, presented this session. Agenda Item
70 03 was circulated and considered as read.

71 As earlier feedback was received by means of a survey circulated to the GSSB, Reinhardt re-
72 quested specific feedback on the following:
73

- 74 1. Should the Foundation Standard require just to apply the reporting principles or also to
75 document how they have been applied?
 - 76 2. Should the Foundation Standard include an expanded G4-18 (with quality principles) or
77 should it be a separate document without disclosures in it? Reference related disclosures
78 would then remain in the general disclosures.
79
- 80 1. *Foundation Standard requirements*

81 Reinhardt requested feedback on the first question. The Standards Division's perspective is that
82 SRSs should be aiming for best practice. The Reporting Principles should be mandatory and re-
83 porting organizations also should be expected to explain how the principles have been applied,
84 even if this is difficult to verify.
85

86 The GSSB had a discussion about the practicality of requiring reporting organizations to docu-
87 ment how the Principles have been applied. One concern was raised that requiring organizations
88 to document how they applied the Principles might limit the widespread use of the Standards.
89

90 The GSSB agreed that the intent of the SRSs should not be seen to be 'lowering the bar' of the
91 existing G4 Guidelines; therefore at a minimum the content of G4-18 should be preserved in the
92 SRSs (this disclosure requires an explanation of how the Principles for Defining Report Content
93 have been applied).
94

95 The Standards Division agreed to maintain within the Foundation Standard a requirement that
96 the organization applies all the Reporting Principles. However, in line with the existing content in
97 G4-I8, the SRSs will only require an explanation of how the Principles for Defining Report Con-
98 tent have been applied.

99

100 Furthermore, this discussion raised additional questions about whether the In Accordance crite-
101 ria in the SRSs should also be reviewed as part of the Transition to Standards project. The GSSB
102 recognized that this is a persistent issue since G4; however undertaking this review would signifi-
103 cantly expand the scope of work within the Transition to Standards project.

104

105 Buck agreed to solicit, via email, the views of the individual GSSB members on whether a sepa-
106 rate review of the In Accordance criteria should be undertaken as part of the Transition project
107 work. This feedback will be reviewed and discussed on the next GSSB call on 11 February 2016.

108

109

110 2. Expansion of G4-I8 (incl. quality standards) and location in Foundation Standard

111 The GSSB held a discussion about whether it was better to locate G4-I8 within the Foundation
112 Standard or to keep it in the General Disclosures standard, with a cross-reference in the Foun-
113 dation Standard. Feedback received from the GSSB ahead of the call was mixed. Several GSSB
114 members emphasized the importance of the disclosures related to applying the Reporting Princi-
115 ples, and therefore felt that these disclosures belong in the Foundation Standard. Other GSSB
116 members suggested that having the disclosures in the Foundation Standard might help make sure
117 it was not overlooked.

118

119 Reinhardt therefore suggested to include the previous indicator G4-I8 in the next version of the
120 Foundation Standard, which will be reviewed by the GSSB during their scheduled call on 3rd
121 March.

122 It was remarked that it will be critical to explain the new format and structure of the SRSs, and
123 how they are used in conjunction, as part of the transition.

124 ACTION ITEMS

125 Standards Division:

- 126 • Consult each GSSB member via email about whether a separate review of In Accordance
127 criteria should be carried out as part of the Transition to Standards project
- 128 • Standards Division to update the draft Foundation Standard to require that all Reporting
129 Principles are applied, and to include the content from indicator G4-I8

130

131 SESSION 4 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

132 Bastian Buck, Director of the Standards Division, presented this session and informed the GSSB
133 of the following.

- 134 • **Ad-Hoc technical committee on employee/worker terminology project:** Fol-
135 lowing the recommendation of the ILO, the Standards Division will extend an invitation
136 to a representative of the International Organization of Employers (IOE) to join this

- 137 committee. The Standards Division will revert to the GSSB with the complete member-
138 ship of the ad-hoc committee for approval as per due process.
- 139 • **Post-meeting summary within a couple of weeks after the actual meetings:** In
140 order to enhance the decision-making process as well as to improve the public disclosure
141 of the Standards activities, a short summary will be circulated to the GSSB very shortly
142 after the call for which the Standards Division will consider silence as consent. The sum-
143 mary will, however, remain a draft until it is approved at the next GSSB meeting.

144 ACTION ITEMS

145 Standards Division

- 146 • Include the decision on the composition of the technical ad-hoc committee on the GSSB
147 meeting agenda once the names of the potential members are known.
- 148 • Circulate a short summary of each meeting shortly after the meeting for provisional ap-
149 proval and disclosure purposes.

150 ACTION ITEMS

151 ACTION ITEMS

152 Standards Division

- 153 • The Revised timeline for the Transition to Standards project will be posted on the GSSB
154 webpages as part of the minutes of the present meeting.
- 155 • Standards Division to update the next version of SRSs to ensure that all 'should' and
156 'shall' statements under Methodology are included in the same section but grouped sepa-
157 rately, with 'shall' statements first
- 158 • Standards Division to transfer the existing topic-specific DMA content into guidance text
159 in the new SRSs as a general rule. However, the Standards Division will highlight for
160 GSSB review any specific cases where topic-specific DMA guidance might need to be in-
161 cluded as a 'should' or 'shall' statements, rather than in guidance
- 162 • Consult each GSSB member via email about whether a separate review of In Accordance
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165 Principles are applied, and to include the content from indicator G4-I8
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169 proval and disclosure purposes.