

Driving Corporate Action Towards Accomplishing the SDGs

Phase 1: Establishing the current state of play on the role of reporting to drive change

Summary of expert perspectives from the ENEL-GRI Collaboration Forum I

October 2019



Facilitated by:

GLOBALSCAN

evidence and ideas. applied

Forum 1 project impact



394
participants from
56 countries



12 expert guest
contributors from
11 organisations



Online & text
discussion



Individual
contributions

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Project overview

Driving Corporate Action Towards Accomplishing the SDGs

Phase 1: Establishing the current state of play on the role of reporting to drive change

Overview

In July 2019, GRI, the global sustainability reporting standard setter, and Enel, a global power company, announced a partnership to explore how the private sector can actively contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

There are two phases to the project:

Phase 1

entails engagement on the global scale through two collaboration forums:

- **Forum 1** explores the **current state of play** on the role of reporting and partnerships to drive corporate change in accomplishing the SDGs (Forum 1: 8 October 2019);
- **Forum 2** builds on the outcomes of Forum 1, and will **develop a vision** on what needs to be done to strengthen the role of future SDG reporting, to enhance sustainable business practices, and actions, to stimulate new partnerships and business models to accelerate corporate SDG action (Forum 2: 14 November 2019); and

Phase 2

will use the outcomes from both forums, written up as two reports, to inform regional dialogues, on **strengthening the role of the SDGs**. These are planned for 2020.

Forum 1, consisted of two 90-minute, global, real-time, online, text-based discussion sessions, held on 8 October 2019, and moderated by global insights firm GlobeScan. The event attracted 394 participants, from 56 countries around the world and included 12 expert guest contributors from 11 organisations, who were invited as multi-stakeholder panellists to help ground the discussion, which was divided into four key thematic parts. An analysis of the textual data was carried out following the forum.

This report summarises learnings across the discussions from Forum 1 of the project and identifies key challenges and initial priorities for action. A list of examples and resources relevant to this forum can be found in the **Appendix 2**.

Introductions from Enel and GRI

The SDGs were established by the United Nations as the ambitious roadmap towards a sustainable future. The success of the SDGs hinges on the ability to engage the private sector and unleash their innovative power.

From the inception of the SDGs, GRI has championed the participation of the private sector in measuring and achieving progress. And it is clear that, by engaging in SDG reporting and embedding this within corporate disclosures, businesses can change their ways of working through embracing sustainable practices.

This exciting partnership between our two organizations will help us understand how this is happening in practice and what we can do to encourage more companies to get on board. In addition, the project aims to trigger new national and global collaboration initiatives.

On one hand, the integration of the SDGs into Enel's strategy is key to fostering group growth while accelerating sustainable development where the company operates and promoting the creation of value to be shared with all its stakeholders, from local communities, to employees, suppliers and investors.

On the other, the implementation of SDG17, which includes new forms of partnerships, helps create long-term value, in line with Enel's 'Open Innovability' vision. From this perspective, Enel is working with GRI in an open environment towards the achievement of the goals of the 2030 Agenda.

We look forward to building on the good discussion from this first forum and the outputs from our next conversation on 14 November, 2019.

We would like to thank GlobeScan for their expertise and moderation of the Forums. Their proprietary platform provides a space for expert stakeholders to come together to learn, inspire fresh thinking and share best practice examples to turn ideas into collective action.

A special thanks to all the contributors for taking the time to join us and for sharing their experience and wisdom.

Marina Migliorato, Head Sustainability Stakeholder Engagement, Enel
Peter Paul van de Wijs, Chief External Affairs Officer, Global Reporting Initiative

Executive Summary

Business reporting plays an important role in building corporate transparency and accountability, which are integral to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The forum identified several reasons **why corporate transparency is key in driving SDG action**. These include its ability to: (1) create accountability through reporting regular progress, (2) build trust, demonstrate commitment and encourage collaboration, (3) enable external stakeholders to assess corporate performance effectively, (4) drive internal performance improvements, and (5) create authentic learning opportunities internally and externally.

The **role and impact of current reporting frameworks**, specifically GRI Standards, were also discussed. Standards help the private sector progress their actions towards the 2030 Agenda by: (1) kick-starting companies' understanding of their SDG contributions, (2) providing global guidance as a common approach to achieve the 2030 Agenda, (3) helping companies identify performance, or business gaps, as an opportunity to improve, collaborate, innovate or gain business advantage, (4) increasing data comparability with other companies easier, and (5) helping companies link SDG performance to business performance.

One of the biggest challenges faced by businesses in using reporting frameworks is the **complexity of the currently available standards** – according to our online poll during the forum, 50% of participants said the greatest reporting challenge is complexity in disclosing performance. Participants agreed that there is a **need for a common approach to reporting on the SDGs**. Other challenges include: (1) problems making the link between SDG actions and financial outcomes, (2) knowing what to report on, (3) different needs for different sizes of companies (SMEs versus large enterprises), (4) low levels of comparable reporting, and (5) integrating the SDGs into overall business strategy.

Both sessions produced relatively few examples of **partnerships and new business models deriving from SDG reporting**. While some companies have adapted their reporting to the SDGs, few have integrated the goals into their business strategy. However, there have been some developments at sector level, such as in the fashion, food and finance industries.

Ahead of the second forum, participants began exploring **what needs to be done to strengthen the role of reporting (and corporate transparency) to accelerate SDG action**. Potential actions to be considered include: (1) increasing awareness, education and support for businesses around reporting standards, record management, materiality, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and target setting, (2) promoting reporting as a learning tool to drive best practice across the sector, and (3) providing different types of business with more tailored support – including those starting out on the SDG journey.

Initial ideas for **strengthening the development of new business models and partnerships through SDG reporting** to accelerate SDG action include: (1) encouraging more impactful partnerships between government and business on the SDGs, (2) simplifying SDG initiatives, such as science-based targets, (3) aligning SDGs with global excellence models, (4) learning from Theory of Change processes, and (5) increasing education and training on materiality.

Part 1

The role and impact of corporate transparency in driving the 2030 Agenda

“ The role and impact of transparency in driving the 2030 Agenda is key. It promotes the objective of making a real change through the ideation, implementation, and disclosure of a sustainable strategy that creates value for company, stakeholders and planet.

Giulia Genuardi, Enel

1.1- Key summary

There was overwhelming agreement among forum participants that corporate transparency (and accountability), which is created through corporate reporting processes, plays a key role in driving impactful change on the 2030 Agenda.

44% of forum participants who took part in an online poll said that the most important role for reporting is committing business to action (see chart 1).

Chart 1
What do you believe is the most important role for reporting on the SDGs?
Number of participants: 211



The forum highlighted a variety of reasons why corporate transparency is key in driving SDG action, which include its ability to: (1) create accountability through reporting regular progress, (2) build trust, demonstrate commitment and encourage collaboration, (3) enable external stakeholders to assess corporate performance effectively, (4) drive internal performance improvements, and (5) create authentic learning opportunities internally and externally.

1.2- The role of corporate transparency in driving the SDG agenda

Corporate transparency helps drive SDG action because it:

Creates accountability. Regular corporate reporting creates a system of transparency and accountability, as it encourages businesses to set targets, measure and monitor SDG impact, which provide a powerful driver for continuous improvement.

“SDG reporting will only drive change if reporting is transparent and increases the accountability of the company to recognise if their strategy isn't working.

Paulina Ondarza Dovali, World Wide Generation

Builds trust, demonstrates commitment and encourages collaboration. Transparency builds trust, helps demonstrate true commitment and progress in achieving the goals, attracts new investment, and boosts collaboration to achieve sustainability impact.

“Change and innovation come through collaborations based on trust and transparency.

Francesca Viliani, International SOS

“As more companies become more transparent, it will allow companies to look across industries and identify partners. It may be partners with similar areas of opportunities, or partners that have solutions to your companies' opportunities. Either way, it's vital to have partners to drive the 2030 Agenda, rather than (work) alone, and that starts with transparency.

Emily Bishop, Mastercard

Enables assessments by third parties. Business reporting results in businesses being more accountable to external stakeholders, such as investors, who can effectively assess their performance, and make sound decisions. The implications of inconsistent and non-transparent practices and processes can be significant.

“Investors and enterprises cannot measure, disclose and compare positive and negative impacts, or benchmark, or improve their performance in a comparable way. The sustainability and impact assessments currently reported by many organizations fall short of facilitating investor decision making.

Marcos Neto, UNDP

“Transparency and disclosure need to be rooted in strategy and KPIs. Investors are pretty tired of the happy talk, that we no longer read in all sorts of reports.

Piet Klop, PGGM

“ Along the value chain, investors and financiers are key drivers for change. With increased pressure from responsible investors and lenders, corporates will raise the bar in their ESG strategy and performance.

Esther An, City Developments Ltd (CDL)

Drives internal performance improvements. Reporting (and corporate transparency) also helps set internal objectives and targets to enable the business to evaluate their own concrete performance towards the SDGs and drive improved performance.

“ Transparency and reporting also help to engage internal audiences, and to plant seeds internally to foster support for further alignment of business activities to SDGs.

Jan Van Rompay, Lumileds

Acts as a learning tool for others. Corporate transparency has a key role in helping organizations learn from each other through disclosing both successes and failures. Reporting on the SDGs, therefore, acts as a force for greater, and wider, sectorial and regional SDG impact.

“ Transparency is not only about accountability and measurement. It is also about sharing with external parties who can learn about your successes and failures, to help improve their practices as well. Achieving the SDGs requires a collaborative effort, so sharing is an important aspect of that.

Jessica Peixoto, Celestica

A number of contributors raised the role of corporate transparency as the first step in having an informed dialogue on how to reach the Goals.

“ Sharing your sustainability journey with external stakeholders allows you to engage with them in a more genuine way. Being able to share your challenges allows for more open discussions with stakeholders, about the journey we were on because it can be a long journey and just getting the feedback alone ensures you are going in the right direction.

Gabriela Polanco-Sorto, Manulife

Part 2

The contribution of reporting frameworks - challenges and successes

“ I feel many companies are lost in their quest for sustainability. Where to start? Standards can serve as an orientation and navigation tool to help pin down what to focus efforts on, how to do this, and track what works, and what doesn't. Standards can inform strategy and process.

Pop Marit Ouwerkerk, PI&C

2.1- Key summary

Participants agreed with the need for a common approach to reporting on the SDGs to create actionable and comparable reporting disclosures to advance the 2030 Agenda.

Currently, there are a small number of global frameworks that have a large adoption rate, the GRI Standards and CDP being the main two in scale. At the same time, there are many specific reporting requirements for business, such as gender pay gap, UK carbon emissions, and specific approaches for some elements of the SDGs, or sectors, such as the Global Real Estate Sustainability Benchmark (GRESB) for real estate, or the International Labour Organisation (ILO) for labour rights. Often times these reporting requirements can be met by using the disclosures which are part of for example the GRI Standards.

Reporting frameworks, such as the GRI Standards, help the private sector make progress towards the 2030 Agenda by: (1) kick-starting companies' understanding of their SDG contribution, (2) providing global guidance as a common approach to achieve the 2030 Agenda, (3) helping companies identify performance or business gaps, as an opportunity to improve, collaborate, innovate or gain business advantage, (4) increasing ease of data comparability with other companies, and (5) helping companies link SDG performance to business performance.

2.2- The role of reporting frameworks, like the GRI Standards, to progress the 2030 Agenda

The forum highlighted how reporting frameworks, like the GRI Standards, are making a contribution to help the private sector accomplish the 2030 Agenda:

Kick-start companies' understanding of their SDG contribution. . Forum participants agreed that reporting frameworks, particularly the GRI Standards, have a key role in helping starting report preparers understand their contribution to the SDGs. And these frameworks can be used in combination with tools developed in collaboration with the United Nations Global Compact.

- “ The ‘Practical Guide to Integrate the SDGs into Corporate Reporting’ – developed in collaboration with GRI - provides guidance on how to prioritize those SDGs (and targets) to act and report on while avoiding ‘SDG-washing’ and ‘cherry-picking’.
Bernhard Frey, United Nations Global Compact

Provide global guidance as a ‘common approach’ to the 2030 Agenda. The value of a common approach was a key theme that trended during the forum.

- “ Standards like GRI help to create a common language and increase data comparability.
Juliette Gaussem, Signify

Reporting frameworks, such as the GRI Standards, help companies report on their SDG progress, by providing targets to enable action and measurement.

- “ Frameworks such as the GRI have given valid and practical metrics to evaluate, ideate and implement practices aligned to the SDGs.
Marcia Massotti De Carvalho, Enel

- “ GRI Standards help organizations have a clear view of what is expected in terms of targets.
Giovanna Jagger, Panoptic Global Solutions

Help companies identify performance or business gaps. Reporting frameworks help companies identify strengths and weaknesses in their performance, as an opportunity to identify areas for improvement, new business opportunities, partnerships, or innovation.

- “ I think the GRI standards, when used not just as a reporting tool, but as an integral part of company strategy, in which the SDGs are part of core business can make a difference.
Marcos Neto, UNDP

Increase data comparability. According to internal and external stakeholders, standards also increase ease of data comparability with other companies.

“ Reporting frameworks have created a scheme that makes comparison with other companies easier.

Marcia Massotti de Carvalho, Enel

“ Standards like GRI make it easier to investigate organizations. For once, they provide a great starting point, a framework for orientation, and they provide data which can be investigated.

Can Gerlach, University of Amsterdam

Help link companies' SDG performance to business performance. Several forum participants highlighted that tools (including the GRI Standards or CDP's questionnaires) tie SDG reporting to existing management tools, and help companies make the link between SDG performance and business performance. See also the resources list at the end of this document.

“ Companies reporting on standardised and hopefully comparable KPIs, helps to measure their progress and compare performance.

Edoardo Gai, RobecoSAM

2.3- Challenges with reporting frameworks

According to our online poll, 50 percent of participants said that the greatest reporting challenge when reporting on progress on the SDGs with the GRI Standards, is complexity in disclosing performance (see chart 2).

Chart 2

What do you find challenging when reporting on your progress on the SDGs with the GRI Standards?

Number of participants: 144



Reporting frameworks are complex. A key insight from the discussions was that reporting frameworks are seen as very complex. Companies are looking for more actionable frameworks and tools.

“ What is still missing is simplification for non-sustainability.
Kari Solomon, Keolis America Inc

“ For first time reporters, the standards can be good to understand their contribution. However, companies will still need to embed the SDGs into their strategy, and to do so, translate the requirements of the standards into commitments, which is not always easy.

Juliette Gaussem, Signify

Business confusion with the wide array of reporting systems. Both reporters and users of reports are still confused about the variety of standards and reporting guidelines, with different initiatives and standards, such as the GRI Standards, the GIIN's IRIS+, IIRC, and others, despite large adoption rates being clear in a handful of them.

“ It is difficult to navigate and to know which system to align with. More consensus and collaboration would be helpful.

David Wallis, Mirova Natural Capital

“ There is no shortage of frameworks like GRI that provide the means of defining, measuring and reporting impacts. For companies the landscape remains confusing and complex.

Filippo Veglio, World Business Council for Sustainable Development

“ It is not accurate to say there are 200 reporting frameworks, that is comparing apples, oranges and potatoes. There are only a very small number of global frameworks with large adoption, GRI and CDP being two with scale.

Paul Simpson, CDP

Difficulty in linking actions that contribute to the SDGs and financial outcomes. The need for a business case was a common theme throughout the discussions.

“ Some companies do not understand why they should do the reporting. We need to emphasize the benefits for companies using GRI reporting.

Panu Hamari, European Green Lean Association

“ The Standards are great for telling companies what to report on. However, they're not great at telling companies why they should report. If more companies and executives understood the link between SDG performance and financial performance, the SDGs would be achieved much faster. All reporting is a burden, but the importance of financial reporting is understood, so it's done, regardless of the time, effort or resources required.

Thabo Mokate, EBS Advisory

Materiality: knowing what to report on. Materiality was highlighted as a significant challenge, in terms of harmonizing and linking assessments to SDG prioritisation.

“ The biggest challenge is always the materiality, and the inclusion of interest groups.

Alejandra Hernandez, IDEAL Estrategicamente Sustenta

“ We need to have a set benchmark, and standardize our frameworks to have better measurement, comparability and transparency as a result.

Almar EIAly, University of Waterloo

Specific challenges for SMEs. There is a need to support SMEs and adjust approaches to meet their needs and resources.

“ I work with SMEs, and they are still in the dark. How do we bring 90% of business on board, and not just the big multinationals, with well-equipped resources?

Rudi Plettinx, The Sustainability and Innovation Centre

“ The processes, and references, are very heavy for small companies who do not have dedicated resources at least to give a start for sustainability policies”. Dubois further highlights: “Indeed we need to adapt the approach to SMEs and social enterprises. One size does not fit all.

Roland Dubois, ABB

“ Reporting is not a small investment for them (SME's). They do want to take part but need assistance. Otherwise they will be left behind, and yet still have lots to offer to contribute to the SDGs. They want to know what, how and when to measure, and what methodology and tools are needed.

Silvie Mensink, Social Leisure

Specific challenges for more complex, larger businesses. At the same time, large companies are not immune to challenges in implementing reporting frameworks.

“ Some challenges that I have experienced are the extensiveness of the reporting, as there may be internal barriers to publishing certain information. At Celestica, we operate globally and it can be very difficult, or time consuming to track certain data, which takes away time from actually implementing new projects to progress on other goals.

Jessica Peixoto, Celestica

“ A pain point is getting the right data in the first place, especially for large, multinationals.

Tom Bryant, TFB Consulting

Relatively low levels of reporting on SDGs. Low levels of reporting can make it difficult for external stakeholders to compare performance between companies.

“ Comparisons are limited because only a small number of firms currently report. That's a big challenge.

Eric Howard, Second Nature

Integrating SDGs into overall sustainability/business strategy. There is a challenge in linking reporting and SDGs into overall sustainability and business strategies – including setting business objectives that align to SDG targets.

“ Many of the standards, frameworks etc. that are currently available, may still miss a direct and plausible link to business strategy and to the desired outcomes, as codes by the SDGs. Recent taxonomies by EU/TEG, APG/PGGM, CBI are trying to do something about the latter.

Piet Klop, PGGM

“ It is important to communicate transparently on how you have integrated sustainability into your business model, business strategy, internal processes, and really, into day-to-day work. That is how we drive real change and we demonstrate genuine commitment to building sustainable future.

Marija Angelovska, Nordic Entertainment

Part 3

Changing business behaviour through reporting - focus on new business models and partnerships

“ When I was at Loyalty One, we were given a clean slate for our sustainability strategy so we internally created a framework to think about the SDGs where we could make a difference. We then invited organizations working on social issues that we had identified, to talk about the impact we wanted to make, and for them to tell us about how they measured impact. After all they were the experts working on the ground, and together we built some really interesting partnerships, but the focus was collaborative. I can tell you the feedback we got from them, as to how we wanted to work was incredible. They could see that we were being transparent, about how we were making (our internal) decisions.

Gabriela Polanco-Sorto, Manulife

3.1- Key summary

The forum highlighted how reporting on the SDGs has led to a shift in business action around new business models. Businesses aligned to specific SDG themes (such as climate change) and specific sectors (such as the fashion sector) are more likely to have developed new business models as a result of reporting. However, not all participants agreed that new business models have emerged from reporting on the SDGs.

In terms of business action around new partnerships, some sectors such as the finance sector have progressed further in developing partnerships as a result of SDG reporting. Discussions suggest that some thematic topics, such as circular economy and supply chains, are potential areas for partnership development as a result of SDG reporting. Also, there was recognition for the business opportunities that come with implementing the SDGs, with particular reference to the estimate of the Business and Sustainable Development Commission, estimating US\$12 trillion in opportunities.

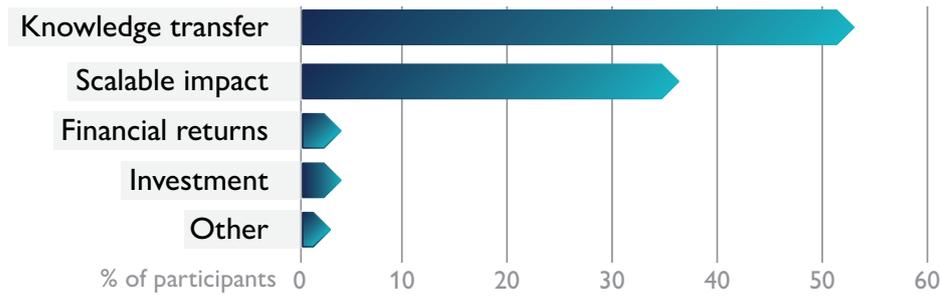
Both sessions produced relatively few examples of partnerships and new business models from SDG reporting.

Over half of forum participants who took part in an online poll said that knowledge transfer is the most valuable benefit from forming new partnerships and collaborating with others (see chart 3).

Chart 3

What value has arisen from establishing new partnerships & collaborating with others?

Number of participants: 103



3.2- The development of new business models through reporting on the SDGs

Both sessions produced relatively few specific examples of new business models as a result of reporting of the SDGs, which participants found surprising, given the expectation that the SDGs would trigger new ideas and approaches.

“ Up to now we have experienced companies, that have adapted their reporting on SDGs, and not yet, so much their business model.

Edoardo Gai, RobecoSAM

Several different reasons for this came up in the discussions. First, the private sector tends to see the SDGs as offering overall guidance rather than an opportunity to drive change. Second, the SDGs are forward looking, whereas reporting is seen as more backward looking. Third, whilst companies have adapted their reporting to the SDGs, few have integrated SDGs in their business strategy and in developing new business models.

“ I think it takes a higher level of commitment to the SDGs to drastically change the business models if there is no immediate synergy with current products and services.

David Matta, Arc En Ciel Solutions

Some trends emerged with examples from forum participants on specific SDG topics that are giving rise to successful new business models. These include SDG 13 on climate action, and a shift in the number of firms moving to science-based targets, which are robust targets defining sufficient contributions through a sectoral approach.

“ On climate change, the SDGs on climate action, and the Paris Agreement led to the new norm of business behaviour, the setting of science-based targets. These are forward looking emissions reduction targets in line with a well below 2 or 1.5C pathway. There are now 670 companies committed to such targets.

Paul Simpson, CDP

Some sectors, more than others, are developing new business models through the SDGs – such as consumer retail and the fashion industry. Examples included The North Face, who is linking product design directly to SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), and the Sustainable Apparel Coalition (SAC), which is an industry-wide group of companies supporting each other to have more impact.

3.3- The development of partnerships through reporting on the SDGs

Certain sectors have also made progress on developing new partnerships as a result of reporting on the SDGs – such as the food, plastics and finance industries.

“ There is a more systemic approach, in the pre-competitive space, where companies within industries, are coming together to develop solutions such as plastics, food.”

Filippo Veglio, World Business Council for Sustainable Development

“ One partnership we’ve formed in the Netherlands is the SDG Impact Measurement Working Group, on the Sustainable Finance Platform, hosted by the Dutch Central Bank. 20 or so financials and companies are trying to strike a balance between credibility and practicality in capturing SDG impacts.

Piet Klop, PGGM

Circular economy and supply chains were discussed as important areas with growth potential for partnerships to accomplish the SDGs through the private sector.

“ We are doing a lot of partnership focused on circular economy, for example, creating shared value. We can benefit people in SDG8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), by giving our operational waste to local entrepreneurs, to produce new stuff, reducing our costs and generating income to them. A lot of SDG impact!

Marcia Massotti De Carvalho, Enel

“ Reporting on some of the SDGs is changing how large companies work with their suppliers. Through CDP over 125 multinationals engage over 5,000 suppliers to disclose on climate change, water security and deforestation in supply chains. The data from those disclosures is being used to form new partnerships with suppliers including providing training, tools, technology and financing.

Paul Simpson, CDP

Some countries are also leveraging corporate partnership data insights as an opportunity to make strategic directions on what needs to be done next. For example, Peter Paul van de Wijs, at **GRI**, described a new partnership between GRI, UNDP, and the Colombian Government, where companies came together to use data reported according to the GRI Standards to understand private sector contributions to the national SDG targets, and engage in national talks on follow-up actions to meet national objectives.

Part 4

Opportunities to strengthen reporting to accelerate SDG action

“ Governments and regulators need to require reporting on SDGs. Business needs to continue to demonstrate that driving action on SDG’s is good for business. Investors need to provide a lower cost of capital for more sustainable companies. Consumers both B2B and C2B need to vote with their purchases and send a market signal. We are making progress on all of these fronts but we need to accelerate and scale change.

Paul Simpson, CDP

4.1- Key summary

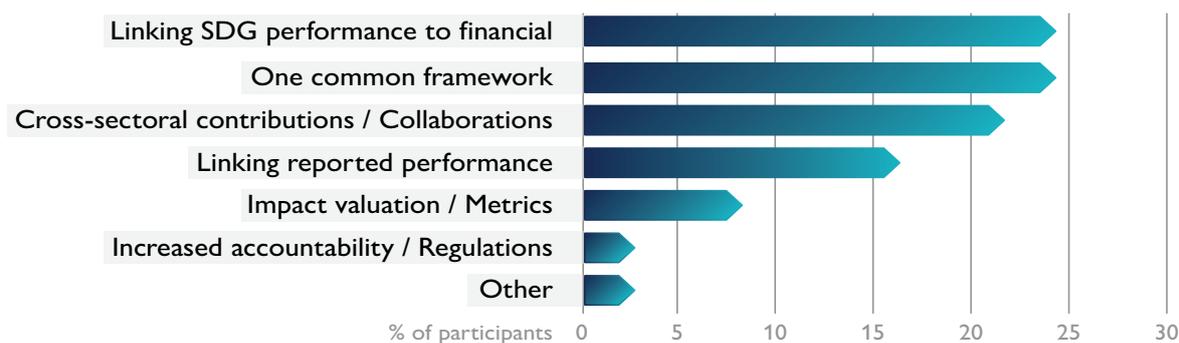
Ahead of the second forum taking place on 14 November, 2019, participants explored areas for improvement in transparency and reporting.

Of participants who took part in an online poll during the forum, 50 percent said that the most important areas of improvement for reporting going forward to achieve the 2030 Agenda are: (1) jointly linking SDG performance to financial performance and, (2) having one common framework.

Chart 4

What is most important for reporting going forward to ensure we achieve the 2030 agenda?

Number of participants: 39



4.2- Priorities for future action: corporate transparency

Forum participants began exploring what needs to be done to strengthen the role of reporting (and corporate transparency) to improve sustainable business practices and support partnerships to accelerate SDG action. Priorities included:

- Increasing awareness, education, support and training for corporates around areas such as reporting standards and tools, effective record and data management, materiality, target setting and measurement, and writing the report.
- Promoting the role of corporate transparency as a 'learning tool' to improve positive sustainability impact, and drive best practice across industries, rather than as an opportunity to 'name and shame'. This means encouraging reporting of areas for improvement, as well as areas of achievements in reports.
- More tailored support for different types of business, for example, SMEs who may be in survival mode and have different needs to larger complex companies.
- More clarity in the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that corporates have to report on, with easier entry mechanisms for corporates starting out on their SDG journeys.
- Opportunities for more auditing, assurance and verification by independent auditors to prevent 'green washing' and confidence in reporting.

4.3- Priorities for future action: reporting frameworks

Areas for improvement in reporting frameworks, specifically, included:

- Increasing awareness, education and training for the private sector on the business case for sustainability reporting, and the benefits of using reporting frameworks. In addition, more education on the link between SDG performance and financial performance, with the aim to engage the CFO community.
- Increasing awareness, training and education on helping the private sector to understand reporting frameworks, what to report on (materiality), prioritise, and how to measure.
- Increasing awareness, education, training and resources for different types of business, for example SMEs or complex corporates.
- Improving the current perceptions of business confused by the array of reporting frameworks, especially those who are just starting out, and do not know where to start.
- Reviewing reporting frameworks to provide practical, more simplified translations to help simplify the journey for businesses, with tailored communications support to non-sustainability professionals across different corporate functions.
- Reviewing calls for more outcome-based reporting and incorporate more granularity (better measurement methodology) on reporting of positive impacts to society.
- Reviewing the GRI Standards on linking indicators more closely to the SDGs, including positive and net impact, as well as different levels of reporting available for global, national and non-listed businesses and SMEs.
- Reviewing support for more assurance and third-party verification of sustainability data.
- Reviewing the interest in reporting frameworks (that are beginning to be developed by some governments) that feed into large open source SDG progress monitoring databases where companies can see if their total efforts are enough.

4.4- Priorities for future action: partnerships and business models

Initial ideas for encouraging partnerships and new business models included the following:

- Solutions are needed to simplify initiatives, such as the science-based targets, to implement all 17 SDGs. Companies need to be engaged and encouraged to start simply and then increase ambition.

“ Out of the 670 companies committed, only 276 have set an approved target so far. Is it reasonable to expect this for all 17 SDGs? Can we simplify somehow?

Daniel Witte, Carnstone Partners Ltd

- Consider opportunities to align SDGs with global excellence models, and fully integrate concepts, as a way to become world leaders, and to break the idea that the SDGs are ‘just another burden’.
- More impactful partnerships between business and national governments – there are currently few of these. Learn from the GRI-UNDP partnership with the Colombian Government where data reported according to the GRI framework is pooled, as a systematic opportunity for national governments to understand current private sector contributions to national SDG targets, and engage in talks on what actions are needed to meet national targets.
- Provide more training on materiality analysis to the private sector, which highlights priorities, and is not based just on relevance, which is key to developing plans in line with the SDGs, and to fostering collaboration, new business models and partnerships.
- Learning from ‘Theory of Change’ processes as an opportunity to improve business models by enabling them to be more targeted and effective.
- Suggestions for partnerships between corporates/investors, with organisations that specialise in impact data processing, and impact performance reporting (with visualisation).

Appendix 1: List of expert guest contributors

Thank you to the expert guest contributors who joined us for the forum, and contributed their invaluable insights and perspectives

- Paul Simpson, Chief Executive Officer, Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP)
- Piet Klop, Senior Responsible Investment Advisor, PGGM
- Filippo Veglio, Managing Director, World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD)
- Edoardo Gai, Managing Director, Head of ESG Benchmarking, RobecoSAM
- Esther An, Chief Sustainability Officer, City Developments Ltd (CDL)
- Giulia Genuardi, Head of Sustainability Planning and Performance Management, Enel
- Tim Mohin, Chief Executive, Global Reporting Initiative (GRI)
- Peter Paul van de Wijs, Chief External Affairs Officer, Global Reporting Initiative (GRI)
- Bernhard Frey, Senior Manager, SDG Impact and Reporting, United Nations Global Compact (UNGC)
- Marcia Massotti De Carvalho, Head of Sustainability Brazil, Enel
- Marcos Neto, Director of Finance Sector Hub, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- Gabriela Polanco-Sorto, Director Sustainability and Community Investment, Manulife

Appendix 2: Shared examples and resources

- Companies that are looking to kick-start their understanding of their contribution to the SDGs should use the GRI Standards in combination with the [tools](#) developed in collaboration with the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC).
- [The Better Business Better World report](#) of the Business and Sustainable Development Commission outlines US\$12 trillion in potential opportunities resulting from the implementation of the SDGs.
- WBCSD shared member data, as follows: High awareness among companies of the SDGs, with 89 percent of WBCSD members acknowledging the SDGs in some way: (1) but only half of them map their sustainability strategy to relevant SDGs and provide some evidence (2) And only 15 percent of companies align strategy and targets to specific SDG criteria and measure contributions to key SDGs.
- In 2017, the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC), and GRI, launched the Action Platform Reporting on the SDGs, which includes guidance to help address some of the key challenges related to corporate SDG reporting. This collaboration produced three publications to help companies and investors align their strategies with the SDGs:
 - [An Analysis of Goals and Targets](#); an inventory of possible disclosures per SDG, at the level of the 169 targets.
 - [The Practical Guide to Integrate the SDGs into Corporate Reporting](#) provides guidance on how to prioritise the SDGs (and targets)
 - [In Focus: Addressing Investor Needs in Business Reporting on the SDGs](#) provides additional information about investor-relevant aspects of corporate SDG reporting.
- GRI and the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) convened a Corporate Action Group to collect case studies and define best practice in revising their materiality assessments in light of 2030 Agenda.
- UNDP highlighted a programme, called Business Call to Action, an impact lab that allows companies to set their strategic social and environment intent, and theory of change, and pick their indicators, linked to the GRI Standards.
- UNDP established the SDG Impact flagship initiative that focuses on eliminating barriers and driving integrity for SDG-enabling investment at scale.
- Enel's Sustainability Dashboard provides a concise sustainability review that demonstrates value created by the company and lays out the path for the next 3 years.
- CDL has evolved sustainability reporting with the GRI guidelines. The GRI Standards helped them in both climate mitigation and adaptation, space for improvement, and opportunities for innovation.
- SDG 13 on climate action, and the Paris Agreement, led to the new norm of business behaviour, the setting of Science Based Targets ([SBTs](#)). These are forward looking emissions reduction targets in line with a well below 2 or 1.5C pathway. There are now 670 companies committed to such targets.
- Guest Contributor, Esther An, at City Developments Ltd (CDL), presented a good example of [mapping material issues to SDGs](#).

Appendix 3: About GRI, Enel and GlobeScan



About GRI

GRI is an independent international organization, based in Amsterdam with a presence around the world, that helps businesses, governments and other organizations understand and communicate their sustainability impacts.

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About Enel

Enel is a multinational power company and a leading integrated player in the global power, gas and renewables markets. It is the largest European utility by market capitalization and ordinary EBITDA and is present in over 30 countries worldwide, producing energy with around 90 GW of managed capacity. Enel is strongly focused on sustainability and innovation. Its renewables arm Enel Green Power manages over 43 GW of wind, solar, geothermal and hydropower plants worldwide.

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About GlobeScan

GlobeScan is an insights and strategy consultancy, focused on helping our clients build long-term trusting relationships with their stakeholders. Offering a suite of specialist research and advisory services, we partner with business, NGOs and governmental organizations to meet strategic objectives across reputation, sustainability and purpose.

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