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# Item 02 – Draft summary of the GSSB meeting held on 29 April 2021

## For GSSB approval

<b>Date</b>	27 May 20201
<b>Meeting</b>	29 April 2021
<b>Description</b>	This document presents the summary of the GSSB virtual meeting held on 29 April 2021.

This document has been prepared by the GRI Standards Division and is made available to observers at meetings of the Global Sustainability Standards Board (GSSB). It does not represent an official position of the GSSB. Board positions are set out in the GRI Sustainability Reporting Standards. The GSSB is the independent standard setting body of GRI. For more information visit [www.globalreporting.org](http://www.globalreporting.org).

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This document does not represent an official position of the GSSB

## 2 Participants

3 Present:

Name	Constituency
Judy Kuszewski	Chair
Robyn Leeson	Vice-Chair
Loredana Carta	Labor
Peter Colley	Labor
Giulia Genuardi	Business enterprise
Evan Harvey	Investment institution
Joseph Martin	Business enterprise
Jennifer Princing	Business enterprise
Corli le Roux	Mediating institution
Kim Schumacher	Civil society organization
Gustavo Sinner	Mediating institution
Kenton Swift	Civil society organization
Rama Krishnan Venkateswaran	Investment institution
Michel Washer	Business enterprise

4 Apologies:

Name	Constituency
Vincent Kong	Business enterprise

5 In attendance from GRI:

Name	Position
Bastian Buck	Chief of Standards
Margarita Lysenkova	Manager
Noora Puro	Manager
Anna Krotova	Senior Manager

## 6 List of abbreviations

GSSB	Global Sustainability Standards Board
HGB	highest governance body
PWG	Project Working Group
RFO	reason for omission
SD	Standards Division

## 7 Decisions and action items

### 8 Decisions

9 **GSSB Decision 2021.05** The GSSB resolved to approve [Item 01 - Draft summary of GSSB meeting](#)  
10 [4 March 2021](#).

11 **GSSB Decision 2021.06** The GSSB resolved to approve [Item 02 - Draft summary of GSSB meeting](#)  
12 [23 March 2021](#).

13 **GSSB Decision 2021.07** The GSSB resolved to approve [Item 03 - GRI Sector Standards Project for](#)  
14 [Agriculture and Fishing - Exposure draft for agriculture, aquaculture and fishing](#), and to change the  
15 name of the Sector Standard to the GRI Sector Standard: Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fishing.

16 **GSSB Decision 2021.08** The GSSB resolved to approve [Item 04 – GRI Sector Standards Project for](#)  
17 [Oil, Gas, and Coal – Exposure draft for Coal](#).

### 18 Action items

GSSB	
Session 2 and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GSSB to provide any feedback on the proposed Sector Standard public comment questions to the SD by 7 May 2021.</li> <li>• GSSB to review and provide feedback on the revised reasons for omission text to the SD prior to approving the final draft of the Universal Standards.</li> <li>• GSSB to debate the decisions and potential consequences of requiring sign off on the statement of use by the highest governance body at a private session, in order to be prepared to take the decision on the content in the next public meeting.</li> <li>• GSSB to revisit decision to expand GOV-13 to also report on executive remuneration at a later date.</li> <li>• GSSB to revisit the issue of notification requirement at a future meeting.</li> </ul>
Standards Division	
Session 2 and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SD to circulate the draft of the text in reasons for omission to the GSSB prior to the final approval of the Universal Standards.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SD to incorporate mention of countries as a dimension of business competencies into the final draft of GOV-1 and GOV-2, with updated wording as suggested by the GSSB.</li> <li>• SD to evaluate and report whether the information requested by the GSSB member in GOV-4 is included in other governance disclosures.</li> <li>• SD to present the GRI Standards format at a follow-up meeting.</li> </ul>
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## 19 Session 1: Welcome

20 The Global Sustainability Standards Board (GSSB) Chair Judy Kuszewski (henceforth the Chair)  
21 welcomed the GSSB and presented an overview of the meeting agenda.

22 The GSSB was presented with [Item 01 - Draft summary of GSSB meeting 4 March 2021](#) and [Item 02](#)  
23 [- Draft summary of GSSB meeting 23 March 2021](#) for approval.

24 **GSSB Decision 2021.06** The GSSB resolved to approve [Item 01 - Draft summary of GSSB meeting](#)  
25 [4 March 2021](#).

26 **GSSB Decision 2021.07** The GSSB resolved to approve [Item 02 - Draft summary of GSSB meeting](#)  
27 [23 March 2021](#).

## 28 Session 2: GRI Sector Standards 29 program

### 30 Exposure draft Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fishing

31 The GSSB was presented with [Item 03 - GRI Sector Standards Project for Agriculture and Fishing -](#)  
32 [Exposure draft](#) for review and approval. The Standards Division (SD) reviewed the progress of the  
33 GRI Sector Standards Project for Agriculture and Fishing, and the content of the exposure draft,  
34 highlighting the addition of aquaculture in the Sector Standard title.

35 A GSSB member questioned whether the GRI Agriculture and Fishing Sector Standards Project  
36 Working Group (PWG) had discussed whether including all topics together would make the scope for  
37 the Sector Standard too broad. The SD responded that the PWG had not indicated that the topics  
38 should be split. However, the group did raise the need to balance the descriptions of impacts related  
39 to agriculture, aquaculture, and fishing, and this has subsequently been addressed in the draft.

40 Another GSSB member questioned whether there was enough focus on the detail of reporting  
41 requirements in the draft but indicated that this could be raised during and after the public comment  
42 period.

43 The Chair asked if there were any concerns or further discussion from GSSB members on the name  
44 change and exposure draft. No further comments were raised, and the Chair confirmed that both were  
45 approved.

46 **GSSB Decision 2021.08** The GSSB resolved to approve [Item 03 - GRI Sector Standards Project for](#)  
47 [Agriculture and Fishing - Exposure draft for agriculture, aquaculture and fishing](#), and to change the  
48 name of the Sector Standard to the GRI Sector Standard: Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fishing.

### 49 **Exposure draft Coal**

50 The GSSB was presented with [Item 04 – GRI Sector Standards Project for Oil, Gas, and Coal –](#)  
51 [Exposure draft for Coal](#) for review and approval. The SD reviewed the progress of the GRI Sector  
52 Standards Project for Oil, Gas and Coal, and the content of the exposure draft for coal.

53 A GSSB member highlighted the need to be careful with the language used around Scope 1, Scope 2  
54 and Scope 3 emissions, specifically regarding allocating responsibility for Scope 3 emissions.

55 The Chair requested any further feedback or concerns from GSSB members on the exposure draft.  
56 No further comments were raised, and the Chair confirmed that the exposure draft was approved.

57 **GSSB Decision 2021.09** The GSSB resolved to approve [Item 04 – GRI Sector Standards Project for](#)  
58 [Oil, Gas, and Coal – Exposure draft for Coal](#).

59 The SD reviewed details of both planned public comment periods, and the Chair highlighted that  
60 GSSB feedback on the proposed public comment questions should be received by 7 May 2021.

### 61 **Actions:**

- 62 • GSSB to provide any feedback on the proposed Sector Standard public comment questions  
63 to the SD by 7 May 2021.

## 64 **Session 3: GRI Universal Standards** 65 **project**

66 The SD presented an update on the latest changes to the draft of the Universal Standards, and set  
67 out to resolve the final open issues of reasons for omission, statement of use and the governance  
68 disclosures.

## 69 **Reasons for omission**

70 The SD presented a concern that allowing a 'not applicable' reason for omission (RFO) when an item  
71 to be reported (such as a policy or commitment) does not exist contradicts the expectations set in the  
72 requirement or the disclosure.

73 Allowing this RFO in such a situation had been settled on by the GSSB in previous meetings.  
74 However, subsequent review by the SD indicated that allowing this RFO would be incorrect as the  
75 requirement or disclosure applies to the organization whether the item exists or not. Instead, an  
76 organization should report that they do not have the item in question as part of the reported  
77 information. The SD proposed to clarify these approaches accordingly in the draft.

78 Some GSSB members argued that it is indeed important to provide the information about why such  
79 an item does not exist because it gives a full picture of how the organization manages its impacts and  
80 can be important to information users. Other GSSB members discussed that it seemed to be a matter  
81 of confusion with language, with clarification needed between 'not applicable' and 'does not exist'.  
82 Another GSSB member indicated that it is better for information users to have the information  
83 included in the content index.

84 The SD clarified that the issue in question is whether the information will be allowed to be reported  
85 briefly in the content index, or more at length in the reporting material. They highlighted revisions had  
86 initially been made to address public comment feedback that it was unclear how to report something  
87 that does not exist.

88 The SD and Chair discussed consensus for distinguishing between disclosures that are not applicable  
89 and items that do not exist, and how to clarify this. They discussed that the GSSB needed to review  
90 and comment on revised text to move forward. The SD will thus amend the text with GSSB input  
91 before it the final approval of the Standard.

## 92 **Actions:**

- 93 • SD to circulate the draft of the text on reasons for omission to the GSSB prior to the final  
94 approval of the Universal Standards.
- 95 • GSSB to review and provide feedback on the revised reasons for omission text to the SD  
96 prior to approving the final draft of the Universal Standards.

## 97 **Statement of use**

98 The SD then presented an overview of the complications associated with the statement of use,  
99 including a proposal for revisions to the statement of use without reference to the highest governance  
100 body (HGB) and with revised guidance.

101 The Chair asked for further clarification on the need for revisions. The SD discussed the complication  
102 of trying to require the HGB to make the statement when there are different legal considerations  
103 following from such a statement in different jurisdictions worldwide. This led the SD to opt for a

104 statement of use issued by the organization in its simplest form but maintaining the essence for  
105 interested users of the information.

106 GSSB members discussed this proposal. Some strongly supported the revised language for the  
107 reasons described by the SD. Others felt that having the HGB or chief executive sign off on the  
108 reporting is necessary to drive change and to clarify for the HGB that sustainability reporting is their  
109 responsibility. A member also highlighted that boards commonly appoint experts to provide  
110 information for board sign off. The member also stated that it would be a significant reduction in the  
111 impact of the GRI Standards to not expect the HGB to carry this responsibility.

112 The Chair confirmed and reiterated the fundamental point of debate as whether the HGB should be  
113 required to bear responsibility for sustainability reporting. The SD added that a link to the HGB  
114 remained in one of the governance disclosures, which requires reporting the process undertaken by  
115 the HGB to review and approve the reported information.

116 Members continued to reiterate their preferred stances without reaching consensus. There was a  
117 suggestion to strengthen the guidance in the governance disclosure requiring the HGB to specifically  
118 review the sustainability reporting, without fully requiring HGB sign off.

119 The Chair stated that because no progress was being made on the issue, the debate should be  
120 deferred.

## 121 **Actions:**

- 122 • GSSB to debate the decisions and potential consequences of requiring sign off on the  
123 statement of use by the highest governance body.

## 124 **Governance disclosures**

125 The GSSB was presented with [Item 05 - GRI Universal Standards Project - Revised governance](#)  
126 [disclosures](#) for discussion.

127 The SD presented proposals to address points raised by the GSSB in relation to the governance  
128 disclosures.

129 The first point concerned adding geography as a unique dimension of business competencies when  
130 describing the selection and composition of the highest governance body in GOV-1 and GOV-2. The  
131 SD proposed two options: option 1, to refer to countries in which the organization operates, and  
132 option 2, to make no change.

133 A GSSB member proposed option 1, with an update of language to 'competencies relevant to the  
134 organizations and to the countries and sectors in which it operates'. Some support for option 1 was  
135 raised by GSSB members. No concerns were raised. The Chair indicated that the SD should proceed  
136 with option 1, while incorporating the suggested language update.

137 The second point raised by the GSSB concerned adding reference to the process to identify, analyze  
138 and mitigate risks to the organization in GOV-4. The SD proposed not to make changes to GOV-4,

139 because the information is already requested in other disclosures, and the GRI Standards do not use  
140 the concept of 'risks to the organization'. They suggested to instead include the reference in the  
141 introduction to the governance section.

142 A GSSB member argued that by not mentioning external risk to the organization the HGB's attention  
143 would be diluted, and that moving the information to the section introduction would not provide  
144 enough focus on the issue.

145 The Chair reiterated that much of the information requested by the member is required in other parts  
146 of the Universal Standards, but it was unclear if anything specific was missing. The Chair thus  
147 suggested parking the question to allow review of the other disclosures for the information, and to  
148 revisit the decision after this has occurred.

149 The final point raised by the GSSB concerned changing GOV-13 to also address executive  
150 remuneration. The SD suggested not introducing this additional disclosure because executive  
151 remuneration is covered elsewhere, and public comment feedback raised many concerns with such  
152 disclosures.

153 GSSB members expressed some support for the change, but there was not time to come to a final  
154 decision, which was deferred to a later meeting.

#### 155 **Actions:**

- 156 • SD to incorporate mention of countries as a dimension of business competencies into the final  
157 draft of GOV-1 and GOV-2, with updated wording as suggested by the GSSB.
- 158 • SD to evaluate and report whether the information requested by the GSSB member in GOV-4  
159 is included in other governance disclosures.
- 160 • GSSB to revisit decision to expand GOV-13 to also report on executive remuneration at a  
161 later date.

#### 162 **Notification requirement**

163 Due to lack of time, the issue of the notification requirement in the GRI Standards will be discussed at  
164 a future meeting.

#### 165 **Actions:**

- 166 • GSSB to revisit the issue of notification requirement at a follow-up meeting.

## 167 **Session 4: GRI Standards format** 168 **update**

169 Due to lack of time, Session 4 will be discussed at a follow-up meeting.

170 **Actions:**

- 171
- SD to present the GRI Standards format at a follow-up meeting.

172 **Session 5: Any other business and**  
173 **close of public meeting**

174 The Chair and the SD expressed their gratitude to Anna Krotova, who is leaving the SD, for the  
175 difference she with her focus, energy, and the consistent quality of her work, and wished her well on  
176 her future endeavors.

177 No other business was raised, and the Chair closed the meeting at 15.04 CET (Central European  
178 Time).

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