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1 **GSSB summary of the virtual meeting**
2 **held on 29 April 2021**

Approved by the GSSB on 10 June 2021

3 Contents

Participants.....	3
List of abbreviations	3
Decisions and action items	4
Session 1: Welcome	5
Session 2: GRI Sector Standards program.....	5
Exposure draft Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fishing	5
Exposure draft Coal	6
Session 3: GRI Universal Standards project.....	6
Reasons for omission	7
Statement of use.....	7
Governance disclosures	8
Notification requirement.....	9
Session 4: GRI Standards format update	9
Session 5: Any other business and close of public meeting.....	10

4 Participants

5 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

6 Apologies:

Name	Constituency
Vincent Kong	Business enterprise

7 In attendance from GRI:

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

8 List of abbreviations

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

9 Decisions and action items

10 Decisions

11 **GSSB Decision 2021.05** The GSSB resolved to approve [Item 01 - Draft summary of GSSB meeting](#)
 12 [4 March 2021](#).

13 **GSSB Decision 2021.06** The GSSB resolved to approve [Item 02 - Draft summary of GSSB meeting](#)
 14 [23 March 2021](#).

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

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

20 Action items

GSSB	
Session 2 and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GSSB to provide any feedback on the proposed Sector Standard public comment questions to the SD by 7 May 2021. • 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. • 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. • GSSB to revisit decision to expand GOV-13 to also report on executive remuneration at a later date. • GSSB to revisit the issue of notification requirement at a future meeting.
Standards Division	
Session 2 and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SD to circulate the draft of the text in reasons for omission to the GSSB prior to the final approval of the Universal Standards.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • SD to evaluate and report whether the information requested by the GSSB member in GOV-4 is included in other governance disclosures. • SD to present the GRI Standards format at a follow-up meeting.
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21 **Session 1: Welcome**

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

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

26 **GSSB Decision 2021.06** The GSSB resolved to approve [Item 01 - Draft summary of GSSB meeting](#)
27 [4 March 2021](#).

28 **GSSB Decision 2021.07** The GSSB resolved to approve [Item 02 - Draft summary of GSSB meeting](#)
29 [23 March 2021](#).

30 **Session 2: GRI Sector Standards** 31 **program**

32 **Exposure draft Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fishing**

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

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

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

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

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

51 **Exposure draft Coal**

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

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

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

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

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

63 **Actions:**

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

66 **Session 3: GRI Universal Standards** 67 **project**

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

71 **Reasons for omission**

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

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

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

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

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

94 **Actions:**

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

99 **Statement of use**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

123 **Actions:**

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

126 **Governance disclosures**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

157 **Actions:**

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

164 **Notification requirement**

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

167 **Actions:**

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

169 **Session 4: GRI Standards format** 170 **update**

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

172 **Actions:**

- 173
- SD to present the GRI Standards format at a follow-up meeting.

174 **Session 5: Any other business and**
175 **close of public meeting**

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

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