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Item 01 – Draft summary of the GSSB meeting held on 4 March 2021

For GSSB approval

Date	15 April 2021
Meeting	29 April 2021
Description	This document presents the summary of the GSSB virtual meeting held on 4 March 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.

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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
Michel Washer	Business enterprise

4 Apologies:

Name	Constituency
Vincent Kong	Business enterprise
Rama Krishnan Venkateswaran	Investment institution

5 In attendance from GRI:

Name	Position
Bastian Buck	Chief of Standards
Anna Krotova	Senior Manager
Sharon Hagen	Senior Coordinator
Mia d'Adhemar	Senior Manager

6 List of abbreviations

GSSB	Global Sustainability Standards Board
SD	Standards Division
RfO	Reasons for omission

7 Decisions and action items

8 Decisions

9 There were no GSSB Decisions in this meeting.

10 Action items

GSSB	
Session 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• GSSB to review the proposal on the revised statement of use and provide comments and questions in preparation for the next GSSB meeting.
Standards Division	
Session 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SD to explore an assessment of uptake and use of GRI referenced reports.• SD to use amended wording to frame 'in accordance' as the recommended reporting approach in the Universal Standards.• SD to permit reasons for omission (RfOs) for disclosures in <i>GRI 102</i> and <i>GRI 103</i>, except for the discussed list of suggested disclosures where RfOs are not permitted.• SD to explore the integration and explanation of the new 'item does not exist' RfO and RfOs in general.• SD to use amended wording 'the organization shall report appropriate disclosures from the GRI Topic Standards' in Requirement 5 in <i>GRI 101</i> (Requirement A-5 in the exposure draft).• SD to add a requirement in <i>GRI 101</i> to list and explain the 'not appropriate' disclosures from the GRI Sector Standards.

11 Session 1: Welcome

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

14 **Session 2: GRI Universal**

15 **Standards project – Reporting model**

16 **Focus on in accordance**

17 The Standards Division (SD) presented a revised proposal for framing ‘in accordance’ reporting as the
18 recommended approach in the Universal Standards and amending the draft wording accordingly.

19 GSSB members expressed support for the proposal. A GSSB member asked for clarification on how
20 this would influence organizations using the GRI Topic Standards to report on a specific topic.

21 The SD stated that these GRI referenced reports make up a limited percentage of reports in the GRI
22 database. The SD also stated that the data on the number of GRI referenced reports is currently
23 inconclusive and warrants a closer look with planned future changes to the report monitoring process.

24 The Chair confirmed the GSSB’s support to frame ‘in accordance’ reporting as the recommended
25 approach in the Universal Standards.

26 **Actions:**

- 27 • SD to explore an assessment of uptake and use of GRI referenced reports as part of the
28 ongoing monitoring.
- 29 • SD to use amended wording to frame ‘in accordance’ as the recommended reporting
30 approach in the Universal Standards.

31 **Reasons for omission**

32 The Standards Division presented two proposals for permitting reasons for omission (RfOs) for
33 disclosures in the Universal Standards. Proposal 1 permitted the use of RfOs for all disclosures in
34 *GRI 102* and *GRI 103*, and Proposal 2 permitted the use of RfOs for all but a subset of disclosures
35 from *GRI 102* and *GRI 103* deemed critical to contextualize the organization’s reporting.

36 The GSSB discussed the relevance and utility of the two proposals. The GSSB expressed general
37 support for Proposal 2, with some discussion of whether the list of disclosures for which RfOs are not
38 permitted was appropriate.

39 A GSSB member questioned whether Disclosure MT-3 in *GRI 103* should be included in the list. The
40 SD responded that if an organization did not have a method to manage impacts to be reported under
41 Disclosure MT-3, it would be useful to permit an RfO to capture that information in the GRI content
42 index.

43 Another GSSB member questioned whether Disclosure REP-5 in *GRI 102* should permit an RfO. The
44 SD stated that organizations would not be required to seek external assurance, but that they must use
45 an RfO to explicitly state if their sustainability reporting has not been externally assured, providing
46 information that gives clarity about the quality of the organization's report.

47 The GSSB also discussed the reporting expectation for the newly proposed RfO 'item does not exist',
48 including the potential confusion between responding to a disclosure that the required information
49 does not exist, and providing an RfO that the item does not exist.

50 The GSSB further discussed the possibility that it would be easier for an organization to report that it
51 did not have a policy to comply with the requirement in Disclosure MT-3 rather than formulate an RfO
52 response, indicating that it would be unlikely for organizations to use an RfO, even if it was permitted.

53 The GSSB expressed support for Proposal 2 - permitting RfOs for all but a subset of disclosures
54 critical for contextualizing the organization's reporting, not including Disclosure MT-3. It also
55 supported introducing a new RfO for reporting items that do not exist, with an expectation to further
56 discuss the integration of this additional RfO and the level of explanation needed for the use of RfOs
57 in general.

58 **Actions:**

- 59 • SD to permit reasons for omission (RfOs) for disclosures in *GRI 102* and *GRI 103*, except for
60 the discussed list of suggested disclosures where RfOs are not permitted.
- 61 • SD to explore the integration and explanation of the new 'item does not exist' RfO and RfOs
62 in general.

63 **Appropriate disclosures**

64 The SD presented a revised proposal for Requirement A-5 in *GRI 101* to address confusion about the
65 concept of 'corresponding GRI Topics Standards' when reporting appropriate disclosures for each
66 identified material topic.

67 The GSSB supported the proposal to reformulate the requirement to clarify that a reporting
68 organization is required to use all Topic Standards that cover the material topics, and report all
69 appropriate disclosures from those Standards, irrespective of whether the title of the Topic Standard
70 corresponds to the name of the material topic.

71 The SD further proposed to not add the requirement to list and explain the 'not appropriate'
72 disclosures from the Topic Standards in the GRI content index, as was agreed during the GSSB
73 meeting held on 10 December 2020. Instead, the SD proposed to include a requirement to list and
74 explain the 'not appropriate' disclosures from the GRI Sector Standards. The SD stated that this
75 change would reduce complexity and improve the utility of reported information. The SD provided

76 examples of reporting scenarios following the requirements to list and explain the 'not appropriate'
77 disclosures in a situation when Sector Standards are available and when they are not available.

78 The GSSB acknowledged that the current reporting system would be prohibitively complex. They also
79 discussed that organizations may have difficulty selecting appropriate disclosures for material topics
80 without an applicable Sector Standard, and that as most Sector Standards still need to be developed
81 this leaves potential gaps in reporting on the disclosures that are deemed not appropriate. They also
82 discussed that these potential gaps are a reasonable trade-off to avoid an overly complex and long
83 content index that lists many meaningless 'not appropriate' reasons for omission.

84 The GSSB further discussed that listing and explaining the 'not appropriate' disclosures from the
85 Sector Standards in the content index will make the content index more useful for evaluating the
86 content and quality of the report.

87 The GSSB expressed support for changing the requirement to list and explain the 'not appropriate'
88 disclosures from the Sector Standards.

89 **Actions:**

- 90 • SD to use amended wording 'the organization shall report appropriate disclosures from the
91 GRI Topic Standards' in Requirement 5 in *GRI 101* (Requirement A-5 in the exposure draft).
- 92 • SD to add a requirement in *GRI 101* to list and explain the 'not appropriate' disclosures from
93 the GRI Sector Standards.

94 **Statement of use**

95 The Chair acknowledged that there was not enough time remaining to address the 'revised statement
96 of use' agenda item. Thus, the GSSB will review the proposal on the revised statement of use and will
97 provide comments and questions in preparation for the next GSSB meeting.

98 **Actions:**

- 99 • GSSB to review the proposal on the revised statement of use and provide comments and
100 questions in preparation for the next GSSB meeting.

101 **Session 3: Any other business and** 102 **close of public meeting**

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