

21 September 2017

The World Benchmarking Alliance launches global consultation

The founding partners of the World Benchmarking Alliance – Aviva, UN Foundation, Index Initiative and the Business and Sustainable Development Commission – will today launch the consultation phase of the World Benchmarking Alliance (WBA). This global multi-stakeholder initiative will develop and publish free to access, publicly available benchmarks ranking companies on their sustainability performance and contributions towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Over the next nine months, the WBA founding partners will lead a global consultation to explore the opportunity and potential for using the benchmarks to measure, motivate, and reward business action on the SDGs. The UK, Danish and Dutch governments have committed funding to the consultation phase, in addition to funding and support from Aviva.

The launch follows Aviva Chief Executive Officer, Mark Wilson’s call at the 2015 UN General Assembly for the UN to help change the rules of the international financial system to become more sustainable and for businesses to play their part in contributing to delivery of the SDGs.

The Business and Sustainable Development Commission (BSDC) supported the concept and creation of corporate Global Goal benchmarks and the World Benchmarking Alliance in its landmark report “Better Business, Better World”. The report, published in January 2017, outlined the \$12 trillion economic opportunity for business in pursuing sustainable and inclusive business models and the creation of 380 million jobs by 2030.

Speaking today in New York at the UN Global Compact Leaders Summit on the margins of the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly in “Global Goals Week”, Mark Wilson, said:

“Our idea is simple. We turn the SDGs into a corporate competitive sport. We draw up transparent data on performance towards meeting the SDGs, and we rank companies according to how well they are doing. This will motivate a race to the top and is what the proposed World Benchmarking Alliance is all about.”

Kathy Calvin, President and CEO of the UN Foundation, said; *“Business today faces a simple choice, embrace sustainable development or risk getting left behind. Benchmarks create a common mechanism for companies to accelerate their sustainability performance and – more importantly – they change the status quo by enabling business, government and civil society to hold each other accountable in creating a world that is good for business, people, and the planet.”*

Wim Leereveld, Chairman Index Initiative and Founder Access to Medicines Index said; “Ranking companies on their actual behaviour doesn’t only drive the top of the list to set new boundaries, it also stimulates the companies in the lower regions to adapt their strategy and behaviour.”

The Governments providing support to the WBA consultation also commented:

Ulla Tørnæs, Minister for Development Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark said; ‘We need more businesses of all sizes and investors to embrace the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Benchmarks can translate the SDGs into a business and innovation agenda, creating clarity on the unique role and abilities of companies to contribute to sustainable development in developing countries. Clarity on the role of business will equally demonstrate where we as governments must step up’

Lilianne Ploumen, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, The Netherlands said; “Civil society, investors and governments need to collectively voice what we expect from industry. And then work together with industry to unlock the full potential of the private sector. Initiatives like the World Benchmarking Alliance enable us to embrace a more productive and sustainable approach that benefits all of us.”

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Notes to editors:

About the global World Benchmarking Alliance consultation:

Over the next 9 months, global and regional consultative roundtables and outreach events will be held, in addition to an online consultation accessible to all. The consultation will scope a set of priority corporate performance focussed SDG benchmarks with global stakeholders. There will also be consultation on the institutional and organisational design of the proposed World Benchmarking Alliance. Organisations that support the concept and ambitions of the World Benchmarking Alliance are invited to become allies to the consultation and actively participate. Allies to date include the EAT Foundation, The Global Foundation, the Inter American Development Bank, Nordea and The United National Global Compact. Allies to the consultation continue to grow and more can be found at: www.worldbenchmarkingalliance.org

About the founding partners:

BSDC

The Business Commission aims to make a powerful business case for achieving a sustainable and inclusive economy. The flagship report 'Better Business, Better World' launched in January 2017, maps the economic prize for companies that align with the Global Goals and shows how to achieve them. The Business Commission is chaired by Lord Mark Malloch-Brown; Mark Wilson serves as a Commissioner. Learn more at www.businesscommission.org

Index Initiative

Index Initiative is a centre of expertise in benchmarking corporate performance against stakeholder expectations. It seeks to propel the use of benchmarks to engage and bring purpose and clarity on the role of companies in contributing to the SDGs closest to their core business. A non-profit based in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, Index Initiative's research and benchmarks are free and accessible to all. Index Initiative will conduct the global consultation on the World Benchmarking Alliance www.indexinitiative.org

United Nations Foundation

The United Nations Foundation builds public-private partnerships to address the world's most pressing problems, and broadens support for the United Nations through advocacy and public outreach. Through innovative campaigns and initiatives, the Foundation connects people, ideas, and resources to help the UN solve global problems. The Foundation was created in 1998 as a U.S. public charity by entrepreneur and philanthropist Ted Turner and now is supported by philanthropic, corporate, government, and individual donors. Learn more at: www.unfoundation.org.

Aviva

Aviva provides life insurance, general insurance, health insurance and asset management to 33 million customers, across 16 markets worldwide.

In the UK, we are the leading insurer serving one in every four households and have strong businesses in selected markets in Europe, Asia and Canada. Our shares are listed on the London Stock Exchange and we are a member of the FTSE100 index. Aviva's asset management business, Aviva Investors, provides asset management services to both Aviva and external clients, and currently manages over £340 billion in assets. Total group assets under management at Aviva group are £450 billion.

Aviva helps people save for the future and manage the risks of everyday life; we paid out £34.4 billion in benefits and claims in 2016. By serving our customers well, we are building a business which is strong and sustainable, which our people are proud to work for, and which makes a positive contribution to society.