

**Professionals from across sectors meet to discuss and deliberate on India and Sustainability Standards**

The Centre for Responsible Business (CRB) along with its partners organised a three-day international conference on Sustainability Standards at Hyatt Regency, New Delhi, from 18<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup> November, 2015. With 50 partners, 23 sessions and 500 plus delegates & speakers, **India and Sustainability Standards: International Dialogues and Conference 2015**, was a landmark event that succeeded in achieving its goal of convening international and Indian stakeholders to initiate dialogue, build understanding, and exchange proposals centered on paths forward on sustainability across a range of industry sectors, commodities and themes. Some of the key partners of the three-day event included the Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change, Government of India, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Government of India, ISEAL Alliance, UNICEF, UNDP, C&A Foundation, OECD, GIZ and Alliance for Integrity.

Dr. Bimal Arora, Chairperson, Centre for Responsible Business (CRB) setting the context for the conference said, “Sustainability standards offer the frameworks for businesses to set their sustainability agendas and provide tools to drive sustainable processes within their organization. Business community must play a proactive role and overcome challenges to take leadership roles in supporting these processes. Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS) provide these guiding frameworks to businesses and complement government policies. For Standards to be credible, however, multi-stakeholder engagement is required, especially with businesses which are expected to implement these standards. Hence we found it useful to put together this platform to bring together policy makers, businesses, standard setting bodies, civil society and the academia to address challenges and design way forward for standard setting and their implementation in the Indian context.”

The conference agenda was meticulously designed and structured in three parts to enable active exchange and learning, as well as space for developing roadmaps across themes and sectors. Plenary Sessions of the conference with high profile Indian and international business leaders and policymakers and international speakers set the context on issues around the development and implementation of sustainability standards in India. A series of thematic and sector-specific Roundtables and Workshops were planned over 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> November and occupied the majority of the conference agenda. These roundtables and workshops were convened by interested international and Indian organizations and standard setters, as conference partners and co-hosts, to focus on specific issues, opportunities, challenges, and needs for the given sector, theme and topic. The final section of the conference returned to plenary and offered an opportunity to share, learn about and engage on the outcomes of the roundtables and workshops and set the agenda for way forward to be followed through in 2016 and beyond, and take stock in a conference annually.

Chief Guest of the Inaugural function, Hon’ble Minister Shri. Kalraj Mishra lauded CRB and Bimal Arora for the pro-active role being played by the organization in defining the contours of the discussions on sustainability standards in India. The Minister further mentioned that he would extend all possible support to the organization in its efforts to scale up business sustainability in India. Guest of Honour, Hon’ble Minister Shri. Suresh P Prabhu said, “When we talk about sustainability, it means different things to different people and the concept of sustainability has a very important social dimension. Standards should be an ambition that eventually can be codified into something that can be applied in the Indian context.”

Perhaps for the first time, sustainability standards have been perceived and deliberated as a journey to achieving sustainability goals, rather than mere compliances. The perception has moved beyond a mere

check-box compliance-based approach. The eminent speakers emphasized the importance of sustainability standards in India and highlighted how India is being continuously watched by the World due to its key role in the global supply chain.

University of Manchester and CRB co-hosted a dedicated roundtable on Indian Multinationals and Sustainability during the conference and invited presentations by and conversations with Indian Multinationals on their internationalisation strategies and engagement with sustainability standards and collaborative sustainability initiatives in India and globally. The AMBS and Global Development Institute (GDI) at the University of Manchester are jointly leading an ambitious and exciting research project around globalizing firms from emerging economies and their engagement with Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS) and Collaborative Sustainability Initiatives (CSI). This research project is part of the UK's Economic and Social Research Council's (ESRC) larger research programme, 'Rising Powers and Integrated Futures' (see <http://www.risingpowers.net>). The session convened by Prof Rudolf Sinkovics from the Alliance Manchester Business School (AMBS) and moderated by Prof. Pawan Budhwar from Aston Business School, saw a presentations from senior sustainability managers from companies like Essar, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Gas Authority of India Limited (GAIL), Tata Sustainability Group (TSG) and Ambuja Cement.

The Centre for Responsible Business (CRB) provided a historic opportunity: to promote pathways to sustainability in India and globally. Company executives gathered with government officials and civil society leaders along with Indian and international standard setters, policymakers, businesses and civil society organizations, to look at how sustainability standards can be adopted, implemented or adapted to promote better environmental and social practices in India, including in the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) world as part of the global production networks and value chains.



Dr. Bimal Arora, Chairperson, Centre for Responsible Business, welcoming the gathering to the 3-day conference.



Hon'ble Minister for Micro, Small and Medium Scale Enterprises, Government of India, Shri. Kalraj Mishra, lighting the lamp and inaugurating India and Sustainability Standards: International Dialogues and Conference 2015. In the photo (From R→L): Mr. AnuragGoel, Mentor, Centre for Responsible Business (CRB); Ms. Karin Kreider, Executive Director, ISEAL Alliance; Mr. Michael Copping, Corporate Engagement Specialist, UNICEF.



Hon'ble Minister for Railways, Government of India, Shri. Suresh Prabhu, addressing the gathering at the Inaugural function. Staging the dias with him (From L→R): Mr. Michael Copping, Corporate Engagement Specialist, UNICEF; Mr. Jaco Cilliers, Country Director – India, UNDP; Dr. Partha Pratim Mitra, Principal Labour and Employment Advisor, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India; Dr. Bimal Arora, Chairperson, Centre for Responsible Business; Ms. Karin Kreider, Executive Director, ISEAL





Alliance; Mr. Tyler Gillard, Head of Sector Projects and Legal Advisor in the Responsible Business Conduct Unit, OECD.



Professor Malcolm McIntosh explains at the High Level Panel Discussion on Sustainability Standards that the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals show we have learned that in order to achieve peace and sustainability, we must communicate, collaborate and cooperate.



The conference gained huge attention from businesses, civil society organisations and academics advocating for sustainability from all over the world. Seen in this picture (From L→R) Prof. Pawan Budhwar, Aston Business School, interacting with a delegate; Prof. Rudolf Sinkovics, Alliance Manchester Business School and Mr. Sean Gilbert, ISEAL Alliance.



Nrityarupa: A Mosaic of Indian Dance, presented by SahityaNatyaAkademi and Sponsored by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Government of India on the inaugural day of India and Sustainability Standards 2015





Ms. Amita Joseph, Director- Business and Community Foundation (BCF) and Governing Body Member of CRB felicitating Ms. Alice Tepper Marlin, President and Founder, Social Accountability Initiative (SAI)





Q&A Session during the workshop on Responsible Tea. From L→R: Ms. Sangeeta Kichlu, President – Marketing, Assam Company; Mr. Ashok Batra, Consultant, Rainforest Alliance; Mr. N Dharmaraj, Whole Time Director and Chief Executive, Harrisons Malayalam Ltd., Dr. Anurag Priyadarshi, Global Sustainability Manager, Tata Global Beverages; and Mr. Philip Schleifer, Max Webber Fellow at the Global Governance Programme of the European University Institute in Florence, Italy.



(From R→L): Hon'ble Ambassador of the Netherlands to India, Nepal and Bhutan, Mr. Alphonsus Stoelinga, Ms. Priya Dagar, Netherlands Embassy in India, Dr. Bimal Arora, CRB and Mr. Michiel Bierkiens, Netherlands Embassy in India.



From L→R: Mr. Sourav Roy, Program Leader – Tata Uttarakhand Program, Tata Sustainability Group (TSG) and Mr. Anurag Goel, Retd. IAS (Former Secretary, Ministry of Corporate Affairs) and Mentor, Centre for Responsible Business (CRB)





The three-day event saw the attendance of over 500 delegates both from India and internationally.







The sessions during the 3 days were a mix of expert panel discussions, presentations and interactive workshops. Here, underway, is Roundtable on Indian Multinationals and Sustainability, Co-hosted by University of Manchester. Top: Convenor of the Roundtable, Prof Rudolf Sinkovics from Alliance Manchester Business School, talking about the Rising Powers Project; Above: [From L→R] Mr. Sandeep Srivastava (Ambuja Cements), Prof Pawan Budhwar (Aston Business School), Mr. Santanu Roy (GAIL) and Mr Sean Gilbert (ISEAL Alliance), during Mr. Srivastava's presentation; and Below: Mr. Mr Arif Ghauri from DFID during the Q&A session at the Roundtable







Closing session of the conference, co-hosted by BW Businessworld, summarizing the discussions held during the 3-day conference. From L→R: Ms. Jennifer Schappert (OECD); Ms. Anita Chester (C&A Foundation); Mr. Louis Marechal (OECD); Ms. Sarah O' Brien (GEC); Mr. Sean Gilbert; Mr. Ayan Mukherjee (Fairtrade NAPP); Ms. Neeta Maya Mishra (BW Businessworld); Ms. Karin Kreider (ISEAL Alliance); Dr. TR Manoharan (Forest Stewardship Council); Dr. Rudolf Sinkovics (Alliance Manchester Business School)



Mr. Rajiv Kher, Former Secretary, Ministry of Commerce, sharing his views at the Valedictory function of the conference. From L→R: Mr. Annurag Batra (BW Businessworld) and Dr. Bimal Arora (CRB)



CRB team, along with the dignitaries, at the valedictory function. From R→L : Mr. Annurag Batra, Mr. Rajiv Kher, Mr. Anurag Goel and the CRB Team