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Report of the Second EU-India Sustainable Business Collaboration Roundtable

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1. Background

More than ever before, rapid unfolding of the current geopolitical uncertainties underlines the interdependence of trade, global value chains with sustainable business and climate action. For the European Union (EU) and India – two natural partners and allies in trade, technology and climate change, this interconnectedness presents new avenues as well as the accompanying contrapunto.

Board room conversations and international policy discourse have moved beyond mere trade and economic issues, to include a focussed thrust on climate resilience, inclusive growth, de-risked supply chains, sustainable consumption and responsible business. This is exemplified in the evolving relationship between EU and India over the years, wherein sustainability and climate have carefully and gradually emerged as defining aspects accelerating the parleys. The collective endeavour of EU's *Competitiveness Compass*¹ and India's *Atmanirbhar Bharat*² provide support to this partnership through trade, economic security, green and digital transitions. This can be sufficiently amplified by the EU's Global Gateway and India's growing role as a development partner for the Global South.

2. Contextualising EU-India Sustainable Business Collaboration (June, 2025)

With support from the EU Delegation to India, the Centre for Responsible Business (CRB) has been advocating the importance of collaborative initiatives between EU and Indian businesses and stakeholders to achieve common, long-term economic and sustainability ambitions of the two partners, embedded in the EU- India Roadmap 2020 – embraced at the peak of COVID-19 by the two Governments.

Motivated by some partners and experts in the region, CRB conceptualised the idea of bringing the experiences of existing EU – India business collaborations and the lessons thereof to a wider audience in Brussels. The **first edition** of the *EU – India Sustainable Business roundtable* was therefore organised in June 2025 in partnership with **amfori** (a leading EU organisation with considerable experience on sustainable value chain projects in India) to create awareness among experts and organisations based in and around Brussels (Headquarters of the EU). Stakeholders' insights at the first forum underscored that sustainability in global value chains must transition from a compliance-driven approach towards a model of shared responsibility and value creation, a shift that aligns closely with the EU-India Trade and Technology Council (TTC)'s agenda.

[1] https://commission.europa.eu/topics/eu-competitiveness/competitiveness-compass_en

[2] <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2156701>

3. Overview of the Second EU – India Sustainable Business Roundtable

Centre for Responsible Business (CRB) in partnership with **Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) Europe** and **CSR Europe** co-hosted the **second edition** of the EU-India Sustainable Business Roundtable on 16th January 2026 in Brussels, building directly on the insights of the first edition. The roundtable was supported by the **European Union Delegation to India**. This roundtable brought nearly 40 senior experts representing EU business/industry, policy stakeholders, Indian enterprises, industry federations, researchers/academia, international organisations and civil society.

The aim of this roundtable was as follows:

1. Underline the importance of collaboration between EU and Indian business and related stakeholders for the strengthening and effective implementation of the EU India Strategic Partnership. This could be envisaged through structured capacity building ateliers to upskill EU and Indian parented companies to apply the new EU Sustainability regulations as drivers for innovation, competitiveness and resilience (beyond compliance).

2. Create an opportunity for sharing of perspectives and lessons from senior policy and practice stakeholders on EU-India sustainable business collaboration building upon for example the experiences of amfori, Drive Sustainability by CSR Europe, the Dutch Sector initiatives on Due Diligence and other such initiatives of EU organisations relevant for India

The discussions centred on the proposed EU – India Strategic Agenda especially some of the strategic pillars, viz – **(i) prosperity and sustainability; (ii) technology and innovation** and **(iii) enablers across pillars** (see Table 1 below).

Table 1: The Forum will focus on the following three of the five Pillars of the proposed EU-India Strategic Agenda

Strategic EU-India Partnership Pillars	Focus Areas
Prosperity and Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boosting trade and investment • Strengthening supply chain and economic security • Advancing the clean transition and resilience
Technology and Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting critical emerging technologies • Advancing a conducive digital environment • Promoting research cooperation
Enablers across Pillars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanding skills mobility • Promoting mutual understanding • Involving business communities • Reinforcing institutional architecture

4. Summary of Discussions

4.1 Opening Remarks

The second edition of the Brussels EU India Sustainable Business Roundtable got underway with opening remarks by co-host **Tata Consulting Services (TCS) Europe's** Global Head of Sustainability – **Hemakiran Gupta**, who outlined the Indian conglomerate's presence and operations in Europe, emphasising its focus on sustainability as integral to business strategy, envisaging it not just for TCS but also for businesses globally. Alluding to the context under which global businesses view sustainability, it was observed that it cannot be merely addressed to satisfy compliance and regulatory requirements, given that a robust sustainability index will decide innovation, resilience and growth. In context of the roundtable being held in the run-up to the EU-India FTA, he aptly noted the importance of the FTA to unlock the potential in clean technology which has immense capacity to impact sustainability measures across sectors through AI, blockchain etc., including a less understood but an important priority area of bio-diversity. To achieve these goals, he remarked it will be imperative for private and public collaborative effort to be increasingly active and visible. He also asserted that EU and India are well placed to expand the current trade volume manifold beyond the present EUR 130-140 billion level.

Jan Noterdaeme, co-founder CSR Europe, which was also a co-host, offered a comprehensive understanding of CSR-Europe's objectives as a frontrunner motivating and mobilising businesses to share and develop best practices on corporate sustainability and responsibility, as it becomes increasingly paramount in a dynamically evolving global stage. He shared his perspectives and experiences from a global standpoint, stating the urgency of businesses to develop and integrate good practices of sustainability adapted to meet the challenges of a rapidly evolving global framework that addresses the opportunities sustainability provides to supply chains to grow in a deeply connected world. Innovation and technology, he outlined, will be indispensable in this emerging environment and as such it will be critical for businesses such as those in manufacturing and their supply chains to adapt quickly to build sustainability measures to remain competitive and not merely to meet regulatory requirements. He informed the group of work underway by a network of experts in Europe on developing a manifesto for responsible and sustainable AI, which will be particularly relevant in the Indian context, given India's current and future plans with AI.

The welcome remarks were followed by a **brief contextualising** of the second edition of the Brussels Roundtable dialogue by Anamika Ghosh, CRB – providing an introduction to CRB as well as the guiding intent of the roundtable, as it specifically emerged in context of the sustainable business initiative that CRB has been implementing in partnership with the EU Delegation to India.

In his keynote address on behalf of the **Ambassador and the Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of India** to Belgium, Luxembourg and the European Union, **Policy Adviser to the Ambassador, Dr. Venkatesh Palani Samy** remarked on the definition of the EU India partnership as material, given the stability both partners promote globally and which has been crucial in the evolution of the historic FTA. He noted the importance of investments in India which will manifest as a key driving factor of the strengthening partnership. The embassy standpoint was clear on sustainability as an important link that makes both sides synchronise views on shared responsibility towards achieving these goals. It is a partnership that bodes well not just for G2G exchange but expressly for citizens in both hemispheres. He emphasised on the transformation of supply chains and the EU and India are natural partners to build on this transformation to implement goals of sustainability.

It was underscored, that these goals must be aligned to meet aspirations, as sustainability cannot be a one-size-fits-all, but rather an evaluation and thereby an evolution of needs and requirements. He also underscored the need to move from a compliance mindset to one of co-creation and collaboration, where regulations and standards are incorporated as growth strategies rather than meeting requirements.

Supporting the roundtable also as **co-host** was **the European Commission**, represented by the **Head Sector – South Asia, DG-INTPA, Libuse Soukupova**, who referred to the partnership between EU and India and the initiatives being supported by the Delegation of the European Union to India and the prominence of the EU-India partnership further accentuated by the aforementioned five pillars of focus that have since been incorporated within the framework of the EU India FTA, agreed upon in January 2026. She underscored the essence of these pillars as the roadmap that will shape the course of the partnership and the expected impacts over the course of the next five years, which were further elaborated at the time of the FTA signing in New Delhi. She provided an exhaustive overview of the five pillars of the EU – India Strategic Agenda – inviting all interested stakeholders to familiarise themselves with its contents, to help design and deploy partnership ideas and projects.

4.2 Presentation by CRB

Rijit Sengupta, CRB proceeded to set the roundtable's context by a presentation focused on:

1. The growing EU-India partnership (including trade and evolving policy and regulatory framework) on sustainable business;

- Leverage optimism to harness the emerging partnership as the much-needed gateway to step-up bi-lateral trade between the two partners, regulations notwithstanding. Much more efforts on the ground is needed to create clarity on relevant EU regulations, as they emerge

2. Experiences from the EU-India SDG business collaboration on sustainability as a catalyst of the Brussels roundtable and key takeaways of the first roundtable;

- Illustrations of good practices of sustainability as evidence of EU-Indian partnerships in India across sectors and industries and across five different models of collaborations, that have paved the way to enhance these engagements as examples of sustainability led collaborations at a global level in the EU region.
- Stakeholders at the first roundtable encouraged by the evidence from the ground on collaborations in practice and also of those underway, were agreed on more concerted efforts and dialogues to continue collectively at Brussels and bilaterally with CRB to add momentum in realising actionable goals

3. Headlining focus areas of the EU India Partnership on sustainability for the future of collaborations;

- Aligning the objectives of the EU India Sustainable Business Forum Roundtables through concerted focus on key areas as envisaged under the larger EU India Partnership agenda, as a strategic aim to further sustainable business collaborative partnerships on both sides.
- Focusing on specific areas of sustainability within the five pillars as enumerated in the joint agenda, to build and foster closer actionable collaborative partnerships on both sides

4. Inviting views of experts on ways to further develop and strengthen this partnership in light of the EU-India FTA and agenda.

- Measured ways in which to build on existing partnerships of sustainability led collaborations as experienced by CRB as well as experts.
- What the EU India Partnership and the FTA could do to enhance and create a consistent level of growth for these collaborations to address sustainability and climate action.

4.3 Experts insights from the Roundtable

Here are some of the key issues that emerged from the contributions of the experts during the roundtable discussions that followed the context setting by CRB:

1. The traction built to achieve goals of sustainability and climate action, has stayed the course and to ensure this momentum, India stands out as a global partner of choice for the European Union to stay collectively steadfast for both sides and for global trade.

- 2.** As the EU - India Partnership emerges in prominence it is important to ensure both sides step up as equal partners that does not relegate one as a 'supplier-only' partner and the other as, 'buyer-only'. This parity in relationship will prove to be successful in navigating through geopolitically and geoeconomically stressed times.
- 3.** The strong appetite that India has to manage supply chain risks, should explicitly include cooperation on respect for human rights, with a stress on expanding skilling and education/capacity building of beneficiaries such as the larger supply chain which includes farmers in the agri value chain.
- 4.** Sustainability solutions should make businesses highlight the achievable economic/business value of being invested in these innovations driving green transition that are integrated within the mainstream business ecosystem. Awareness generation of Indian suppliers and manufacturers is critical to help them align with the evolving expectations (standards) of EU businesses. There is an urgent need to ensure the onboarding of suppliers/manufacturers from India is done by investing in awareness and capacity building by the buyers, brands, financiers/investors from the EU.
- 5.** Technology stands to play a material role with cutting edge AI and alternative sources of energy making the transition to a low carbon economy swift and efficient allowing businesses to prioritise goals of decarbonisation.
- 6.** Advances already underway in emerging technologies will ensure data protection and empowerment become indispensable towards shaping sustainability led actions across industries and sectors in an effort to mitigate industrial emissions, with a significant impact on supply/value chains.
- 7.** Concerted efforts to infuse FDIs in sustainability led collaborative partnerships that will add thrust to the green transition agenda as outlined above, will drive the importance of financial materiality. These considerations underscore the key role of sustainable finance on the road to achieving green transition.
- 8.** Companies will have to report on financial materiality even as cross border alignment of standards become critical, notwithstanding regulatory changes, that stand to impact business negotiations between EU and Indian partners. Sustainable finance is critical especially in the form of transition finance for Indian businesses, to achieve their decarbonisation and net zero ambitions. In addition, innovative financing projects should also be considered between EU and Indian stakeholders related to biodiversity conservation and nature-based solutions.
- 9.** Consistent engagement with key actors will provide robust clarity on sustainability focussed standards and the interoperability of standards on both sides as they evolve over the course of the next few years.

10. There was a stress on interoperability of standards to focus critically on achieving pragmatic and meaningful business solutions leading sustainability, and not merely focussed on regulatory compliance. In addition, interoperability of solutions is crucial as well (to ensure context-relevance of solutions), while not diluting the essence of regulations, partnerships will benefit more from developing long term collective solutions that address and fulfil regulations that keep them globally competitive.

11. Envisaging a joint standards body promoting sustainability disclosure and supply chain accountability has the potential of serving as a template for global south partnerships.

12. The EU India partnership can play a catalytic role in engaging with third and other countries (such as Canada), to further strengthen the objectives of collective cooperation on sustainability and global climate action.

13. India and EU business partnership should be based on overall 'value-creation' and not just 'wealth-creation'; and this should emphatically drive the 'business case' for a stronger partnership between EU and Indian stakeholders. It will stand to mutually benefit both partners, given the importance of resilient supply chains for EU and its businesses; and the aspiration of Indian suppliers and manufacturers to integrate into EU businesses' value chains.

14. Both EU and Indian stakeholders should engage continuously on this agenda, especially in narrative building – to ensure that the attention is focussed equally on risks and as well as opportunities for collaboration. For a country like India, it is important to invest equal attention in the interest of people and of nature.

15. Evidence from and engagements with stakeholders from India was critical especially for politicians (MEPs) and financiers/investors from EU. It is essential to continue engaging these stakeholders the joint agenda and the overall discourse.



5. Endnote Analysis

The second edition of the Brussels EU India Sustainable Business Roundtable built a consensus amongst stakeholders that the discussions were timely, pertinent and important to delve further towards sharpening the focus in context of the EU India FTA. The strategic importance of these dialogues is seen as imperative to continue the momentum on driving and facilitating pragmatic deliberations based on institutional experience and good practices of collaborations between EU and Indian businesses and enterprises, in context of the EU India Cooperation that is on the upswing following the FTA agreement.

CRB and its partners were encouraged by the stakeholders to continue facilitating these discussions to inform and shape the implementary pathways of the EU-India strategic agenda, which has intelligently integrated sustainability as a core subject.

Some of the key issues that senior experts underlined for future dialogues and discourses to keep in view were:

1. Capital Mobilisation for Development: Stakeholders have collectively echoed the importance of sustainable investments and finance as a paramount driver of the EU India cooperation. FDI infusion remains critical to help collectively achieve some of the stated objectives of the strategic agenda, especially keeping the interest of people, nature and enterprises on both sides intact. Aligning the thrust of these dialogues alongside that of the EU India FTA will lead to the forum being recognised as a body with objectives that complement the overarching priorities of the EU India partnership in engaging businesses to drive the common goals of sustainability and climate action. One of the possible outputs could be a draft regulatory architecture to support deployment of sustainable investment and finance over the next 5 years.

2. Sustainability driving Economic/Business Value across industry sectors: Stakeholders have observed a greater need to sharpen industry level discussions on integrating sustainability led technology and innovations to drive economic value. Propagate mechanisms to build and strengthen this among partners and value chains. Facilitate the integration of value chains in the larger discourse around the value proposition of sustainability of businesses. Rather than pivoting on the sole focus of financial outputs, the overall (true) 'value' of partnership projects should also be assessed, especially in terms of creating value across all capitals – social, human, natural and produced.

3. Technology interfacing with sustainability: This has been reiterated by stakeholders, given that technology will play a definitive role in making the green transition more efficient. A decided focus on technology as a driving factor in businesses integrating sustainability will become a priority in the years ahead. Therefore, a focussed engagement with industry and policy experts at these dialogues will be catalytic in giving shape to actionable undertakings. It will also address an important aspect of green transition, which is just transition. Co-developing sustainable and responsible business frameworks on digitalisation and AI will be critical.

The collective consensus that emerged was that together we have the will and capacity to turn the FTA Chapter on Trade and Sustainability into a real action plan towards measurable transformative impacts for Indian and European enterprises and societies.

6. Participating Organisations at the 2nd Brussels EU India Sustainable Business Roundtable:

AIM-Progress
AMFORI
Belgo Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
CRB
CSR Europe
Danfoss
European Policy Centre (EPC)
European Commission
European Parliament
Embassy of India to Belgium, Luxembourg and the European Union
Frankbold
FERN
GeSI
GIZ
GSMA
Impact Economy Foundation

IISD
ISEAL Alliance
Impact Economy Foundation
International Cooperative Alliance
Mobius
Koppert
PEFC International
Robecco NL
RSPO
Rud Pedersen Public Affairs
TCS
The Netherlands India Chamber of Commerce & Trade (NICCT)
VECTRA International B. V.
Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies
WWF Sweden
ISEAL Alliance

7. Organisers

About TCS – Europe: Rooted in the heritage of the Tata Group, TCS is focused on creating long term value for its clients, its investors, its employees, and the community at large. With a highly skilled workforce of over 607,000 consultants in 55 countries and 180 service delivery centres across the world, the company has been recognised as a top employer in six continents.

TCS is a transformation partner for companies in industries that range from banking and retail to insurance and travel.

About CSR Europe: Is the leading European business network for Corporate Sustainability and Responsibility. The organisation helps business leaders and partners navigate EU regulations and turn sustainability challenges into strategies for impact and value. The organisation collaborates with professionals across enterprises, policymakers, and civil society to accelerate the transition from compliance to leadership.

About European Commission – DG INTPA: DG INTPA works hand in hand with its partners, setting policy agendas, taking initiatives and ensuring effective implementation of its actions for the ultimate shared benefit of EU citizens and people across the world. As part of this effort, Global Gateway serves as the EU's main investment strategy for international partnerships, fostering smart, clean, and secure infrastructure while promoting fair, values-driven, and mutually beneficial cooperation

About Centre for Responsible Business (CRB): CRB was established as a think tank to promote the understanding among relevant stakeholders on social, environmental and economic sustainability issues – facilitating the achievement of UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs). It actively partners with various ministries and agencies of the government of India; international agencies and governments; academic institutions; industry associations; businesses; civil society organisations; etc. to contribute towards measurable positive impacts on people, environment, communities and livelihoods



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