

Indo-Dutch CSR and Sustainability Forum (INDUS Forum) Second Consultation Meeting 18th January 2017, MINBUZA, The Hague

Brief Proceedings

1. Introduction

1.1 CRB has been implementing a project entitled, **Indo-Dutch CSR & Sustainability Forum (INDUS-Forum)** since May 2016, with support from the Dutch Embassy in India. The aim of this initiative has been to promote and facilitate dialogues, debates and thought leadership between Indian and Dutch companies on strategic and operational aspects of CSR and sustainable business, to complement the existing trade and economic relations between these two countries.

1.2 Over the course of this project, CRB has organised a series of engagement with both Dutch and Indian businesses, in India and in The Netherlands. Feedback and inputs received from representatives of Dutch businesses operating in India and that of Indian firms with operations in the Netherlands indicate interest and overall support for this Forum. Stakeholders based both in India and in The Netherlands also consider the Forum to be useful. As part of the project activities, CRB was also keen to receive inputs and guidance from businesses and stakeholders based in the Netherlands – and hence organised a meeting on 18th January 2017 in The Hague. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MINBUZA) hosted this meeting at the MINBUZA building. The Indian Embassy in The Hague extended their support by sharing information about major Indian companies operating in Holland. The Indian Ambassador was also personally supportive, and spoke at the event.

1.3 This is a brief report of this consultative meeting organised on 18th January 2017 in The Hague. Over 50 participants comprising businesses, knowledge organisations, civil society organisations, academicians participated in this meeting.

2. Brief Proceedings

2.1 Inaugural Session

- Marjan Schippers, Deputy Director, welcomed all the participants to this meeting. She reiterated MINBUZA's interest in the INDUS-Forum project, and its pleasure of working in close cooperation with the Dutch Embassy in India and CRB for a successful launch of the forum through the final meeting on 22nd March 2017 to be held in New Delhi, India.
- Bimal Arora, Chairperson, Centre for Responsible Business (CRB) highlighted the importance of understanding CSR and sustainability in the context of international business. This issue was of considerable importance from the perspective of contemporary trade and commerce. For both Indian and Dutch businesses it was crucial to have a sound understanding of the prevailing CSR and Sustainability regime and practice in each other's territories. He explained that the objective of the INDUS-Forum project was to enable this. Through this Forum, it was expected that a mechanism for sharing of knowledge, good practice and thought leadership would be established.



- H. E. Ambassador J S Mukul informed everyone that 2017 was the 70th year of diplomatic relations between India and The Netherlands, and that it was currently as strong a bond it has ever been. Netherlands is not only the 4th largest FDI provider to India, but 6th largest trading partner of India as well. The relationship between the two countries over the years have been underpinned on common interests not only in the areas of economic growth, trade and tourism but also on account of a common commitment towards the rule of law, multi-culturalism, parliamentary democracy, etc. Given this background and the current relations between the two countries, he felt the INDUS-Forum was an extremely relevant initiative and conveyed the Indian Embassy's support to the same. The Netherlands remains a gateway for Indian businesses to Europe and for overall trade and commerce. He concluded by saying that currently India is undergoing a process of unprecedented economic reforms, which offered considerable potential to the Dutch business to participate even more actively in India's economy.
- Marten van den Berg, Director General, Foreign Economic Affairs, The Netherlands underscored the importance of India as a key trade and investment destination for Holland. He expressed his Ministry's support to the INDUS-Forum project, especially given the alignment of the project on supply chain sustainability issues. He added that the centrepiece of the INDUS-Forum is multi-stakeholder cooperation and partnership, a key component of the SDGs (SDG-17). He agreed with the earlier speakers that trade and sustainability go hand in hand in today's interconnected world. Businesses need to work together with government and civil society in order to carry the agenda of sustainability forward. Giving a glimpse of the current activities on CSR by his Ministry, he informed that a number of voluntary CSR agreements are being developed for some of the most critical sectors for Dutch businesses internationally, viz. banking, textiles, food and agriculture, natural stone, etc. Given this, he opined that the Dutch government is committed to make INDUS-Forum project successful.

2.2 Panel Discussion

- Representing the Social and Economic Council of the Netherlands, Alexandra van Selm shared in brief that the Dutch government is closely looking at the issue of international CSR, especially from the lens of international supply chains that its businesses are involved with. She suggested that the forum looks closely at how businesses, CSOs, government, labour unions could come together to promote sustainability along supply chain. This, she thought, would have direct interface with the current interest of the Dutch government.
- Vikas Goswami, Head of Good and Green, Godrej Industries India provided a brief historical perspective on CSR and sustainability (practice) in India. She provided a brief idea of how Indian businesses have contributed in developing thriving communities and cities, throughout history. She explained how over the years, the practice of CSR by Indian businesses has evolved from being purely philanthropic to being more aligned with long-term sustainability of the companies. Currently, the Companies Act 2014 provides the basis for CSR practice in India (CSR Rules, 2015) – and that companies operating in India would need to understand and operate within this framework. She added that the challenge therefore would be to balance private sector development with the most pressing social developmental needs of the country and its citizens.
- Roger Steens, Head of Sustainability for Tata Steel in Europe highlighted that it has always been an aim of the Tata company to be a net positive contributor of sustainable development, wherever it



operates. He raised the question for businesses, whether to consider sustainability strategy or a strategy that was sustainable? In this regard, he stressed the importance for companies to consider 'appropriate measures', in their business operations. He shared a number of contemporary but critical elements of sustainability for modern businesses, viz. climate change, circular economy, new technology and business models, financial stability, thriving communities, happy employees.

- Steven ten Napel from CoMakeIT shared his company's emphasis on promoting quality education by working in partnership with a local foundation based in rural area of southern India, which runs a school. The aim of this school is to provide opportunities for rural children and develop them as confident youth, who are able to determine their future.
- Bas Ruter, Head of Sustainability in RaboBank informed the audience that his company has been part of the Steering Committee of the initiative. He added that RaboBank's interest stems from the fact that INDUS-Forum talks about developing a long-term perspective on CSR. RaboBank has integrated CSR into their long-term business strategy – and therefore sees considerable value in being part of this initiative. The Bank discusses CSR and sustainability issues with all its business clients, in order to identify 'risks' and highlight 'opportunities'. He mentioned that food and agriculture is a sector of considerable interest to the Bank – and hoped that INDUS-Forum would take up activities in this sector. He offered RaboBank's global knowledge and understanding on sustainability issues in food and agriculture sector (value chains of ten commodities) for the members. He indicated that being part of multi-stakeholder initiative is of utmost interest to RaboBank.
- In the discussion that followed the (above) presentation by the panellists, the following points were raised:
 - Understanding sustainability related challenges and aiming to address them is extremely critical in the long-term interest of businesses, hence cannot be ignored
 - HR issues for a MNC in a foreign country? are extremely sensitive, and need to be handled extremely carefully
 - The 'business case' for sustainability for international business is clear
 - It is important to promote two-way communication with respect to sharing knowledge and experience on sustainability between both Dutch and Indian companies
 - Naming and shaming of businesses might not always work, and that there is a need for a constructive dialogue that is aimed to find solutions
 - There is a need to assess the feasibility of cooperation between companies, their approaches including on stakeholder engagement

2.3 Group Discussion

- The participants were subsequently divided into 5 groups and provided with a set of questions pertaining to - *possible benefits* they envisage by being part of the INDUS-Forum initiative, *specific activities* that could be considered by INDUS-Forum to undertake (research, communication/outreach, projects, events) and *specific contribution* that members would be ready to make to activate INDUS-Forum. Each group made a brief presentation.
- Inputs received from each group has been summarised in the below table:

Characteristics of INDUS-Forum	Description
Expected Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access to a large network - Sharing experience on issues of common interest in the realm of CSR and Sustainability - Learning from each other - Demonstrating and understanding the ‘business case’ for sustainability - Having a two-way conversation (using ‘chatham house’ rules) between Dutch and Indian businesses and stakeholders - Help align business strategy and operations better with local conditions - Help Dutch SMEs get better exposure and access to information - Create link and visibility with governments
Scope of INDUS-Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clear ‘Goal’, ‘Focus’ and ‘Objectives’ to be defined - Should bring in a diversity of thought and expertise - Continuous engagement with the two Governments - Equal levels of engagement by both Indian and Dutch companies and stakeholders - Activities could be guided by specific SDG targets and/or UNGP - The narrative should be focused on ‘leveraging opportunities’ and not on ‘managing risks’ - Sectors: (i) aligned with the key sectors of Dutch government in India and (ii) aligned with the interest sectors of the I-CSR Covenant
Possible Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sectors and cross-sectoral themes to be selected by members - <u>Sectors</u>: (i) aligned with the key sectors of Dutch government in India and (ii) aligned with the interest sectors of the I-CSR Covenant - <u>Themes</u>: cross-sectoral themes to be identified by members - Best practices (definition of ‘best practices’ should be broad to help align with both the Dutch and the Indian context) - Develop business ‘case studies’ - Information should be open source (open to all) - A ‘systems approach’ to be adopted for designing projects - Projects that help bridge the cultural gap, specifically to help CSR and Sustainability practice
Contribution by Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need to define the commitment? - Members interested to provide in-kind contribution (experience, information, good practices, learning outcomes) - Need active drivers to bring results to the table and strengthen the Forum - Return on investment for members needs to be clear

2.4 Concluding remarks

- In his concluding remarks, Michiel Bierkens, Head of Economic Section, Dutch Embassy in India expressed his gratitude to all the participants for their active participation in the event. He observed from the active participation and engagement of all the participants in the meeting and the discussions that there is overall support and interest of stakeholders in the INDUS-Forum.

Annexure-I: Agenda

1300 - 1400hrs: Lunch

1400 - 1430hrs: High-level Inaugural Session

- Welcome by Marjan Schippers, MINBUZA
- Introduction to INDUS-Project by Bimal Arora, Chairperson, Centre for Responsible Business
- Special Address by Amb J S Mukul, Ambassador of India to The Netherlands
- Special Address by Marten Van Den Berg, Director General for Foreign Economic Relations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Netherlands

1430 - 1550hrs: Panel discussion: Exchange of Knowledge & Practice on CSR & Sustainability between Dutch & Indian business

Chair: Ton Boon von Ochssee, MINBUZA

Panelists:

- Alexandra van Selm, Social and Economic Council of the Netherlands
 - Vikas Goswami, Godrej Industries, India
 - Bas Ruter, Rabo Bank, The Netherlands
 - Roger Steens, Tata Steel, The Netherlands
 - Steven ten Napel, CoMakeIT, The Netherlands
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- Brief orientation to the Indian CSR regime. CSR Vs Sustainability – the current state in India
 - Introduction to CSR and Sustainability regime in The Netherlands - domestic regime and alignment with the EU CSR and Sustainability policy and the OECD Guidelines for MNEs
 - Findings solutions to common Sustainability issues and Challenges - exchange of information/good practices/approaches/tools between Dutch & Indian businesses
 - How an Indo-Dutch CSR & Sustainability Forum could help? Generating support and buy-in for the same and crafting a road-map

Q&A

1550 - 1715hrs: Working Session: Framing the Role and Functions of the INDUS-Forum

Participants would be divided into 4 to 5 groups to make suggestions about the possible Role and Functions of the INDUS-Forum through Group Presentation, especially:

- Possible Role of the Forum: Resource-Hub/Information dissemination/Experience Sharing/Projects/Convening
- Benefits for Members: meeting members' needs on sustainability practice
- Activities of the INDUS-Forum: Annual Report, List of Activities, Sectoral Priorities

1715 - 1730hrs: Summary of the Discussions & Way Forward

- Representative of MINBUZA
- Representative of CRB

1730 - 1830hrs: Drinks

Annexure-II: List of Participants

SI No.	First name	Middle name	Last name	Organisation
1.	Joeke		Abbing	Intend
2.	Bimal		Arora	CRB
3.	Femmy		Bakker	ICCO
4.	Marten	van den	Berg	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
5.	Michiel		Bierkens	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
6.	Simone	De	Boer	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
7.	Ton		Boon von Ochssee	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
8.	Toon		Boonekamp	Arcadis
9.	Bernedine		Bos	MVO Nederland
10.	Wijnand		Broer	CREM
11.	Sander	de	Bruine	Water Footprint Network
12.	Mark		Goedkoop	PRé Consultants bv
13.	Vikas		Goswami	Godrej Industries
14.	Brigitte	De	Heij	GENPACT
15.	Wendela		Huisman	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
16.	Anke	van den	Hurk	Plantum
17.	Julia		Huss	Akzo Nobel
18.	Leon		Husson	PUM
19.	Liza		Iessa	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
20.	Rotislav		Ilchenko	Horticoop
21.	Anselm		Iwundu	Profundo
22.	Anouschka		Jansen	FTA/BEPI
23.	Namita		Krul-Taneja	New Yardsticks
24.	Mariëlle	van der	Linden	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
25.	Kanchan		Mishra	Profundo
26.	Amb. J. S.		Mukul	Indian Embassy
27.	Herman		Mulder	NCP
28.	Steven	Ten	Napel	coMakelt
29.	Saskia		Nijhof	Solidaridad
30.	Enrico		Partiti	University of Amsterdam
31.	Valentin		Post	Waste
32.	Desirée		Rasenberg	Pure Jute
33.	Elien		Rogaar	Perspectivity
34.	Mirte		Ruesen	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
35.	Bas		Ruter	Rabobank
36.	Marjan		Schippers	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
37.	Philip		Schleifer	University of Amsterdam
38.	Alexandra	Van	Selm	SER
39.	Rijit		Sengupta	CRB



SI No.	First name	Middle name	Last name	Organisation
40.	Sradhanand		Sital	Dalit Indian Chamber of Commerce & Industry (DICCI)
41.	Inke	van der	Sluijs	RSPO
42.	Norma		Snell	Foreign Trade Association
43.	Beata		Stappers	Terre des Hommes
44.	Roger		Steens	Tata Steel
45.	Lisa		Suess	Fairwear Foundation
46.	Sonia		Smith	Philips
47.	Mathilde		Teuben	Intend / Better Business
48.	Johan		Teuling	Johahn Teuling management
49.	Ajay		Varadharajan	Green Insights
50.	Aline	Van	Veen	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
51.	Tirza		Voss	Terre des Hommes
52.	Nora	de	Wekker	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
53.	Bouke	van	Zinderen	Saral business technologies