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THE 3rd EU - INDIA SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS FORUM DIALOGUE

A Collective Roadmap to Implement the EU-India Joint Comprehensive Strategic Agenda

Brussels | 16 June 2026













1. Executive Summary

Cooperation between India and the European Union (EU) has received significant strategic impetus and priority in recent times. In January 2026, the partners announced the EU-India Free Trade Agreement (FTA) accompanied by several measures related to trade and sustainable development. The EU-India FTA deal has been referred to as the 'mother of all trade deals', in an environment marred by unpredictable geopolitical-geoeconomic factors and regulatory ambiguities. Building on several decades of strategic partnership, the progressive nature of the EU-India partnership anchors the mutual commitment of both partners to advance structured, outcome-oriented cooperation in a complex geopolitical landscape, while reaffirming their commitment to work together as trusted and reliable partners to advance shared priorities and strengthen multilateral cooperation.

In addition, giving a filip to the dynamic footprint of EU businesses in India, was the formation of the Federation of European Business in India (FEBI) alongside significant visits by President Ursula von der Leyen with the college of commissioners as well as the President of the European Union Council, Antonio Costa and the High Representative/Vice President, Kaja Kallas. Indubitably defining a forward looking and an increasingly important role that EU & Indian business partnerships are set to fuel both economies and in the process contribute towards fostering ties between the peoples in both regions.

A key announcement accompanying the FTA was the, 'Towards 2030: EU-India Joint Comprehensive Strategic Agenda' – an almanac for the next five years defining the strategic collaboration of the partners, as it enumerates a list of common areas of interest, including – sustainability, clean tech, energy transition, supply chain resilience, digitalisation and innovation, among others. The Joint Strategic Agenda, is categorised into five key areas:

5 Key Pillars of the EU-India Strategic Agenda
Prosperity and Sustainability
Technology and Innovation
Enablers across Pillars
Connectivity and Global Issues
Security and Defence

With these and other concomitant developments in place such as the Green Hydrogen Task Force under the EU–India Clean Energy and Climate Partnership; EU-India Resource Efficiency Initiative; etc., the European Union and India commit their collective intent to achieve the goals of the 2015 Paris Agreement and to deepen cooperation on environmental protection, clean energy transition, energy resilience and circular economy.

2. EU-India Sustainable Business Forum

Beginning in June 2025, Centre for Responsible Business (CRB) in partnership with leading European and Indian businesses and industry stakeholders (amfori, Tata Consulting Services – Europe and CSR Europe) co-hosted two rounds of dialogues between EU and Indian businesses, civil society and related stakeholders on the need and opportunity for partnership on sustainable business parleys, which were held in view of the ongoing dialogues in the run up to the EU-India FTA announcement and summit in January 2026. These dialogues have been welcomed as timely by stakeholders on both sides – that underline the need for an anchored locus for discussions around strategic and sustainable collaboration between EU and India, specifically in the current geopolitical environment.

CRB together with its partners is exploring the formalisation of an initiative the - 'EU – India Sustainable Business Forum' to support needs and interests of both EU and India in Brussels and in New Delhi.



3. The 3rd EU - India Sustainable Business Forum Dialogue: A Collective Roadmap to Implement the EU-India Joint Comprehensive Strategic Agenda

Centre for Responsible Business (CRB) was pleased to continue its partnership with *Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) Europe* and with *CSR-Europe;* and welcomed a new partner, *Business Europe*, to co-host the 3rd edition of the EU-India Sustainable Business Forum dialogue on 16th June 2026 in Brussels, Belgium. In addition to sharpening the focus of these insights, this third edition of the Dialogue focused on certain 'pillars' of the EU-India Joint Strategic Agenda. As an organic offshoot (in Europe) of a partnership that CRB has been implementing in India with the Delegation of the European Union to India and Bhutan, and who along with the European Commission continued to guide and advice the 3rd edition, thereby contributing immeasurably to the Forum's evolution. Equally supporting the effort of the Forum has been the motivation and encouragement provided by the Embassy of India to Belgium, Luxembourg and the European Union, since the Forum's inception in June 2025.

The third edition, on the basis of suggestions and feedback from partners and stakeholders, was envisaged as a Forum with a sharper lens aligning with the key pillars of the EU-India strategic agenda, drew over 60 senior experts and practitioners from leading industry, research, academic and civil society organisations from across Europe to the Brussels Press Club. Developing the rationale of the Forum's objectives in line with the Key Pillars of the Strategic Agenda lies in the intrinsic value that 3 of the 5 pillars stress on addressing sustainability and climate action as a definite path of the EU-India Cooperation. These in turn are concomitant with the objectives of the Forum's partners and the inherent ideals which guided the evolution of the Dialogue.

Therefore, the Forum welcomed experts from Europe and India to deliberate on two key pillars of the Joint Strategic Agenda: (i) Prosperity & Sustainability and (ii) Technology & Innovation

Strategic EU-India Partnership Pillars	***Focus Areas***
Prosperity and Sustainability	(i) Boosting trade and investment (ii) Strengthening supply chain and economic security (iii) Advancing the clean transition and resilience
Technology and Innovation	(i) Supporting critical emerging technologies (ii) Advancing a conducive digital environment (iii) Promoting research cooperation

Table 1: Key Focus Areas of Towards 2030: Joint Comprehensive Strategic adopted in the EU-India FTA

The Forum focused on the components of the pillars through the three following sessions:

- Session 1: Pillar: Prosperity & Sustainability: Focus Area (ii) - Shared Responsibility to drive Resilient and Reliable Supply Chains
- Session 2: Pillar: Prosperity & Sustainability: Focus Area (iii) - Energy Transition, Resource Efficiency & Climate Action partnerships
- Session 3: Pillar: Technology & Innovation: Focus Area (i) - Supporting and Advancing Critical and Emerging Technologies and Innovation, in the age of AI

4. Summary of Discussions

OPENING REMARKS



The 3rd Brussels EU India Sustainable Business Forum Dialogue got underway with **Anamika Ghosh** of CRB welcoming all speakers and delegates to the full day congress which included several new stakeholders from across the EU region, validating the growing relevance and timeliness of the forum.

In his welcome address, **Rijit Sengupta**, CEO, CRB, echoed the sentiment of the significance and importance of the EU-India Partnership accentuated by the historic FTA announcement made earlier in January 2026 in New Delhi. He touched upon the course charted by the Forum, to spotlight the growing need of the EU-India discourse on sustainability in Brussels at the heart of the European Commission. He weighed in on the seamless manner in which trade and sustainability have come together in a closer partnership as it is only natural that for trade to expand, it does so with a sustainability-led and inclusivity-focussed lens. He acknowledged the support and guidance from the Embassy of India to Belgium and the European Commission, specifically in context of the long-standing partnership between the Delegation of the European Union to India and Bhutan and CRB and the joint research projects undertaken which has resulted in the creation of the EU-India endeavour in Brussels. He emphasised the timely evolution of this forum a year ago with support from partners and stakeholders who continue supporting the need to bring greater and engaged dialogue between European and Indian businesses from across industried towards achieving and implementing the key pillars of the EU-India Joint Strategic Agenda, which will guide the partnership. It will critically ensure, he underlined, through the auspices of the Forum, that private sector, policymakers, academia and other experts come together to discuss ideas and contemporary issues to effectively partner the process of implementation of the EU-India key pillars.



In his opening remarks as co-host, TCS Europe's Sustainability Director – **Eugenio Longo**, outlined the significance of the EU-India Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and for it to be examined from the lens of sustainability and technology and the growing role of technology as a key enabler of sustainability led transparency of trade and supply chains. He highlighted the Indian capacity to innovate and the inherent calibre of the country's talent ecosystem which can and is to Europe's advantage. Similarly, India's growing pivotal role as a result of the FTA, will create more access to Europe's low carbon and resource efficient technologies. The role of regulations, on both sides, were cited as complementary that will improve competitiveness of both partners.



He offered a brief overview of the Indian conglomerate's presence and operations in Europe, not just as a provider of software services, rather a technology co-creator with some of Europe's largest organisations across the banking and insurance sectors and cited the importance of not concentrating solely on outsourcing, but drive and build co-creation. At TCS, he stressed, partnership is also about driving scale, emphasising on working collaboratively to build, scale

and lead together, which can be implemented across other industry sectors. The Forum, as it has evolved from a small group of like-minded stakeholders buoyant on the EU-India partnership, he encouraged is where all partners and stakeholders can openly and freely discuss thoughts and ideas which will aim to be presented to the right decision and policymakers of both partners.



Jan Noterdaeme, co-founder CSR Europe, and a co-host of the Forum, underscored the pertinence of supporting the dialogue of partnership between EU and India to help it mature into a mutually enabling alliance. As an alliance, Mr. Noterdaeme shared, it would be material for CSR Europe to understand the nuances of the partnership which would support its members to anchor growth strategies in India, while being based on creating a strong social impact.

He weighed in on the need to explore threadbare the deficiently addressed topic of the financial narrative which key decision makers in organisations have the ability to transform. He invited concerted thoughts and ideas to motivate clear mandates from an organisational level to catalyse the financial narrative within the larger sustainability dialogue. Such a mandate will allow organisations to access capital and investors. He cited the example of one of the biggest networks on sustainability in Europe working with organisations to develop such effective mandates for sustainability. He further expressed that for CSR- Europe the partnership with the Forum will continue to expand as the lens becomes granular with the EU-India alliance unfolds over the coming years.



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, Adviser - Industry and Engineering of the Commerce Section, **Ashutosh Salil** remarked on the timely and structured dialogue which is defined by the extraordinary partnership between India and the European Union, that together as strong trading partners represent nearly a quarter of the world's GDP and a third of global trade. He reiterated the common foundations of democracy, rule of law, pluralism and innovation, on which the partnership rests. Mr. Salil underscored the historic juncture at which the partnership stands poised, even as the landmark FTA was announced on 27 January 2026, fittingly a day after India's Republic Day celebrations. The embassy standpoint was clear on the Joint Strategic Agenda with its five key pillars, adopted at the FTA announcement, and underlined India's initiatives in clean technology, start-up innovation, green hydrogen and green transition. It will serve as a resolute framework defining the way forward for India and the European Union, as an alliance that is resilient, responsible and future ready. He encouraged the meeting and CRB and its partners to identify specific and concrete action projects.



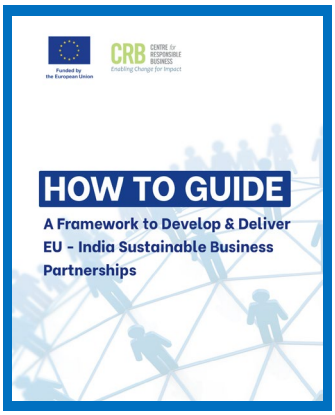
Consistently supporting the EU-India Sustainable Business Dialogue from its initiation in June 2025 and offering the opening remarks, was the European Commission's Head of Sector - South Asia, DG-INTPA, **Libuse Soukupova**, who referred to the growth of the EU-India Sustainable Business Dialogue from a roundtable to now a Forum, as a positive signal from key stakeholders in Europe. She highlighted the importance of the dialogue given the growing regional and global relevance of the EU-India partnership, even as the joint strategic agenda with its key pillars builds on the 2025 Roadmap by expanding into sectors beyond digital and energy partnerships to include sustainable trade, water, security and defence and indeed all priority areas of the EU. Ms. Soukoupova also stressed on the quality of the partnership as it invests greater attention to inclusivity which includes a sharper focus on gender equality and economic empowerment along with some new areas of interest such as skills, education and legal migration. She outlined the EU's commitment to continue building on existing partnerships and priorities and turning them into practical cooperation but at the same time forging new engagements specifically with the private sector. To support this, she shed light on the EU's Global Gateway Investment Hub that will work closely with investors from the private sector. The EU's commitment to the EU-India Cooperation was clear as it aims to widen the partnership and facilitate a global dimension addressing supply chains, sustainability and technology and opportunities for greater multilateralism. In light of the momentum building rapidly on the significance of the EU-India alliance, Ms. Soukoupova acknowledged the relevant timeliness of the EU-India Sustainable Business Dialogue's objectives firmly allied with the Joint Strategic Agenda Pillars.



In his special remarks, Ambassador **Mikael Anzen**, CSR Ambassador – Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sweden, said the convening of the Forum was appropriate, as it came just weeks after the Indian Prime Minister's visit to Sweden (followed by Norway, Netherlands and Italy), wherein leaders underscored the deep ties of cooperation between the two countries by emphasising the need to move from rhetoric to delivery on trade and sustainability. The stand of Sweden on sustainability has clarity of thought and direction as it quietly underpins decisions that drive businesses. He also stated the need to pave the way for businesses to build on and grow and dialogues to facilitate these developments, such as the Forum, which comes as a timely intervention in that direction.

RELEASE OF THE 'HOW TO GUIDE: A FRAMEWORK TO DEVELOP & DELIVER EU-INDIA SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS'





Under the aegis of the EU-India SDG Business Collaborative Initiative, CRB in partnership with the Delegation of the European Union to India and Bhutan, has designed a guidebook to serve as a framework to develop and deliver sustainable business collaborations, in line with the EU-India Partnership towards 2030. The objective of the guidebook is to highlight existing examples of good practices of collaborations between EU and Indian partners/stakeholders through 5 pathways redefining business goals across industry sectors. (Refer: How To Guide: A Framework to Develop & Deliver EU-India Sustainable Business Partnerships)

SESSION 1: PROSPERITY & SUSTAINABILITY

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY TO DRIVE RESILIENT AND RELIABLE SUPPLY CHAINS



Pointers for the Panel:

- Common outcomes that both Governments expect to pursue from the increasingly strengthening partnership of both regions. The progressive role businesses and Industry stakeholders can play to support strategic EU-India collaborations that are on the anvil.
- Key lessons (positive and negative) that can be derived from existing experiences of EU and Indian businesses (of collaboration and shared responsibility) across key sectors including – Heavy Industries, Apparel and Textiles; Agri-food; Forest-based Commodities; Building & Construction; Mining & Minerals; etc.

Key Take-aways from the Discussion:



» The EU-India FTA is a motivating start and offers credible foundation to unlock the collective potential between the two partners to build on and ensure sustainability focussed measures in the evolution of supply chains. While these are positive indications, it will be essential to address the issue of shared responsibility of sustainability that includes shared investments which will translate to shared benefits and thereby mutual value creation.

» The FTA lays the foundation for deeper cooperation to promote the uptake of more sustainable production and capacity building opportunities that improve compliance of businesses with legislation in this area. For businesses to accrue these benefits will require concerted effort to build capacity and awareness of enterprises, specifically SMEs, on the FTA's provisions.

» Both regions are equipped to deliver trade diversification and predictability as a response to geopolitical uncertainty thereby increasing and improving supply chain resilience along with close monitoring of regulatory developments on both sides to ensure the agreement continues to deliver.

» Sustainability can be understood through different realities that both partners embody, and through the lens of resilience and competitiveness which translate to responsible sourcing, investment certainty, long-term partnerships and stronger supply chains.

» Perception of risk in terms of unlocking investment flow to India is shaped by three things that can be addressed: labour conditions, supply chain transparency and regulatory uncertainty. The narrative around these perceptions holds the key towards fundamentally redefining the investment and investor confidence.

» The partners must redefine shared responsibility to develop sustainable supply chains, ensuring that risks and benefits are equitably distributed across the value chain. Industry stakeholders called for greater regulatory clarity and guidance (Digital Product Passports) and harmonisation of standards to mitigate compliance fatigue, especially in context of SMEs.



» While ESPR readiness presents both challenges and opportunities for the Indian apparel and textile sector, end-to-end traceability and DPP preparedness are critical areas where greater collaboration can build competitive advantage and sustainability.

» India has a strong manufacturing base but it needs more competition. Competition is necessary as it brings innovation, resilience, new operation models and this is where sustainability comes into play.

» Businesses on both sides will have to comply with regulations. Capacity Building will play an important role to help businesses and supply chains to build sustainability and business opportunities as mutually beneficial principles of shared responsibility.

» Indian supply chains are ramping up preparedness to comply with the regulation on ESPR and there are clusters that are confident of meeting all requisite compliances to be globally competitive.

» Mindset towards sustainability of Indian businesses has moved from being viewed as a compliance necessity to a competitive advantage, which will need to be sustained and it is where important milestones such as the EU-India FTA will act as a catalytic agent.

» Strategic partnership talks at a deeper level of where the collaboration is headed. The real test is to see how companies can benefit from the agreement as it gets ready to be ratified. Industry on both sides want clarity and long-term predictability that legislation on both sides will remain consistent and not prove to be barrier in the future

» Accountability and joint ownership will define how the EU India FTA translates as a mutually beneficial agreement for partners and stakeholders on both sides.

SESSION 2: PROSPERITY & SUSTAINABILITY

ENERGY TRANSITION, RESOURCE EFFICIENCY & CLIMATE ACTION PARTNERSHIPS



Pointers for the Panel:

» Areas of priority - clean energy; decarbonisation; resource efficiency & circular economy envisaged as common outcomes for both Governments till 2030.

» Examining support from businesses and Industry stakeholders leading the strategic collaboration around energy transition towards a low carbon economy, specifically emphasising the integration of supply/value chains

» Key lessons (positive and negative) from EU and Indian business experiences of collaboration in clean energy; decarbonisation; resource efficiency & circular economy, that can be built upon as well as avoided to achieve swifter implementation. The decisive role of policy, on both sides, to support such collaborations

Key Take-aways from the Discussions:

» Energy transition cannot be separated from the question of critical raw materials and resilient supply chains. Strategic autonomy for both the EU and India should not mean isolation. For Europe, resilience will increasingly depend on trusted partnerships and this is where India can become a key partner in diversification, recycling, refining, digital traceability and long-term industrial cooperation.

» There is a need to invest in infrastructure development, transparency mechanisms as well as long-term partnerships to support SMEs to ensure they can benefit from market opportunities.

» While the discussion around CBAM has been complex, it is now evolving into a more constructive conversation on interoperability and development of international carbon markets. Even as India develops its own Carbon Credit Trading System (CCTS), the EU-

India FTA and its Joint Strategic Agenda is paving the way for dialogue between the EU-ETS, CBAM and the Indian CCTS, exemplifying the move from regulatory friction to mutual understanding with a better aligned climate ambition.



» The larger opportunity waiting to be tapped by the EU-India narrative are illustrations of Indian businesses moving away from a compliance mindset to integrate sustainability within the core business strategy which includes green finance, electric mobility, renewable energy, emissions mitigation and climate adaption. Sustainability transition will take centre-stage when large industrial groups, MSMEs, investors, technology companies, and governments work together to turn climate ambition into operational change.

» The future of the EU–India model lies in co-creation, joint development of standards, pilots, data systems, green industrial models, AI governance approaches, and sectoral transition pathways.

» The partnership has emerged as one of equals, wherein: India brings scale, engineering capacity, digital talent, manufacturing ambition, human capital, and the experience of solving for complexity. Europe brings seasoned regulatory experience, green-transition frameworks, advanced industrial ecosystems, financial systems and market power. The opportunity clearly lies in pooling these strengths to bolster the cooperation.

» Energy transition has emerged as an industrial strategy pivot, as it is directly linked to industrial competitiveness, energy security, trade policy, investment risk and geopolitical resilience.

» The Indian heavy industry sector will be pivotal to the EU-India partnership, as Indian businesses are clearly and surely moving from ambition to implementation through renewable energy, circularity, low-emission steel, green hydrogen pilots, scrap ecosystems, electric mobility, green finance, and green-aligned revenue.



» There has to be a more realistic conversation about industrial decarbonisation, as climate diplomacy will only work if it recognises developmental realities. India's priorities remain closely linked to growth, poverty reduction, energy access and industrial development. At the same time, both India and Europe face the challenge of decarbonising critical sectors such as steel, transport, construction and manufacturing. The task for the future lies not simply in reducing emissions on paper, but in avoiding new forms of carbon lock-in while supporting competitiveness and inclusive development.

» Stakeholders also reflected that the construction and materials sector - given its cross-cutting relevance to both CBAM & ESPR as it embodies carbon and labour-rights considerations - is well positioned to serve as a pilot sector for deeper EU–India cooperation. The Forum acknowledged the value of developing structured mechanisms to support this, including regulatory guidance, buyer–supplier dialogue platforms and evidence generation on just transition.

» While CBAM has remained contentiously untouched, the discussion revealed the increasingly pragmatic approach adopted by Indian businesses, paving the way for it to accelerate learning on both sides and adoption and development of carbon markets.

» Europe and India should not merely adapt to standards shaped elsewhere. They should increasingly help define them together. Carbon accounting, ESG disclosure, lifecycle assessment, digital product passports and supply chain transparency will shape future global exchange. However, these instruments must become workable, credible and business-friendly, not just adding new burdens of complexity.

SESSION 3: TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

SUPPORTING AND ADVANCING CRITICAL AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES AND INNOVATION, IN THE AGE OF AI



Pointers for the Panel:

» Common agenda for both Governments that will complement each other's expertise in the era of Artificial Intelligence (AI). The role of businesses and Industry stakeholders in augmenting strategic collaborative support towards advancing the development from AI (Narrow AI) to AGI (Artificial General Intelligence) at the intersection of sustainability driven technologies to drive a non-fossil fuel revolution as well as make emerging technologies less dependent on conventional energy systems.

» Central findings (positive and negative) from EU and Indian business experiences of collaboration in critical and emerging technologies and innovation. Determining the role of collaborative technologies set to bring about change in light of the transition from AI to AGI and the role of governance to ensure responsible and sustainable modes of energy consumption in the deployment of AI. In what way can India balance this transition by leveraging experiences and support from EU partners?

Key Take-aways from the Discussion:

» Opportunities emerging from the integration and adoption of AI are futuristic and are enablers for businesses and societies and there is considerable thrust from the Indian government and EU businesses in India to ensure these benefits integrate the SME sector without excluding them.

» It also emerged that the EU–India dialogue should consider skills as a strategic enabler of sustainability at a time when the EU region has a shortfall of professionals in STEM sectors and India with its strong and technically talented ecosystem, requires upskilling for emerging technologies, AI, green industry and advanced manufacturing.

» Technology transition and AI are cross cutting enablers and will be central to the sustainability agenda. The EU has already introduced its Sovereignty Package and India has also been a frontrunner in technology and innovation as well as with its Digital Data Protection Act.

» The two partners can cohesively develop and support energy optimisation, supply-chain

traceability, predictive maintenance, compliance, demand forecasting, route optimisation, industrial efficiency, agriculture, healthcare and SME productivity.



» The EU-India opportunity can be leveraged to establish a responsible and sustainable innovation corridor as it will be critical to monitor and govern new sustainability risks emerging as a result of the AI proliferation.

» AI requires data centres, energy to keep them going, enormous water usage, compute infrastructure, rare minerals, human labour, and diligent governance. While AI is crucial to develop sustainability, AI itself must be responsible and sustainable.

» Stressing on India's experience with technology and AI's emerging landscape, its relevance needs to emerge beyond a labour, outsourcing and data-processing hub.

» There is a need to scale AI in a way that is trusted, sustainable and human-centred which will highlight the opportunities for EU–India collaboration in clean energy, industrial efficiency, ESG data infrastructure and responsible AI governance. System transformation will require shared principles, shared metrics and value-chain collaboration and not merely successful pilots.

» The AI Impact Summit in February 2026, a significant alliance between Europe (France) and India, proved the country's role as a reliable partner in the age of emerging technical prowess to power sustainability.

» Experts urged a greater need to govern the ethical impact AI can have on societies even as its importance in driving sustainability and achieving goals of climate partnership and green transition are deeply intertwined. More so in context of the AI enabled energy systems which will have an impact on energy savings allowing for these to be channeled into AI infrastructural investments which are anticipated, that have a clear potential for EU-Indian partners.



» It was reiterated by all experts in context of the EU-India cooperation on aspects that both partners complement. Integration of markets is important. India has industrialised technology on massive scale. Quality and discipline of engineering that India has, is unparalleled, which will complement and fill the current gap of skilled engineering talent that Europe requires. India is an obvious partner for Europe in the current geopolitical environment.

» Data requires streamlining for making AI efficient along with diligent governance. Developing the performance of AI will be necessary by understanding the patterns on which it develops as it corresponds directly to the quality of data.

» Quality of AI and due diligence in context of global supply chains and distribution examines several factors such as control and security in context of EU businesses and Indian technology companies and the nuanced criticality of embedding security into AI across end-to-end global supply chain ecosystems and the level of awareness of the global supply chain of eco-AI systems. These can be modelled through consistent data quality and which is where regulation plays a key role in defining consistency of data for consistency of AI.

» The growing partnership between the two regions, specifically on developing regulations is important from the perspective of citizens and stakeholders of how services are consumed, such as GDPR, EU AI Act, Sovereignty Package etc. These enable the development of frameworks which allow enterprises to build responsibly.



» Rules, harmonisation and mutual recognition of each other's complementarities are crucial to emerge stronger together as partners. EU requires scale and partners and with the capital it has, the most natural way ahead would be to build with India which has scale and skilled engineering talent. These require to be given a simultaneous thrust along with legislations and regulations.

» Identify and strengthen ways to streamline regulatory uncertainties and build consensus on alignments as well as assess barriers at an early stage, encourage SME cross border innovations etc. The EU-India Trade and Technology Council (TTC) is already established and which can be further developed to be utilised as a platform to reconcile differences on both sides at a consistent pace, along with all stakeholders beyond policymakers which includes concerted engagement with industry and think tanks.

» Good practices of AI governance in the EU-India context have the opportunity to develop along the following lines:
  - Focussing on human capital as equal partners on both sides
  - Recognising the damage that profit for a few can cause - especially at the cost of resources
  - Emphasisng the creation of AI as a public good for social impact
  - Cross vertical and cross functional collaboration on communication will be key across organisational levels with employees and stakeholders
  - Expanding markets between EU and India by focussing on the wealth of indigenous knowledge

LAUNCH OF BRIEFING PAPERS ON EU REGULATIONS AND INSIGHTS FROM INDIAN INDUSTRY

Briefing Paper: 'Navigating ESPR Regulation: Implications & Readiness of India's Apparel & Textile Sector'





Key Messages:

- ESPR presents both a compliance challenge and a strategic opportunity, encouraging Indian exporters to move beyond cost-based competition towards higher-value, sustainable, and differentiated products
- A&T Clusters in India with established textile recycling ecosystem could offer competitive advantage through traceability, documentation & recycled-content verification
- End-to-end traceability & Digital Product Passport readiness emerging as most significant areas in preparedness gaps, raising concerns about ability of A&T SMEs to participate in data-driven global value chains
- There is urgent need for promoting shared responsibility across value chains, given sustainability requirements are often passed down to suppliers without adequate financial, technical, or operational support
- Existing investments in certifications, resource efficiency, waste management, renewable energy, and sustainability reporting provide a strong foundation. Needs to be integrated with ESPR's more rigorous data and traceability requirements
- Readiness challenges extend beyond technology, with awareness, skills, regulatory interpretation, and stakeholder coordination equally important

Briefing Paper: Indian Steel Industry Insights on EU's CBAM Regulation





Key Messages:

- Indian steel industry faces differentiated treatment due to structural asymmetry embedded in EU CBAM (pricing of carbon, non-recognition of domestic carbon trading system, existing quotas for EU producers, etc.)
- Policymakers & businesses on both sides need win-win solutions; develop transition pathways - combining financing, tech and policy options
- Decarbonisation actions for the Indian steel industry include green steel taxonomy; scaling energy efficiency initiatives; advancements in renewables; deployment of CCUS among others
- Scaling and acceleration of these efforts will require boosting investment across R&D; technology cooperation and exchanges
- Indian SMEs integral to the sector will face CBAM-headwinds. Solutions and enabling environment needed for their integration
- Need for a phased & well supported financial transition of the sector – opportunity for EU-India collaboration based on 'Shared Responsibility'
- Competitive advantage will depend on data driven traceability - Measurement, Reporting & Verification (MRV) framework remains key
- Imperative of the EU CBAM implementation will need to be reconciled with the spirit of the EU-India FTA and the EU-India Strategic Partnership 2030

5. Endnote: Recommendations & Way Forward

An analysis of key expert recommendations, from the sessions and floor discussions summarised by a panel of policymakers and industry experts, especially in context of the development and formal establishment of the EU-India Sustainable Business Forum, are as follows:

COMPLIANCE TO CO-CREATION

There emerged a strong emphasis on the need to move beyond compliancedriven approaches which includes engaging more and listening, observing and communicating with businesses, civil society, local communities, NGOs etc., which builds on the importance of technological diplomacy and social acceptance.

These are required nuances for the next phase of the EU and India dialogue which should move from traditional logic and debate of technology transfer towards industrial co-creation. Renewable energy, energy efficiency, hydrogen, storage and smart grids remain central areas of cooperation. Europe brings regulatory experience, technologies, financing instruments and industrial standards. India brings scale, engineering capacity, manufacturing potential and rapidly growing domestic demand. The opportunity lies in combining these strenghts in joint ecosystems as Europe brings technology, standards and financing and India brings scale, talent and entrepreneurial dynamism. This partnership has the potential to become much more than a bilateral success story with a focussed approach to implement the joint strategic agenda pillars. It can become a model for democratic, equitable and results-oriented climate cooperation, that is more than ever needed in a fragmented global order.

DE-RISKING INVESTMENT AND CLIMATE FINANCE

A stated observation was that, the mandate of the EU-India Partnership is in place and it is up to businesses to deliver on transformation. This means moving from mere exports to co-investment, from isolated projects to ecosystems and from short-term transactions to long-term partnerships. However, there remains an important element for which policy plays a catalytic role - derisking investment. Climate finance must become more accessible thereby ensuring regulatory dialogue is also strengthened. To make this seamless, business actors must be involved earlier and more systematically in implementing the EU–India agenda.

Sustainability is too often viewed from a narrow lens of moral (just transition), regulatory, or compliance issue, rather than viewing these jointly as investment and competitive narratives. This narrow vision has created the consistent financial gap conundrum. A strong emphasis emerged for Boards in organisations to mandate the functions of the Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Chief Sustainability Officer (CSO) and Chief Investment Relations Officer (CIRO) to link sustainability initiatives and integration with access to capital, investor confidence, risk reduction, market opportunity and long-term value creation. Such a financial narrative will ensure sustainability integration becomes investment worthy and scalable.

BRIDGING REGULATORY AMBITION WITH OPERATIONAL REALITY AND INNOVATIONS

A strong shift from aspiration to implementation was observed, indicating businesses and investors need much greater clarity on both the constraints and opportunities if they are to plan credibly for CBAM, ESPR and due diligence requirements.

The EU and India should increasingly help define standards together as increasingly carbon accounting, ESG disclosure, lifecycle assessment, digital product passports and supply chain transparency will shape future global exchange. Discussions on CBAM, ESPR, EUDR, ITMOS, Investment Protection Act and other regulatory priorities will continue to deserve attention along with the growing discourse on circularity and resource efficiency.

As remarked by experts, Indian businesses are gearing up to meet regulatory criteria and the EU-India Dialogue can successfully amplify these aspirations in the EU region allowing for greater exchange and understanding between businesses in both regions. The experts agreed that the briefing papers on insights from Indian industry sectors (steel and textiles) on the level of preparedness to address regulatory requirements of CBAM and ESPR, is a reflection of the pragmatism to re-structure that will address both EU as well as emerging Indian regulations, thereby ensuring future readiness and global competitiveness.

It was welcomed by all stakeholders to build on the insights of these briefing papers by inviting discourse in the EU over the ensuing months to present granular thoughts from both regions as a reflection of multilateral debate at the next Forum.

INTEGRATING THE SME NARRATIVE AS AN IMPERATIVE OF THE EU-INDIA JOINT STRATEGIC AGENDA

Developing and sustaining resilient supply chains rests on the core principle of shared responsibility, which has been underscored by all experts. Sustainability and climate action are shared goals making it incumbent on large businesses to ensure the process of transformation, which includes SMES, is shared equitably across costs, risks, investments, data responsibilities, including and importantly: benefits.

This will require sustaining long-term relationships to jointly develop sourcing partnerships, responsible procurement, capacity building, affordable digital tools, harmonised standards, implementing certifications, traceability, digital reporting, buyer participation in transition costs amongst others.

It will be important to examine the implementation risks that new sustainability rules could unintentionally exclude the sector, given that it is central to the global economy and supply / value chains, including in India, but as has emerged, they lack the financial and technical capacity to manage complex requirements of the transition towards a green economy.

SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE ACTION AS POINTS OF CONVERGENCE IN GLOBAL TRADE

The tenacity of the Forum's objectives found resounding support to clearly continue sharpening the focus provided by the key pillars of the joint strategic agenda as sustainability is an integral driving force of trade between the two regions. It is being increasingly recognised as an alliance of market access, competitiveness, investment, and long-term resilience within the wider context of sustainability, technology, industrial, and geopolitical strategy.

Expert views also suggested that industrial and construction materials sector could represent one of the most immediate test cases for operationalising the Joint Strategic Agenda, by outlining ways to examine the potential, including developing a Just Transition & Innovation Evidence Series to make India's innovation ecosystem visible and investable as well as sector specific regulatory clarity sessions.

ACTIONABLE POLICY SUPPORT AND ENGAGEMENT ON TRADE, GVCS AND SUSTAINABILITY

A consensus emerged amongst experts and policymakers guiding the next steps, that the real benefit of the partnership was in the dynamism reflected in thought leadership from industry, policy, government, diplomacy, academia, trade, all of which find relevancy in the larger G-to-G discussions and which offer a clear policy direction on where the next steps should focus.

The EU-India partnership is one of equals and therefore the focus on sustainability will need to respect different points of reference moving towards a common goal to jointly design pathways of implementation. The Forum once again exemplified the belief of experts that the foundations of the alliance are in place and that Brussles is on the right track to becoming an important node in the widening fabric of EU-India relations.







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