



MAKING GLOBAL GOALS LOCAL BUSINESS

CONFERENCE “THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: EXPERIENCES AND PROGRESSES ON THEIR IMPLEMENTATION IN EUROPE”

Rome, October 25th 2017

On the 25th of October the **Global Compact Network Italy (GCNI)** held, in collaboration with **the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI)**, the conference “*The Sustainable Development Goals: Experiences and Progresses on Their Implementation in Europe*”.

The **objective** of the event, hosted at the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation in Rome, was to share insights of key policies as well as of business and civil society organizations trends and developments on the *SDGs* within the European context. These insights will help better understand the state of the play and promote collaboration at the local, national and European levels among all the different actors engaged in facing the sustainable development challenge.

The meeting was **chaired by Minister Plenipotentiary Mercuri, Sustainability Coordinator DGMO** and the speakers were: Sen. Benedetto DELLA VEDOVA, Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI); Marco FREY, President, Global Compact Network Italy (GCNI); Enrico GIOVANNINI, Spokesman, Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development (ASVIS); Lise KINGO, Executive Director, United Nations Global Compact (UNGC); Roberto RIDOLFI, Director for Planet and Prosperity, DG Development and Cooperation-EuropeAid, European Commission (EC); Maria Benedetta FRANCESCONI, Head of the National Contact Point Secretariat for the OECD Guidelines, Ministry of Economic Development (MiSE); Stefan CRETS, Executive Director, CSR Europe; Giovanni MORO, Scientific Advisor, FONDACA – Fondazione per la Cittadinanza Attiva; Angelo RICCABONI, Full Professor at University of Siena, Chair of Fundación PRIMA (Partnership on Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area), Chair of SDSN Assembly; Stefano VENIER, CEO, Hera Group; Alberto GIOVANNINI, President, Salini Impregilo; Ernesto CIORRA, Head of Innovation and Sustainability, Enel Group.

This event reaffirms the increasingly closer relationship between the GCNI and the MAECI, as well as with other Italian and European Institutions, and the strong **commitment of the GCNI to exploiting the results achieved by Italian companies that are committed to sustainability**.

The presence of Lise Kingo (UNGC) rendered even greater value, significance and international visibility to the meeting. The attendance of **25 representatives of the European Global Compact Local Networks** and of **three Italian companies** sharing their experience and practices proves **the collaborative and pragmatic approach of the GCNI in Making Global Goals Local Business**.

The **key insights** emerged from the conference are summarized below.

Reaching the *Global Goals* set by the 2030 Agenda will take an unprecedented effort by all sectors in society. The business sector, possibly encompassing the widest range of human activities, plays a crucial role in the process. In this context, the UNGC has developed a portfolio of *Action Platforms* for enterprises aimed to advance responsible business activities and to fill gaps in meeting the *SDGs*. In parallel, the role of the Local Networks has proved to be essential in helping companies to understand the meaning of responsible business practices within the different national, cultural and linguistic contexts and to facilitate outreach, learning, policy dialogue, collective actions and partnerships. The *SDGs* represent a historic opportunity for European businesses, not only for large international firms, but also for small, medium



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enterprises as well as start-ups. In Europe SMEs account for 99% of all businesses and for 70% of total employment. Companies may use the *SDGs* as an overarching framework to shape, steer, communicate and report their core strategies, goals and activities, allowing them to capitalize on a range of benefits. For example, in Italy greening strategies help corporate gain competitive advantage, create value, employment and increase exports. The GCNI supports and works together with corporates in taking steps towards sustainability with a multi-stakeholder approach, by promoting collective actions, the sharing of experiences and by engaging with companies at different levels.

As Lise Kingo pointed out, today, more than ever, the very fabric of our society relies on our ability to make globalisation work for all, making sure no one is left behind. Delivering on the *2030 Agenda* for sustainable development will be essential to build trust and to strengthen the global contract between governments, citizens, businesses and their stakeholders.

Eighteen years ago, the Global Compact began with 40 companies and a lot of progress has been made since with close to 10,000 businesses and 3,000 non-business signatories to date. Pulling together all the employees that are working for UNGC companies, there are more than 66 million UNGC ambassadors across the world. There are two areas that are particularly challenging and that are not living up to all the *Key Performance Indicators* that have been set under each of the 17 goals. One of them is Making Growth Inclusive – with all the related issues on inequality - and the other is Climate Change.



SDGs Conference, October 25 10 2017
L. KINGO QUOTES

“We are very passionate on being the change we want to see in the world”

“Let’s see SDGs as a change agenda and enjoy the moment! There is no plan B.”

“We must make growth inclusive”



69% CEO

23% MIDDLE MANAGEMENT

50% SENIOR MANAGEMENT

75% OF RESPONDENTS SAY THEY ARE TAKING ACTION ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

“Sustainability is gaining strategic ground”

37% CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY OR ETHICS OFFICER

47% BOARD OF DIRECTORS

9% SUBSIDIARIES



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This all boils down to leadership. We need individuals, CEOs, government representatives that have the courage to take leadership on the *2030 Agenda*. Because it involves transformation, it requires bravery to take risks and it's not going to work if all of the individuals do not join the global movement.

For example – as specified by Marco Frey - the role of citizens in driving business towards sustainability is crucial, as they can be the principal actors in influencing companies through their purchasing choices.

Despite collective efforts, Italy is still not on a sustainable path on the environmental as well as social and economic dimensions. There is a need for a shift in political commitments and a substantial amount of work should be done on raising awareness and promoting education. Europe is not a role model in terms of living up to the 17 goals, which is frightening considering that the UNGC has more than half of its participants based in Europe.

The *2030 Agenda* is by all means a partnership agenda, which should leverage on platforms, coalitions and alliances on a global scale taking into consideration that solutions also need to be found for those areas of the world facing the biggest challenges, such as Africa. It's all about partnerships and cooperation.

In line with this approach is the European Union's perspective on implementing *SDGs* which goes through development cooperation. The role that the EU has in this area is political as policy is a crucial driver for sustainability. The EU is engaged in a political dialogue with the countries that are drivers for sustainability in order to promote a conducive investment climate, starting from the rule of law. The rule of law is part of *SDGs* principals, if you don't have a good judiciary you can't prosecute people damaging the environment. The EU External Investment Plan, a new integrated tool, is the first big intervention at a planetary scale in executing *SDGs* into financing for private sector development: leveraging tax payers' money in order to reduce the risk of investments of private actors for sustainable growth. The EIP's innovative and holistic approach builds on the Commission's blended finance instruments with a contribution of €4.1 billion from the European Commission. The External Investment Plan is expected to leverage more than €44 billion of investments by 2020.

Immense investments and new technical tools, to help allocate resources towards sustainability, are needed to meet the *2030 Agenda* with financial Institutions playing an important role in driving companies' sustainability. The financial world should integrate *SDGs* into investments to redirect resources towards sustainable growth and, other than policy-making, data needs to be recorded and produced to prove that these investments are profitable.

Breakthrough innovation is fundamental. This is a completely new agenda where companies have to think about turning major business risks into business opportunities. The MISE is making an effort to align cross national policies with the *SDGs* and all these policies are characterised by innovation because it can maximise the contribution of the private sector for the *SDGs*. This does not only mean making investments in digital and new technology but also in adopting innovative ways to manage sustainability.

Three Italian companies shared their approaches and practices towards the *SDGs*. In order to engage with the *SDGs*, companies underlined that *SDGs* need to be integrated to the company's strategy and even more than this, the *SDGs* should become a source of inspiration for the company. The *SDGs* are indeed drivers toward implementing innovative models, as sustainability and innovation are two sides of the same coin. Great attention is given by companies to the shared value model; to creating benefits within the communities where they operate; to the connection between *SDGs*' social benefits and business performances and to the importance of partnerships with the academic, industrial, start-up and non-



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governmental sectors. Moving toward the *SDGs* requires a solid and daily commitment, which involves planning, setting targets, implementing and evaluating results.



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