

GRI Program Spreading Responsible Business Practices in Africa

GRI and Switzerland's SECO collaborate on capacity building for sustainability reporting

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Event speakers (left to right): Front row: Franziska Spörri, Douglas Kativu, Bernd Oellermann, Saint-Francis Tohlang. Back row: Corli le Roux, Shameela Soobramoney, Claude Kabemba, H.E. Dr. Nicolas Brühl, Stiaan Wandrag.

April 15, 2022 /3BL Media/ - A program to support more business in the African region to engage with sustainability reporting and increase their accountability is underway, thanks to funding from Switzerland's State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO).

The GRI-SECO **Sustainability Reporting for Responsible Business** (SRRB) program, which runs until 2024, is being implemented in Africa, Hispanic America, South East Asia, through local partnerships with GRI's network of regional offices.

The SRRB aims to encourage African companies to report on their sustainability impacts, contributing to an improved environment for transparency and increased engagement on corporate sustainability data by stakeholders. This will be achieved by training and capacity building exercises; **scholarships to the GRI Academy**; collaboration with government agencies, stock markets, regulators; and engagement with media practitioners on the sustainability agenda.

A launch event, jointly hosted by the GRI Africa regional office and SECO, recently took place in Pretoria, South Africa, to mark the start of the SRRB in Africa. This hybrid event was also delivered live online so that regional stakeholders could participate.

The event was opened by H.E. Dr Nicolas Brühl, The Ambassador of Switzerland to South Africa. He said:

“This program from GRI and SECO is an important entry point to support companies, especially down the supply chain, to comply with sustainability reporting requirements. We are very pleased that, with the launch of the programme, we can contribute to further improving the environmental, economic, and social performance and competitive advantage, in South Africa and the region.”

Eelco van der Enden, GRI CEO, who addressed the launch event virtually, said:

“Collaboration is absolutely crucial, if business and society are to do more to work together to reach the Sustainable Development Goals and tackle the significant sustainability challenges facing the global community, and Africa in particular. That is why I am delighted that GRI and SECO are continuing to work together in support of sustainable change, as enabled by transparency as the catalyst for responsible business.”

Franziska Spörri, Head of SECO in South Africa, said:

“Sustainability reporting is an important puzzle piece to improve competitiveness, to increase transparency, and to build a sustainable economy. The SRRB program offers companies the ability to adapt to this new reality and new requirements, which also creates opportunities to comply and fit into global value chains.”

Douglas Kativu, Director of GRI Africa, added:

“GRI has been highly successful in recent years in deepening our engagement with African companies and stakeholders, utilizing the freely available GRI Standards as the vehicle for organizations to demonstrate accountability for their impacts. I look forward to working with SECO to spread the practice of sustainability reporting to many more companies in the region in the years to come.”

The event on 25 March 2022 included a panel discussion on 'driving business accountability for social impact', followed by an open Q&A. Discussions reflected the lessons and insights on rethinking business purpose to drive the sustainable development agenda, the enabling role of accountability and transparency in driving social impact, and the leadership pivot and corporate actions required to accelerate impact.

Speakers included: Shameela Soobramoney, Chief Sustainability Officer, Johannesburg Stock Exchange; Stiaan Wandrag, Sustainability and External Reporting Director, Tiger Brands; Saint-Francis Tohlang, Corporate Communications and Public Affairs Director, Nestle; Claude Kabemba, Executive Director, Southern Africa Resource Watch; Bernd Oellermann, Director: Regional Industrial Development, DTIC; Asthildur Hjaltadottir, Chief Regional Officer, GRI.

The €3.8 million (US\$4.1m) **Sustainability Reporting for Responsible Business** program is a continuation of GRI's long-standing cooperation with SECO. The SRRB program seeks to enable a demand-driven increase in GRI sustainability reporting and quality of disclosures in Africa, Hispanic America and South East Asia.

The **State Secretariat for Economic Affairs** implements Switzerland's economic and trade policies for the benefit of developing countries, with an aim of reducing poverty and overcoming challenges in its partner countries. SECO runs some 300 programs and projects that help countries in the Global South and East increase their economic competitiveness and achieve sustainable prosperity, with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as an important reference point.

Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) is the independent, international organization that helps businesses and other organizations take responsibility for their impacts, by providing the global common language to report those impacts. The **GRI Standards** are developed through a multi-stakeholder process and provided as a free public good.

All of GRI's grant funding meets the requirements of the Global Sustainability Standards Board **Terms of Reference**, which ensures the GRI Standards are developed in line with the needs of companies and the global community, free from external influence.

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