

Press release

World Benchmarking Alliance launches to help business measure progress against the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals

September 24, 2018: Today, Aviva, Index Initiative and the United Nations Foundation announce the launch of the World Benchmarking Alliance (WBA), with the aim of helping businesses do more to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The WBA, launched in New York today on the eve of the General Debate of the 73rd session of the United Nations General Assembly, will develop free, publicly available benchmarks which will rank companies on their contributions to achieving the SDGs.

At a time of increasing focus on the role of the private sector in helping to drive greater levels of sustainability, equality and prosperity in society, the WBA will increase transparency and accountability for businesses in relation to the SDGs. It aims to empower consumers, investors, governments and civil society organizations by providing them with free and publicly available data that shows a company's SDG performance, which they can use when deciding where to spend their money, allocate their investments or direct their policy and advocacy efforts.

The WBA will develop a range of corporate benchmarks by 2023 to comprehensively assess the progress of 2,000 companies across major areas of transformation required to achieve the SDGs. The first set of benchmarks will be published in 2020 and will address food and agriculture, climate and energy, digital inclusion and gender equality and empowerment.

The benchmarks will be designed to clarify what society expects from business with regards to the SDGs, and how best these companies can contribute to meeting these expectations. The WBA also believes this initiative will help to promote competition among businesses in their race to deliver against the SDGs. By assigning a value to social good, the WBA will help to create a market that rewards corporate leadership while challenging those that lag behind.

Gerbrand Haverkamp, Executive Director of the World Benchmarking Alliance, added: "With only 12 years left to deliver against the SDGs, governments, businesses, civil society and individuals alike must make a concerted effort to achieve progress. This new and unique approach will measure and incentivize businesses to continue driving efforts towards a more sustainable future. The real value of benchmarks is that they will empower society to make decisions that are in line with societal values, which will ultimately create demand for corporate responsibility."

Adopted in 2015 by 193 countries, the SDGs are a collection of 17 interconnected goals negotiated by U.N. member states. Developed in consultation with business and civil society, the SDGs outline a global framework to ensure a better and more sustainable future for all by 2030, and address the world's most pressing challenges, including poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, prosperity and justice.

Mark Wilson, Group Chief Executive of Aviva, said: “We need to harness the power of economics to do what’s best for society and the planet. Benchmarks will be the ‘floodlights of sustainability’, shining a powerful light on how far companies and regulators are meeting their responsibilities. They allow consumers and investors to make informed choices based on sustainability performance. League tables will inject a healthy dose of competition to encourage both businesses and regulators to do better at thinking and acting for the long-term.”

Kathy Calvin, President and Chief Executive Officer of the United Nations Foundation said: “The World Benchmarking Alliance is an important initiative that will help to unleash the power of business to drive progress and build partnerships that cut across industries, sectors and geographies for a better world that leaves no one behind. Now is the time for all of us to step up to achieve the SDGs.”

The WBA’s launch follows a year of international consultations, expert meetings and online surveys, with more than 10,000 stakeholders representing business, civil society, government and consumers themselves. Through this collaboration, the WBA defined its vision, institutional structure and priorities in terms of focus industries and SDGs.

The WBA is funded by Aviva and the Governments of the Netherlands, United Kingdom and Denmark.

Sigrid Kaag, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation of the Netherlands said: “The world has united on an agenda for tackling the greatest global challenges and produced a framework for action: the SDGs. Achieving the SDGs is a collective effort. Benchmarks give us valuable insights and identify areas for improvement. Measuring helps us raise standards together.”

Penny Mordaunt, International Development Secretary of the United Kingdom said: “More and more people are recognizing that businesses need to be a force for good in the world. In giving ordinary people the information they need to hold companies to account, the World Benchmarking Alliance will fundamentally challenge businesses to up their game on the contribution they are making to the Global Goals.”

Ulla Tørnæs, Minister for Development Cooperation of Denmark said: “The World Benchmarking Alliance is an ambitious and necessary initiative to unleash the power of business and private finance for the Sustainable Development Goals. With the benchmarks, companies will know what we as a society expect from them on the sustainability agenda. This will take us one step closer to the vision and ambition to create the world we want embodied in the Sustainable Development Goals.”

- Ends -

The World Benchmarking Alliance

While many of the world’s leading companies are taking clear action to align their business models with the SDGs, information and analysis of corporate sustainability performance is often hard to access or compare. Thus, investors, civil society, governments and consumers have no common mechanism through which to

credit leading companies. Companies' efforts, or lack thereof, often go unrecognized, reducing incentives to improve sustainability performance and making it difficult to gauge industry leaders.

WBA's mission is to provide everyone with access to information that indicates how companies are contributing to the SDGs. It will do so by developing free and publicly available corporate sustainability benchmarks that rank companies on their sustainability performance and contribution to achieving the SDGs. The WBA is also expected to play a role in helping to leverage and harmonize the incoming wave of SDG-related monitoring initiatives that are currently being developed. Learn more at:

www.worldbenchmarkingalliance.org

Aviva

Towards a more sustainable future

Aviva has long recognized the benefits to our business, our customers and the world of a sustainable future. At Aviva, we're incredibly proud to be promoting the vital reorientation of capital away from short-term thinking and towards more sustainable financial markets. As an international insurer and investor, we're acutely aware that the investments and decisions we make today will influence the world we live in tomorrow, and we're in this for the long term.

We recognize we cannot do this alone. In 2015 Mark Wilson, Aviva's Group CEO spoke at the U.N. calling for the SDGs to be turned into a corporate competitive sport by drawing up transparent data on performance towards meeting the SDGs and ranking companies according to how well they are doing. Aviva is a founding partner of the World Benchmarking Alliance and, with the support from the U.K., Danish and Dutch governments, is working on benchmarks to measure, motivate, and reward action on the SDGs.

The pace of positive change on sustainable finance is rapid. We must act now on smart policymaking and regulation in partnership with positive businesses and civil society to reshape financial markets in time. Read more about our support of the SDGs and commitment to sustainable finance here:

<https://www.aviva.com/social-purpose/delivering-sustainable-finance/>

Notes to editors:

- Aviva provides life insurance, general insurance, health insurance and asset management to 33 million customers.
- In the U.K., we are the leading insurer serving one in every four households and have strong businesses in selected markets in Europe, Asia and Canada. Our shares are listed on the London Stock Exchange and we are a member of the FTSE100 index.
- Aviva's asset management business, Aviva Investors, provides asset management services to both Aviva and external clients, and currently manages over £350 (USD458) billion in assets. Total group assets under management at the Aviva group are £490 (USD 641) billion.
- Aviva helps people save for the future and manage the risks of everyday life; we paid out £34.6 (USD 45.3) billion in benefits and claims in 2017.
- By serving our customers well, we are building a business that is strong and sustainable, that our people are proud to work for, and that makes a positive contribution to society.

Index Initiative

Index Initiative, a non-profit organization based in Amsterdam, seeks to propel the use of benchmarks to engage companies in advancing the SDGs. It strives to bring clarity to the role and performance of companies in contributing to the goals most relevant to their core business, while providing stakeholders and the wider public with free and accessible research and benchmarks. Index Initiative - as one of the founding partners of the WBA - will undergo a name and governance change to become the WBA, leading the development and delivery of the WBA benchmarks.

The United Nations Foundation

The United Nations Foundation builds public-private partnerships to address the world's most pressing problems and broadens support for the United Nations through advocacy and public outreach. Through innovative campaigns and initiatives, the Foundation connects people, ideas and resources to help the U.N. solve global problems. The Foundation was created in 1998 as a U.S. public charity by entrepreneur and philanthropist Ted Turner and now is supported by philanthropic, corporate, government and individual donors. Learn more at: www.unfoundation.org.

For further press information, please contact:

Michael Kelly, Edelman - +44(0)20 3047 2119 / michael.kelly@edelman.com

Kelsey Hickson, Edelman - +44 (0)20 3047 4121 / kelsey.hickson@edelman.com