

The Intergovernmental Working Group of Experts on International Standards of Accounting and Reporting (ISAR)

ISAR was established in 1982 by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Since then, in accordance with its mandate, it has been assisting member States in their efforts towards implementation of international standards, codes and best practices to promote harmonization and improvement of quality of enterprise reporting to facilitate financial stability, international and domestic investment, social and economic progress. It achieves these objectives by facilitation the exchange of views and best practices, building consensus, developing guidance documents, providing technical assistance on issues related to both financial and sustainability/SDG reporting. This work is conducted through the annual sessions of ISAR, as well as associated workshops and roundtables, research and capacity building activities. ISAR work is coordinated by United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and its Enterprise Branch serves as ISAR's Secretariat, providing substantive and administrative support to its activities.

With the adoption of the SDG Agenda, ISAR has been addressing issues on enhancing the role of enterprise reporting in implementation of agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and its monitoring mechanism. In particular, it has been assisting member States in their efforts to improve quality and comparability of companies reports on their SDG related performance. Towards this end, ISAR initiated developing of *Guidance on Core indicators for entity reporting on contribution towards implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (GCI)*¹ which was launched at the World Investment Forum of UNCTAD in 2018 and published in 2019.

The GCI is a technical tool aimed to assist companies to provide data on a limited number of universal and core SDG baseline indicators in economic, environmental, social and institutional areas. It also aims to assist governments to design policies and build institutional mechanisms to collect such data from companies' reports with a view to enable them to reflect the private sector contribution to SDG implementation in a consistent and comparable manner, including in their Voluntary National Reviews presented at the High Level Political Forum. GCI can also help to facilitate countries reporting on the SDG 12.6.1 "Number of companies publishing sustainability reports". Several company case studies conducted by UNCTAD on the GCI application helped to validate the suggested methodology and required data availability.

On 30 October to 1 November 2019 ISAR conducted its 36th annual session at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. It was attended by over 400 participants from around 100 countries. In its Agreed Conclusions inter alia ISAR referred to the GCI as a useful toolkit for organizations to provide comparable baseline data on their contribution to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Acknowledging usefulness of the GCI case studies, it requested UNCTAD to conduct further case studies, including in francophone countries in Africa, among others, including for small and medium-sized enterprises, to facilitate wider use, raising awareness and dissemination of the guidance, as well as training and capacity-building, including in cooperation with relevant training institutions.

The next 37th session² will take place from 17 to 19 June 2020 in Geneva. The main agenda items will be:

¹ UNCTAD, 2019, *Guidance on Core Indicators for Entity Reporting on Contribution towards Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.19.II.D.11, Geneva).

<https://unctad.org/en/pages/PublicationWebflyer.aspx?publicationid=2469>

² <https://isar.unctad.org/blog/2019/11/26/isar-37/>

1. Practical implementation, including measurement, of core indicators for entity reporting on the contribution towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals: Review of case studies.
2. Climate-related financial disclosures in mainstream entity reporting: good practices and key challenges.

For more than three decades ISAR has been the focal point in the United Nations addressing issues of harmonization of enterprise reporting to enhance enabling business and investment environment, sustainable and inclusive growth. While sessions are open to all member and observer States of UNCTAD, ISAR has 34 formally elected members. The ISAR membership³ includes nine African, seven Asian, six Latin American, three Eastern European, and nine Western European and Other States as members. The membership is on a rotation basis which allows interested member States to join the Group to play a proactive role in improving harmonization and quality of sustainability and SDG reporting by companies towards maximizing a positive impact of the private sector on the SDG agenda.

More information on ISAR and its membership could be found at <https://isar.unctad.org/about/>.

³ <https://isar.unctad.org/isar-membership/>