

FTA Conference Highlights

FTA Sustainability Conference 2016



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Editorial



Dear readers,

Following the FTA Sustainability Conference on 2 June, FTA would like to thank the 250+ participants who joined us from all around the world share some of the conference highlights with all attendees as well as those who were unable to attend this year.

Under the theme 'The Power of Collaboration', we welcomed our diverse network of leading practitioners in business, sustainability and civil society to embrace their journey towards a world of international trade and sustainable supply chains. Together with inspirational thought leaders, we looked towards 2050 and explored the business challenges set ahead of us. With a population set to hit 9.2 billion, coupled with a rise in protectionist trade policies, increased food scarcity, rising sea levels and depleting natural resources, to name a few, the interlinkage between human rights and climate change was deemed inseparable.

The theme of collaboration was set at the heart of the conference, with a focus on the intertwined challenges through today's necessity for an international trade policy framework that promotes improved social and environmental standards. With this in mind, the synergies created by bringing together the [Business Social Compliance Initiative](#) (BSCI) and the [Business Environmental Performance Initiative](#) (BEPI) under the holistic service 'FTA Sustainability' were recognised as a means to drive forward efficiencies.

To find out more about the conference outcomes, please see the links below:

- [Watch the conference highlights videos on Youtube](#)
- [See the Twitter updates through the conference Storify](#)
- [Find yourself in the conference photos uploaded to FTA's Flickr account](#)
- [Check out the conference infographic to visualise key facts and figures from the event](#)

We were pleased to hear that participants appreciated the bold and inspiring plenary sessions, the wide choice of practical breakout sessions, the ample networking opportunities and the interactive challenges. For this, we would like to thank all attendees for their high-level of engagement, the speakers who provided grounds for thought-provoking debates, and our motivated team for their hard work and enthusiasm to deliver this successful conference.

We look forward to seeing you at our 2017 conference when we will celebrate FTA's 40-year anniversary. Until then, please stay tuned on our website www.fta-intl.org to explore further opportunities to engage with us over the coming year.

Yours sincerely,

Christian Ewert
FTA Director General

Darrell Doren
FTA Senior Director, Sustainability

Catch Up on the Plenary Discussions: The Power of Collaboration

The FTA Sustainability Conference set new precedents for the business community as they strive to develop sustainable business models which meet the needs of the future. While the link between trade and sustainability was recognised as playing an increasing important role for businesses, the expectations set out by industry leaders, sparked diverse debates by conference participants.

The conference featured two high-level panels; one explored the sustainable business models of the future, and the other looked at the crucial link between human rights and climate change. Following the theme of 'The Power of Collaboration', the day featured nine practical breakout sessions, welcomed five high-level keynote speakers, and engaged the audience in many interactive challenges. All session summaries, powerpoints and video presentations can be found on the sustainability conference website (sustainability2016.fta-intl.org)

Watch the Conference Highlights



FTA Director General, Christian Ewert, opened the day and highlighted the fact that our world has developed in a way that embraces international trade which is an essential means to stimulate development and create employment. Trade should only be considered in parallel with good governance and social and environmental compliance. Together, these are the strongest drivers to enhance economic growth and prosperity in both developed and developing economies.

"International trade cannot happen at any cost. And the production and trading of the goods we consume cannot be at the cost of neglected conditions of human beings nor at the condition of a polluted natural ecosystem. International trade should be done with purpose." Christian Ewert, FTA Director General.



What is the Sustainable Business Model of the Future?

The morning plenary session ‘What is the Sustainable Business Model of the Future?’ featured high-level and diverse speakers who confronted the challenges for businesses to meet their sustainability objectives. The session welcomed Mr Dante Pesce, Chair of the [UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights](#), Louise Nicholls, Head of Responsible Sourcing at [Marks and Spencer \(M&S\)](#) and Jonathon Porritt, Founder of [Forum for the Future](#).

The session was initiated with an interview between conference moderator, John Morrison, Executive Director of the [Institute for Human Rights and Business](#) and Dante Pesce. Referring to the [UN Guiding Principles of Human Rights \(UNGPs\)](#), Mr Pesce noted that while having received much political recognition, there has been a little uptake in practical terms with the largest resistance coming from governments. The UN endeavours to build a platform to increase accountability and improve transparency through requiring sustainability reporting. However, implementation outside of Europe, where governments are weaker, is a key challenge.



"We are in need of more leadership and courage, where companies use their leverage to move forward, while also able to admit when they are not perfect, but that they are doing their best to fix the problems in a systemic way, all together." Dante Pesce, Chair of the UN Working Group on Business & Human Rights.

Providing insight from a company perspective, Louise Nicholls showcased how M&S tackles sustainable business challenges *"in a world of VUCA – Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity"*. Ms Nicholls explained M&S' ambitious journey, including projects such as their:

- [Eco and Ethical Plan 2020](#) to engage customers in sustainability;
- [Environmental projects](#) which includes an initiative to donate every saved hanger to [UNICEF](#) and contribute towards water sanitation in Bangladesh;
- [Global Community Programme](#) to increase resilience in local communities via loyalty cards, a scheme by which consumer can contribute to a charity of their choice.



"Collaboration is key, we have to stop competing and stop talking and start action. We have to work together for leverage." Louise Nicholls, Head of Responsible Sourcing - Marks & Spencer

The audience finally welcomed Jonathon Porritt who, as a leading and recognised environmentalist, provided a realistic outlook on our future. Among challenges, Mr Porritt highlighted that even with thousands of sustainability tools and countless efforts from the business community, still little progress has been achieved in reality. Turning to consumers, western lifestyles must begin to value the price of people, communities and the environment. Finally, governments must scale up their efforts to implement regulations. In this complex setting, Mr Porritt recognised the efforts made by initiatives like BSCI and BEPI, and stressed that only with a collaborative and cohesive approach to tackling sustainability challenges, can progress be achieved.



"Until we hear the voice for free trade to speak up for better and more vigorous regulation, we will never move this agenda very far forward." Jonathon Porritt, Founder – Forum for the Future



Climate Change and Human Rights: An Intertwined Challenge

The closing session of the conference invited thought leaders to share their perspectives on why environmental and social concerns need to be considered in parallel in order to live in a prosperous world. The session was led by Alan Atkisson, Founder of Atkisson Group, Runa Khan, Founder of Friendship International and FTA's Senior Director Sustainability, Darrell Doren.

Setting the scene, Alan Atkisson provided a lively interaction introducing the [Sustainability Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) and their importance in today's sustainability agenda. The SDGs, also known as the '2030 Agenda' calls for universality, integration and transformation. Mr Atkisson highlighted that these goals apply to every nation and every sector; universality challenges nations, but also cities, businesses, schools and organisations. Secondly, he stressed the goals are all inter-connected and cannot be achieved alone without an integrated approach. Finally, he argued that this agenda requires making transformative and fundamental changes in how we live on this earth. Mr Atkisson called for the creation of tools and access for stakeholders to inform themselves and interact. He started the initiative [17 Goals](#) for this purpose.



"We are living on a planet with the ultimate circular economy. Everything you do, everything we do has to contribute to a sustainable life for 9 - 10 billion people for the next hundred years, hundreds of years..." Alan Atkisson, Founder - AtKisson Group

Providing insight from Bangladesh, BSCI's second most popular sourcing country and one most impacted by climate change, Runa Khan shared her insight after having set up her charity Friendship, founded to serve Bangladesh's marginalised communities and to empower people. Friendship's vision is to provide equal opportunities for people to live with dignity and hope. Ms Khan is achieving this through providing healthcare services to serve communities, along with promoting education, disaster management and infrastructure development, good governance, sustainable economic development and cultural preservation. Ms Khan provided insight into daily life in Bangladesh and how people's lives are being visibly impacted by climate change. When faced by such challenges, she questioned how they begin to deal with human rights.



"Major rivers are flowing in, land is being made and broken, islands are shifting, people are migrating daily. This is the reality of the people of Bangladesh. Climate change is not for the future. It is today, it's happening and we see it daily." Runa Khan, Founder - Friendship, Bangladesh

Darrell Doren wrapped up the session introducing how FTA Sustainability supports companies to achieve the SDG goals and how, through its collaborative efforts, it aims to augment progress. FTA Sustainability initiatives; BSCI and BEPI, have the common aim of improving sustainability in global supply chains. Through this, many of its objectives laid out through the BSCI Code of Conduct and BEPI Environmental Principles have an aligned objective to meet many goals of the 2030 Agenda. Mr Doren went on to highlight just a few of the partnerships formed between FTA and initiatives with similar goals, including BSCI's merger with French social compliance [Initiative Clause Sociale \(ICS\)](#), its collaborative efforts with [Sedex](#) and BEPI's recent partnership with the [Zero Discharge of Hazardous Chemicals \(ZDHC\)](#) programme.



"Challenges don't stop; they get a bit larger, they get a bit more nuanced, they get a bit more complex. At FTA, we have started a community of companies that can work together with a consolidated system and operationalise these important elements." Darrell Doren, FTA Senior Director Sustainability



[See all conference photos on FTA's Flickr account](#)

John Morrison Interviews FTA Directors on the Latest Developments and the Association's Vision

John Morrison interviews...Christian Ewert, FTA Director General

John: It has been 18 months since you became FTA's Director General, what have been your highlights so far?

Christian: It has been quite an adventure! In the last 18 months our association has grown by 400 member companies. Our network, of now 1,864 members and 13 national associations across 34 countries, is a clear demonstration of the good direction we're going in. In terms of outreach, there are not many associations like FTA. One of the most significant changes in this time has been the introduction of 'FTA Sustainability' – FTA's new holistic service. With the strength of BSCI, together with the potential of BEPI, we came to the conclusion that combining these initiatives will really drive these efficiencies. Following feedback from the conference, I can see that we are on the right track and companies are embracing the interconnectivity of our trade policy work with sustainability.



Another highlight actually took place during our conference, when we welcomed a renewed FTA Board, including a new FTA President Tino Zeiske, Senior Vice President – Corporate Responsibility at Metro Group. Our Board is already actively working on FTA's Vision 2030, a strategy for the future developments of the association.

John: There are some indications that some parts of the world are becoming more nationalist and protectionist. For this reason, trade and sustainability might have more in common than has been the case before. How do you see this link?

Christian: I fully agree that the link between trade and sustainability is only intensifying. The example of the free trade agreement between the European Union and Vietnam demonstrates the scope of the sustainability chapter in that agreement which sets a new benchmark. I think all future negotiations in this context will be based on that agreement.

It is also very clear that international trade is a given fact today. However, this cannot come at any cost. We have to ensure that we look at sustainable value chains globally, both from a social perspective and also from an environmental perspective.

John Morrison Interviews...Darrell Doren, FTA Senior Director - Sustainability

John: You have been implementing a new strategy for FTA Sustainability, can you tell us more about this?

Darrell: The activities of FTA Sustainability have been based around a common strategy for BSCI and BEPI. The strategy focuses on four criteria; sustainable supply chains, membership services, growth and transformation; and sustainable operations, each of which is complete with concrete metrics to measure our performance.



In addition, continuous assessment and dialogue is needed to ensure we remain on the right track. In this sense, we fully utilise our network, including the FTA Board, Steering Committee and National Contact Groups, to ensure that we are all aligned. There are ambitious and exciting challenges ahead and it will be an important challenge to evolve in a structured and coordinated approach.

John: Following the theme of the conference Power of Collaboration, there has been a lot of collaborative activities across FTA Sustainability, can you tell us more?

Darrell: Over the past couple of months, there have been several key developments formed between FTA Sustainability initiatives and other organisations with a similar mission of improving sustainability in global supply chains.

For example, BSCI's merger with the Initiative Clause Sociale (ICS) aims to increase synergies and reduce duplication of efforts for member companies. The merger is now in its final stages, as we lay out final practicalities, ahead of our full merger in 2017. In addition, BEPI has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Zero Discharge Hazardous Chemicals (ZDHC) programme aiming to provide a focussed approach to chemical management and increase alignment with the broader industry. And even more recently, BSCI's collaboration with Sedex was kicked off in May. Together, have seen many opportunities to collaborate on various projects in order to add value to our membership.

These are just a few examples of our collaborative work. We will continue putting together a portfolio of organisations that we would like to work with; ones that will help small and large businesses, at the regional and global level, etc. We are looking to create real value for our members through a targeted approach.

Five ways to catch up on the conference highlights:



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[See all presentations, powerpoints and session summaries on the conference website](#)



For more information and updates about the
conference, check the official website



sustainability2016.fta-intl.org

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FTA is the leading business association of global commerce that promotes the values of international trade and sustainable supply chains. FTA represents 1,800+ retailers, importers and brands to promote and defend international trade and supports their business by providing information and practical solutions towards sustainability in the global supply chain.

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