

## UNFSS Academic Advisory Council Annual Meeting 2023

### Building a Sustainable Future for Trade: A Multi-Dimensional Assessment of VSS in Global Sustainability Governance and Due Diligence for Developing Countries

The UNFSS AAC meeting 2023 will focus on exploring the synergies between due diligence and voluntary sustainability standards (VSS) within the context of global sustainability governance. Through a multi-dimensional assessment, the discussions will delve into the potential of these approaches to drive sustainable trade.

#### Draft Agenda

8h45-9h00	<b>Arrival and Registration</b>
9h00-9h15	<b>Opening Remarks by the AAC Co-Chairs</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Bernard Hoekman, Robert Schuman Centre, EUI</li> <li>2. Santiago Fernandez de Cordoba, UNCTAD</li> </ol>
9h15-11h00	<b>Panel 1: State of Play: VSS and Due Diligence Developments in international trade</b> <p>Many regulatory initiatives have started to emerge to govern sustainability requirements across global value chains. Given that, this session will explore the evolving landscape of due diligence regulatory developments and the role VSS can play in them. The session will assess the potential for VSS to act as a facilitation or a verification tools for due diligence requirements.</p> <p><b>Moderator: Elisabeth Tuerk, Director, Economic Cooperation and Trade, UNECE</b></p> <p>Panelists:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. “Mapping the ‘legislative tsunami’ of due diligence regulations and preparatory responses in the coffee sector”, Janina Grabs, Department of Society, Politics and Sustainability at ESADE Business School (virtual)</li> <li>2. “Impacts of environmental regulations on supply chain management” Michida Etsuyo, Institute of Developing Economies, JETRO Japan</li> <li>3. “The politics of “smart” supply chain regulation in the EU”, Philip Schleifer, Political Science Department at the University of Amsterdam (virtual)</li> <li>4. “Fit or Mismatch? VSS and the EU Deforestation-Free Regulation”, Paulo Mortara Baticic, Thomas Dietz, University of Münster</li> </ol> <p>Commentator: [TBC]</p> <p>Discussion</p>

11h00-11h30	Coffee Break
11h30-13h15	<p><b>Panel 2: VSS Positioning and Impact: Navigating Due Diligence Implications</b></p> <p>Traditionally, VSS were tools for producers and firms who wanted to play a leading role in sustainability to signal their commitment. But new regulatory initiatives basically transform soft law approaches on corporate social responsibility into hard law and level the playing field for all companies. Following that, the session will look at how VSS can position themselves vis-à-vis these developments. The session will assess the possible implications of regulatory initiatives on VSS, including on their theories of change, and examine how these developments influence the substantial and procedural aspects of VSS. The session will also analyze the potential impact of regulations on the uptake of VSS, considering the possibility of increased adoption or potential obsolescence. Lastly, the session will explore the effect of these due diligence regulations on the VSS market, whether it would lead to a possible proliferation of new initiatives or consolidation of standards.</p> <p><b>Moderator: Virpi Stucki, Chief of Rural Entrepreneurship, Job Creation and Human Security Division, UNIDO</b></p> <p>Panelists:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. “Private Auditor Power in the Verification of Voluntary Sustainability Standards”, Graeme Auld, School of Public Policy and Administration, Carleton University</li> <li>2. “VSS grievance mechanisms: strengths, weaknesses and ways to improve”, James Harrison, Warwick University</li> <li>3. “Governance Matters: Voluntary Sustainability Standards and Farmer Welfare in Peru”, Eva Boonaert, Charline Depoorter, Axel Marx, Miet Maertens, KU Leuven</li> <li>4. “Operationalizing due diligence regulations: a role for VSS?”, Joseph Wozniak, Trade for Sustainable Development (T4SD) Programme, ITC</li> </ol> <p>Commentator: Irene Oliván García, Trade Policy Analyst, Trade Policy Division, Trade and Agriculture Directorate, OECD</p> <p>Discussion</p>
13h15-14h30	Lunch
14h30-16h15	<p><b>Panel 3: Leaving no one behind: Developing Countries’ Perspectives</b></p> <p>Scholars and policymakers from developing countries have raised important concerns about the possible impacts and additional challenges resulting from social and environmental due diligence legislations as well as interactions with VSS. From the perspective of suppliers, especially in developing countries, export costs can be</p>

	<p>expected to increase as firms have to provide evidence of their compliance with due diligence requirements separately for each importer through bureaucratic processes. This could lead to a loss of export business or even market exit. This session will discuss these challenges from the lens of developing countries and explore the potential contribution of VSS in mitigating these challenges.</p> <p><b>Moderator: [TBC]</b></p> <p>Panelists:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. “Is sustainability governance abetting inequality? Reflections from the South African wine value chain”, Stefano Ponte, Copenhagen Business School</li> <li>2. “VSS in the Mining Industry”, Ximena Rueda, Universidad de los Andes (virtual)</li> <li>3. [TBC], Archana Negi, Jawaharlal Nehru University</li> <li>4. “TBT, VSS and ESG: Global North against Global South”, Vera Thorstensen, Getulio Vargas Foundation, Center on Global Trade and Investments</li> </ol> <p>Commentator: Maximo Torero Cullen, Chief Economist, FAO</p> <p>Discussion</p>
16h15-16h30	<p><b>Way Forward</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. José Valencia, Ambassador, Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Ecuador to the WTO, Chair, WTO Committee on Trade and Environment</li> <li>2. Mercedes Araoz Fernandez, Professor at Universidad del Pacifico, Former Vice President of Peru</li> </ol>
16h30-16h45	<p><b>Conclusions</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Elisabeth Tuerk, Director, Economic Cooperation and Trade, UNECE</li> <li>2. Clara Brandi, Head of Programme, Transformation of Economic and Social Systems, IDOS</li> <li>3. Axel Marx, Deputy Director at the Leuven Centre for Global Governance Studies, KU Leuven</li> </ol>