



## Roundtable on Assurance on Sustainability

21 November 2006

The FEE Roundtable was held with the following participants:

David Devlin	Chairman, FEE President
David Damant	Chairman IAASB CAG
Denise Esdon	Deputy Chair IAASB
Claus Frier	Sustainability Manager, Novozymes
Anne Gadegaard Larsen	Advisor, Corporate Responsibility Management, Novo Nordisk
Richard Howitt	Member, European Parliament
John Kellas	Chairman IAASB
Alan Knight	Head of Standards and Related Services, AccountAbility
Ernst Ligteringen	CEO GRI
Jacques Potdevin	FEE Deputy President
Hege Sjo	Manager, Hermes Equity Ownership Services Ltd

The Roundtable was held following the publication of the FEE Discussion Paper “Key Issues in Sustainability - An Overview” to discuss the publication in a wider context addressing the possible need for assurance on sustainability and a related international sustainability assurance standard.

The discussion was held around the following questions:

- Where and how can assurance generate value for the reporting organisation and its stakeholders?
- What are the key elements of an effective assurance approach?
- Are there sufficiently developed standards and criteria to enable assurance?
- Is there a need for a global sustainability assurance standard?

The main conclusions of the Roundtable were the following:

- There is a demand from the investors’ community and from companies for raising the credibility of the sustainability reporting but the sustainability report needs to be complete and to concentrate on the relevant information.
- Clear and recognised criteria of sustainability reporting need to be in place on which to provide assurance and the GRI G3 guidelines could serve as a reference. The accounting profession will assess whether G3 are sufficient against which to give assurance.
- The assurance report issued by the accounting profession is not always clear to the readers. There is a need to work on the content of the report, what is meant, explain the work the accountants do and what the report can bring to the stakeholders.
- Different levels of assurance for different elements of the sustainability report could be considered.
- The global framework on sustainability assurance should be at principle level and different standards may be developed with the aim of converging over time.
- Assurance work should be carried out with multidisciplinary teams comprising experts on sustainability, specific sectors and accountants.