



## ***Notes on the outcomes of the first edition of the “Italian Business & SDGs Annual Forum”***

*(September 25<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup>, 2016)*

At the end of September, the first edition of the “Italian Business & SDGs Annual Forum” was held in Venice and organized by the Global Compact Network Italy Foundation in collaboration with the VIU - Venice International University and the University Ca' Foscari Venice and with the support of FriulAdria and Edison SpA.

The Forum was launched on the evening of 25<sup>th</sup> September with a *Networking Dinner* held at the University Ca' Foscari's prestigious and historic Grand Canal site. The following working day, hosted at the VIU on the island of San Servolo, was set up in two sessions. The first was a brainstorming session which was coordinated on the private sector's potential contribution to achieving the United Nations' *Sustainable Development Goals - SDGs* for 2030 as well as to collect experiences, project ideas and proposals aimed in that direction. The second session was dedicated, instead, to a in depth analysis of the role that the GCNI Foundation is called upon to play in the coming years in order to support the efforts of companies on the new global goals for sustainable development.

At the Forum, with regard to the topic “*How can the private sector support the implementation of SDGs?*”, what was mainly highlighted was the need to support the paths taken individually by companies towards fulfilling the *SDGs* by creating new forms of partnership involving all the sustainable development partners in a coordinated way and by capitalizing on the specificities of each one (*SDG 17 - “Global Partnership”* between firms, governments and local administrations, communities, NGOs, universities and research centers). More specifically, the participants expressed the belief that in the near future the strengthening of relations between businesses and civil society should be promoted looking to forms of shared planning that go beyond the logic of pure philanthropy and sponsorship. The collaborative relationships between companies and civil society should be based in the future on knowledge sharing and on a shared effort between the partners to recount the social impact and the value of their joint action to external persons. With this in mind, the associations present at the Forum also invited businesses to go beyond the stakeholder consultation to make way for new and more effective engagement modalities pushing themselves as far as the hypothesis of a partnership of stakeholders incorporate production processes.

Shifting the focus away from the idea of a “new global partnership” for the *SDGs* towards the idea of the enterprise as the main actor of sustainable development, the first edition of the Forum reported the following priorities for the coming years: - ensure the involvement of top management on the *SDGs* and promote the adoption of management evaluation systems related to the sustainable development goals; - spread a shared culture on sustainability through education, awareness and awareness building within the company and outside of it (within its





sphere of influence); - promote the integration of sustainability in business strategies and innovation through the adoption, by the company, of a medium to long term approach to *SDGs* that includes as relevant areas also those of the supply and consumer chains ; - and finally, carry out an action of advocacy at institutions for the introduction of new standards to support the commitment to sustainability of the private sector (such as, for example, instituting standards about facilitation mechanisms and/or supporting the production of goods and services that are environmentally sustainable).

Within this framework and based on the outcomes of the Forum, the role that the Global Compact Network Italy Foundation has been called upon to play in the coming years is that of an entity that promotes information and new knowledge on the *SDGs* and of the institutional dialogue facilitator on sustainability issues, continuing to be characterized as an International initiative under which according to a multi-stakeholder approach will research and test innovative solutions to the global challenges of sustainable development. In doing so, particular attention should be paid to Italian SMEs that even while remaining on the margins of mainstream sustainability are characterized as an important resource for change at national and international level.

