



# International

## Sustainability Proxy Voting Guidelines

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2016 Policy Recommendations

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## INTRODUCTION

ISS recognizes the growing view among investment professionals that sustainability or environmental, social, and corporate governance (ESG) factors could present material risks to portfolio investments. Whereas investment managers have traditionally analyzed topics such as board accountability and executive compensation to mitigate risk, greater numbers are incorporating ESG performance into their investment making decisions in order to have a more comprehensive understanding of the overall risk profile of the companies in which they invest to ensure sustainable long-term profitability for their beneficiaries.

Investors concerned with portfolio value preservation and enhancement through the incorporation of sustainability factors can also carry out this active ownership approach through their proxy voting activity. In voting their shares, sustainability-minded investors are concerned not only with economic returns to shareholders and good corporate governance, but also with ensuring corporate activities and practices are aligned with the broader objectives of society. These investors seek standardized reporting on ESG issues, request information regarding an issuer's adoption of, or adherence to, relevant norms, standards, codes of conduct or universally recognized international initiatives including affirmative support for related shareholder resolutions advocating enhanced disclosure and transparency.

ISS has, therefore, developed proxy voting guidelines that are consistent with the objectives of sustainability-minded investors and fiduciaries. On matters of ESG import, ISS' Sustainability Policy seeks to promote support for recognized global governing bodies promoting sustainable business practices advocating for stewardship of environment, fair labor practices, non-discrimination, and the protection of human rights. Generally, ISS' Sustainability Policy will take as its frame of reference internationally recognized sustainability-related initiatives such as the United Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative (UNEP FI), United Nations Principles for Responsible Investment (UNPRI), United Nations Global Compact, Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), Carbon Principles, International Labour Organization Conventions (ILO), CERES Principles, Global Sullivan Principles, MacBride Principles, and environmental and social European Union Directives. Each of these efforts promote a fair, unified and productive reporting and compliance environment which advances positive corporate ESG actions that promote practices that present new opportunities or that mitigate related financial and reputational risks.

On matters of corporate governance, executive compensation, and corporate structure, the Sustainability Policy guidelines are based on a commitment to create and preserve economic value and to advance principles of good corporate governance.

These guidelines provide an overview of how ISS approaches proxy voting issues for subscribers of the Sustainability Policy. We note there may be cases in which the final vote recommendation at a particular company varies from the voting guidelines due to the fact that we closely examine the merits of each proposal and consider relevant information and company-specific circumstances in arriving at our decisions. To that end, ISS engages with both interested shareholders as well as issuers to gain further insight into contentious issues facing the company. Where ISS acts as voting agent for clients, it follows each client's voting policy, which may differ in some cases from the policies outlined in this document. ISS updates its guidelines on an annual basis to take into account emerging issues and trends on environmental, social and corporate governance topics, as well as the evolution of market standards, regulatory changes and client feedback

## 1. OPERATIONAL ITEMS

### Financial Results/Director and Auditor Reports

▶ **Sustainability Policy Recommendation:** Vote for approval of financial statements and director and auditor reports, unless:

- › There are concerns about the accounts presented or audit procedures used; or
- › The company is not responsive to shareholder questions about specific items that should be publicly disclosed.

### Appointment of Auditors and Auditor Fees

▶ **Sustainability Policy Recommendation:** Vote for the reelection of auditors and proposals authorizing the board to fix auditor fees, unless:

- › There are serious concerns about the accounts presented or the audit procedures used;
- › There is a reason to believe that the auditor has rendered an opinion which is neither accurate nor indicative of the company's financial position;
- › External auditors have previously served the company in an executive capacity or can otherwise be considered affiliated with the company;
- › Name of the proposed auditors has not been published;
- › The auditors are being changed without explanation; or
- › For widely-held companies, fees for non-audit services exceed either 100 percent of standard audit-related fees or any stricter limit set in local best practice recommendations or law.

In circumstances where fees for non-audit services include fees related to significant one-time capital structure events: initial public offerings, bankruptcy emergence, and spinoffs; and the company makes public disclosure of the amount and nature of those fees which are an exception to the standard "non-audit fee" category, then such fees may be excluded from the non-audit fees considered in determining the ratio of non-audit to audit fees.

For concerns relating to the audit procedures, independence of auditors, and/or name of auditors, the Sustainability policy will focus on the auditor election. For concerns relating to fees paid to the auditors, the Sustainability policy will focus on remuneration of auditors if this is a separate voting item, otherwise the Sustainability policy would focus on the auditor election.

### Appointment of Internal Statutory Auditors

▶ **Sustainability Policy Recommendation:** Vote for the appointment or reelection of statutory auditors, unless:

- › There are serious concerns about the statutory reports presented or the audit procedures used;
- › Questions exist concerning any of the statutory auditors being appointed; or
- › The auditors have previously served the company in an executive capacity or can otherwise be considered affiliated with the company.

### Allocation of Income

▶ **Sustainability Policy Recommendation:** Vote for approval of the allocation of income, unless:

- › The dividend payout ratio has been consistently below 30 percent without adequate explanation; or
- › The payout is excessive given the company's financial position.

### **Stock (Scrip) Dividend Alternative**

- ▶ **Sustainability Policy Recommendation:** Vote for most stock (scrip) dividend proposals.

Vote against proposals that do not allow for a cash option unless management demonstrates that the cash option is harmful to shareholder value.

### **Amendments to Articles of Association**

- ▶ **Sustainability Policy Recommendation:** Vote amendments to the articles of association on a case-by-case basis.

### **Change in Company Fiscal Term**

- ▶ **Sustainability Policy Recommendation:** Vote for resolutions to change a company's fiscal term unless a company's motivation for the change is to postpone its AGM.

### **Lower Disclosure Threshold for Stock Ownership**

- ▶ **Sustainability Policy Recommendation:** Vote against resolutions to lower the stock ownership disclosure threshold below 5 percent unless specific reasons exist to implement a lower threshold.

### **Amend Quorum Requirements**

- ▶ **Sustainability Policy Recommendation:** Vote proposals to amend quorum requirements for shareholder meetings on a case-by-case basis.

### **Transact Other Business**

- ▶ **Sustainability Policy Recommendation:** Vote against other business when it appears as a voting item.

## 2. BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### Director Elections



**Sustainability Policy Recommendation:** Vote for management nominees in the election of directors, unless:

- › Adequate disclosure has not been provided in a timely manner;
- › There are clear concerns over questionable finances or restatements;
- › There have been questionable transactions with conflicts of interest;
- › There are any records of abuses against minority shareholder interests; or
- › The board fails to meet minimum corporate governance standards, including board independence standards.

Vote for individual nominees unless there are specific concerns about the individual, such as criminal wrongdoing or breach of fiduciary responsibilities.

Vote against individual directors if absences at board meetings have not been explained (in countries where this information is disclosed).

Vote for employee and/or labor representatives if they sit on either the audit or compensation committee *and* are required by law to be on those committees. Vote against employee and/or labor representatives if they sit on either the audit or compensation committee, if they are not required to be on those committees.

Vote against or withhold from directors individually, on a committee, or potentially the entire board due to:

- › Material failures of governance, stewardship, risk oversight<sup>1</sup>, or fiduciary responsibilities at the company, including failure to adequately manage or mitigate environmental, social and governance (ESG) risks;
- › Failure to replace management as appropriate;
- › Egregious actions related to the director(s)' service on the boards that raise substantial doubt about his or her ability to effectively oversee management and serve the best interests of shareholders at any company.

At Canadian TSX and TSXV firms, generally withhold votes from all directors nominated by slate ballot at the annual/general or annual/special shareholders' meetings.

### Externally-Managed Issuers (EMIs) –TSX and TSXV

Vote case-by-case on say-on-pay resolutions where provided, or on individual directors, committee members, or the entire board as appropriate, when an issuer is externally-managed and has provided minimal or no disclosure about their management services agreements and how senior management is compensated. Factors taken into consideration may include but are not limited to:

- › The size and scope of the management services agreement;
- › Executive compensation in comparison to issuer peers and/or similarly structured issuers;
- › Overall performance;
- › Related party transactions;

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<sup>1</sup> Examples of failure of risk oversight include, but are not limited to: bribery; large or serial fines or sanctions from regulatory bodies; significant environmental incidents including spills and pollution; large scale or repeat workplace fatalities or injuries; significant adverse legal judgments or settlements; hedging of company stock; or significant pledging of company stock.

- › Board and committee independence;
- › Conflicts of interest and process for managing conflicts effectively;
- › Disclosure and independence of the decision-making process involved in the selection of the management services provider;
- › Risk mitigating factors included within the management services agreement such as fee recoupment mechanisms;
- › Historical compensation concerns;
- › Executives' responsibilities; and
- › Other factors that may reasonably be deemed appropriate to assess an externally-managed issuer's governance framework.

Other factors that may reasonably be deemed appropriate to assess an externally-managed issuer's governance framework. While a firm's country of incorporation will remain the primary basis for evaluating companies, Social Advisory Services will generally apply its U.S. policies to the extent possible with respect to issuers that file DEF 14As, 10-K annual reports, and 10-Q quarterly reports, and are thus considered domestic issuers by the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). U.S. policies will also apply to companies listed on U.S. exchanges as Foreign Private Issuers (FPIs) and that may be exempt from the disclosure and corporate governance requirements that apply to most companies traded on U.S. exchanges, including a number of SEC rules and stock market listing requirements. Corporations that have reincorporated outside the U.S. have found themselves subject to a combination of governance regulations and best practice standards that may not be entirely compatible with an evaluation framework based solely on the country of incorporation.

In **European markets**, Sustainability Advisory Services looks at a different set of factors to make determinations regarding director elections. The following factors are taken into account:

### **Director Terms**

For Belgium, France, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, and Switzerland, vote against the election or re-election of any director when his/her term is not disclosed or when it exceeds four years and adequate explanation for non-compliance has not been provided. In these markets, the maximum board terms are either recommended best practice or required by legislation. Under best practice recommendations, companies should shorten the terms for directors when the terms exceed the limits suggested by best practices. The policy will be applied to all companies in these markets, for bundled as well as unbundled items.

Clients will also be advised to vote against article amendment proposals to extend board terms. In cases where a company's articles provide for a shorter limit and where the company wishes to extend director terms from three or fewer years to four years, for example, the Sustainability policy will recommend a vote against, based on the general principle that director accountability is maximized by elections with a short period of renewal.

### **Bundling of Proposals to Elect Directors**

For the markets of Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Spain, vote against the election or reelection of any directors if the company proposes a single slate of directors.

In France, unbundled director elections are market practice. In Germany, it has been recommended best practice since July 20, 2005, and in Spain it has been recommended best practice since Jan. 1, 2007. The policy will be applied to all companies in these markets.

Bundling together proposals that could be presented as separate voting items is not considered good market practice, because bundled resolutions leave shareholders with an all-or-nothing choice, skewing power disproportionately



towards the board and away from shareholders. As director elections are one of the most important voting decisions that shareholders make, directors should be elected individually.

### Board Independence

The following policies would be applied to all widely held companies<sup>2</sup>, unless there is a majority shareholder:

- › For all markets (except Greece or Portugal), vote against the election or reelection of any non-independent directors (excluding the CEO) if:
  - › Fewer than 50 percent of the board members elected by shareholders would be independent, or
  - › Fewer than one-third of board members, including those who, in accordance with local law(s) requiring their mandatory board membership, are not elected by shareholders, would be independent.
- › In Italy, at least half of the board should be independent (50 percent). Issuers with a controlling shareholder will be required to have a board consisting of at least one-third independent members (33 percent). This applies to individual director appointments (co-options). In the case of complete board renewals that are regulated by the Italian slate system (“voto di lista”), board independence will be one of the factors for determining which list of nominees the Sustainability policy considers best suited to add value for shareholders based, as applicable, on the Sustainability European policies.
- › For companies incorporated in Portugal or Greece, at least one-third of the board will be required to be independent. The Sustainability policy will recommend a vote against the entire slate of candidates (in the case of bundled elections), or a vote against the election of any non-independent directors (in the case of unbundled elections) if board independence level does not meet the minimum recommended one-third threshold.

For companies with a majority shareholder (excluding Italy and Portugal):

- › Generally vote against the election or reelection of any non-independent directors (excluding the CEO) if the level of independence on the board will be lower than minority shareholders' percentage of equity ownership, or, in any case, if the board will be less than one-third independent (whichever is higher).
- › Minority shareholders' ownership percentage is calculated by subtracting the majority shareholder's equity ownership percentage from 100 percent. Majority control is defined in terms of economic interest and not voting rights, and is considered to be any shareholder or group of shareholders acting collectively that control at least 50 percent + 1 share of the company's equity capital. This independence threshold is applied to controlled widely held companies or main index-listed/MSCI-EAFE member companies which would otherwise fall under a 50-percent independence guideline as described in the Board Independence Policy.
- › However, in markets where the local corporate governance code addresses board independence at controlled companies, the Sustainability policy will generally recommend against the election or reelection of any non-independent directors (excluding the CEO) if the level of independence on the board is lower than the local code recommendation, but in any case, if the level of board independence will be less than one-third.

<sup>2</sup> Widely held companies are interpreted as:

- › Generally, based on their membership in a major index and/or the number of ISS clients holding the securities;
- › For Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, and Luxembourg: based on local blue chip market index and/or MSCI EAFE companies;
- › For Portugal, based on their membership in the PSI-20 and/or MSCI-EAFE index.

## Disclosure of Nominee Names

Vote against the election or reelection of any and all director nominees when the names of the nominees are not available at the time the proxy analysis is being written. This policy will be applied to all companies in these markets, for bundled and unbundled items.

## Combined Chairman/CEO

Generally, vote against the (re)election of combined chair/CEOs at widely held European companies.

However, when the company provides assurance that the chair/CEO would only serve in the combined role on an interim basis (no more than two years), with the intent of separating the roles within a given time frame, considerations should be given to these exceptional circumstances. In this respect, the vote recommendation would be made on a case-by-case basis. In order for the Sustainability policy to consider a favorable vote recommendation for a combined chair/CEO to serve on an interim basis, the company would need to provide adequate control mechanisms on the board (such as a lead independent director, a high overall level of board independence, and a high level of independence on the board's key committees).

This policy will be applied to all widely held European companies that propose the (re)election of a combined chair/CEO to the board, including cases where the chair/CEO is included in an election by slate.

## Election of Former CEO as Chairman of the Board

Generally vote against the election or reelection of a former CEO as chairman to the supervisory board or board of directors at widely held companies in Germany, Austria, and the Netherlands. In markets such as Germany, where the general meeting only elects the nominees and, subsequently, the new board's chairman, the Sustainability policy will generally recommend a vote against the election or reelection of a former CEO, unless the company has publicly confirmed prior to the general meeting that he will not proceed to become chairman of the board.

Considerations should be given to any of the following exceptional circumstances on a case-by-case basis if:

- › There are compelling reasons that justify the election or reelection of a former CEO as chairman; or
- › The former CEO is proposed to become the board's chairman only on an interim or temporary basis; or
- › The former CEO is proposed to be elected as the board's chairman for the first time after a reasonable cooling-off period; or
- › The board chairman will not receive a level of compensation comparable to the company's executives nor assume executive functions in markets where this is applicable.

## The Florange Act (France)- Double Voting Rights

For French companies that:

- › Did not have a bylaw allowing for double voting rights before the enactment of the Law of 29 March 2014 (Florange Act); and
- › Do not currently have a bylaw prohibiting double-voting rights; and either
  - › Do not have on their ballot for shareholder approval a bylaw amendment to prohibit double-voting, submitted by either management or shareholders; or
  - › Have not made a public commitment to submit such a bylaw amendment to shareholder vote before April 3, 2016;

Then, on a case-by-case basis, the Sustainability policy may recommend against the following types of proposals:

- › The reelection of directors or supervisory board members; or
- › The approval of the discharge of directors; or
- › If neither reelection of directors/supervisory board members nor approval of discharge is considered appropriate, then the approval of the annual report and accounts.

### **Unilateral Adoption of an Advance Notice Provision**

For Canadian companies, generally withhold from individual directors, committee members, or the entire board as appropriate in situations where an advance notice policy has been adopted by the board but has not been included on the voting agenda at the next shareholders' meeting.

Continued lack of shareholder approval of the advanced notice policy in subsequent years may result in further withhold recommendations.

### **Overboarded Directors**

In Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Spain, and Switzerland, at widely held companies, the Sustainability policy will generally recommend a vote against a candidate when s/he holds an excessive number of board appointments, as referenced by the more stringent of the provisions prescribed in local law or best practice governance codes, or the following guidelines:

- › Executive directors are expected not to hold other executive or chairmanship positions. They may, however, hold up to two other non-executive directorships.
- › Non-executive chairmen are expected not to hold executive positions elsewhere or more than one other chairmanship position. They may, however, hold up to three other non-executive directorships.
- › Non-executive directors who do not hold executive or chairmanship positions may hold up to four other non-executive directorships.

An adverse vote recommendation will not be applied to a director within a company where he/she serves as CEO or chair; instead, any adverse vote recommendations will be applied to his/her additional seats on other company boards.

The Sustainability policy will take into account board positions held in global publicly listed companies.

For directors standing for (re)election at French companies, the Sustainability policy will take into account board appointments as censors in French publicly listed companies.

### **Voto di Lista (Italy)**

In Italy, director elections generally take place through the *voto di lista* mechanism (similar to slate elections). Since the Italian implementation of the European Shareholder Rights Directive (effective since Nov. 1, 2010), issuers must publish the various lists 21 days in advance of the meeting.

Since shareholders only have the option to support one such list, where lists are published in sufficient time, the Sustainability policy will recommend a vote on a case-by-case basis, determining which list of nominees it considers is best suited to add value for shareholders based, as applicable, on the Sustainability European policies for Director Elections and for Contested Director Elections.

Those companies that are excluded from the provisions of the European Shareholder Rights Directive publish lists of nominees 10 days before the meeting. In the case where nominees are not published in sufficient time, Sustainability will recommend a vote against the director elections before the lists of director nominees are disclosed. Once the various lists of nominees are disclosed, the Sustainability policy will issue an alert to its clients and, if appropriate, change its vote recommendation to support one particular list.

### **One Board Seat per Director**

In cases where a director holds more than one board seat on a single board and the corresponding votes, manifested as one seat as a physical person plus an additional seat(s) as a representative of a legal entity, vote against the election/reelection of such legal entities and in favor of the physical person.

However, an exception is made if the representative of the legal entity holds the position of CEO. In such circumstances, the Sustainability policy will typically recommend a vote in favor of the legal entity and against the election/reelection of the physical person.

While such occurrences are rare, there have been cases where a board member may have multiple board seats and corresponding votes. Holding several board seats concurrently within one board increases this person's direct influence on board decisions and creates an inequality among board members.

This situation has manifested in Belgium, Luxembourg, and France. This is not a good corporate governance practice, as it places disproportionate influence and control in one person.

### **Composition of Committees**

In Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland, vote against the (re)election of executives who serve on the company's audit or remuneration committee. Sustainability may recommend against if the disclosure is too poor to determine whether an executive serves or will serve on a committee. If a company does not have an audit or a remuneration committee, the Sustainability policy may consider that the entire board fulfills the role of a committee. In such case, the Sustainability policy may recommend against the executives, including the CEO, up for election to the board.

For Belgium, the Netherlands, and Switzerland, vote against the (re)election of non-independent members of the audit committee and/or the remuneration committee if their (re)election would lead to a non-independent majority on the respective committee.

These policies apply only to companies for which the Sustainability policy includes overall board independence as a factor in its analysis of board elections.

Markets where local corporate governance codes prescribe specific composition requirements are assessed in accordance with compliance with their local codes. More stringent requirements are applied to those markets where local corporate governance codes prescribe more robust composition requirements.

Separation of power is one of the fundamental tenets of good corporate governance. The primary objective of the board is to provide independent oversight of executive management, and because board committees are entrusted with carrying out crucial functions for this purpose, such as assessing the veracity of the independent audit and carrying out board succession planning, it is important that committees be sufficiently independent of management. The presence of executive directors on audit and compensation committees represents clear and widely recognized conflicts of interest. Executive audit committee members may compromise the integrity of the independent audit, and the presence of executives on the compensation committee means that executives are allowed to select the directors who determine their pay. Corporate governance codes in a number of European markets have already introduced

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amendments in recent years which recommend majority independence on key committees such as the audit and remuneration committees, and even the outright ban of executive members on these committees, and this policy is intended to reflect these code recommendations as well as market practice.

### **Composition of the Nominating Committee (Sweden/Norway/Finland)**

Vote for proposals in Sweden, Norway, and Finland to elect or appoint a nominating committee consisting mainly of non-board members.

Vote for shareholder proposals calling for disclosure of the names of the proposed candidates at the meeting, as well as the inclusion of a representative of minority shareholders in the committee.

The above policy notwithstanding, vote against proposals in Sweden to elect or appoint such a committee if the company is on the MSCI-EAFE or local main index and the following conditions exist:

- › A member of the executive management would be a member of the committee;
- › More than one board member who is dependent on a major shareholder would be on the committee; or
- › The chair of the board would also be the chair of the committee.

In cases where the principles for the establishment of the nominating committee, rather than the election of the committee itself, are being voted on, vote against the adoption of the principles if any of the above conditions are met for the current committee, and there is no publicly available information indicating that this would no longer be the case for the new nominating committee.

### **Election of Censors (France)**

For widely held companies, the Sustainability policy will generally recommend a vote against proposals seeking shareholder approval to elect a censor, to amend bylaws to authorize the appointment of censors, or to extend the maximum number of censors to the board.

However, the Sustainability policy will recommend a vote on a case-by-case basis when the company provides assurance that the censor would serve on a short-term basis (maximum one year) with the intent to retain the nominee before his/her election as director. In this case, consideration shall also be given to the nominee's situation (notably overboarding or other factors of concern).

In consideration of the principle that censors should be appointed on a short-term basis, vote against any proposal to renew the term of a censor or to extend the statutory term of censors.

Please see the International Classification of Directors on the following page.

### **Cumulative Voting – Middle East and Africa (MEA)**

For MEA markets, in cases where:

- › Directors are proposed for (re)election through a cumulative voting system, or
- › Director elections do not take place through a cumulative voting system, but the number of nominees up for (re)election exceeds the number of board vacancies,

Sustainability Advisory Services will recommend a vote on a case-by-case basis, considering additional factors, for the purpose of identifying the best suited nominees to add value for shareholders. Positive vote recommendations will be issued preferentially in favor of the following categories of candidates:

- › Candidates who can be identified as representatives of minority shareholders of the company, or independent candidates, namely:
  - › Candidates who can be classified as independent according to SRI policy, or, failing that,
  - › Candidates explicitly classified as independent per the company's director classification.
  
- › Candidates whose professional background may have the following benefits:
  - › Increasing the diversity of incumbent directors' professional profiles and skills (thanks to their financial expertise, international experience, executive positions/directorships at other listed companies, or other relevant factors.
  - › Bringing to the current board of directors relevant experience in areas linked to the company's business, evidenced by current or past board memberships or management functions at other companies.
  
- › Incumbent board members and candidates explicitly supported by the company's management.

## Classification of Directors – International Policy 2015

### Executive Director

- › Employee or executive of the company;
- › Any director who is classified as a non-executive, but receives salary, fees, bonus, and/or other benefits that are in line with the highest-paid executives of the company.

### Non-Independent Non-Executive Director (NED)

- › Any director who is attested by the board to be a non-independent NED;
- › Any director specifically designated as a representative of a significant shareholder of the company;
- › Any director who is also an employee or executive of a significant shareholder of the company;
- › Any director who is nominated by a dissenting significant shareholder unless there is a clear lack of material<sup>5</sup> connection with the dissident, either currently or historically;
- › Beneficial owner (direct or indirect) of at least 10 percent of the company's stock, either in economic terms or in voting rights (this may be aggregated if voting power is distributed among more than one member of a defined group, e.g., members of a family that beneficially own less than 10 percent individually, but collectively own more than 10 percent), unless market best practice dictates a lower ownership and/or disclosure threshold (and in other special market-specific circumstances);
- › Government representative;
- › Currently provides (or a relative<sup>1</sup> provides) professional services<sup>2</sup> to the company, to an affiliate of the company, or to an individual officer of the company or of one of its affiliates in excess of \$10,000 per year;
- › Represents customer, supplier, creditor, banker, or other entity with which the company maintains a transactional/commercial relationship (unless the company discloses information to apply a materiality test<sup>3</sup>);
- › Any director who has conflicting or cross-directorships with executive directors or the chairman of the company;
- › Relative<sup>1</sup> of a current or former executive of the company or its affiliates;
- › A new appointee elected other than by a formal process through the general meeting (such as a contractual appointment by a substantial shareholder);
- › Founder/co-founder/member of founding family but not currently an employee;
- › Former executive (five-year cooling off period);
- › Years of service<sup>4</sup> is generally not a determining factor unless it is recommended best practice in a market and/or in extreme circumstances, in which case it may be considered.
- › Any additional relationship or principle considered to compromise independence under local corporate governance best practice guidance.

### Independent NED

- › No material<sup>5</sup> connection, either direct or indirect, to the company (other than a board seat) or to a significant shareholder.

### Employee Representative

- › Represents employees or employee shareholders of the company (classified as "employee representative" and considered a non-independent NED).

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> "Relative" follows the definition of "immediate family members" which covers spouses, parents, children, stepparents, step-children, siblings, in-laws, and any person (other than a tenant or employee) sharing the household of any director, nominee for director, executive officer, or significant shareholder of the company.

<sup>2</sup> Professional services can be characterized as advisory in nature and generally include the following: investment banking/financial advisory services; commercial banking (beyond deposit services); investment services; insurance services; accounting/audit services; consulting services; marketing services; and legal services. The case of participation in a banking syndicate by a non-lead bank should be considered a transaction (and hence subject to the associated materiality test) rather than a professional relationship.

<sup>3</sup> A business relationship may be material if the transaction value (of all outstanding transactions) entered into between the company and the company or organization with which the director is associated is equivalent to either 1 percent of the company's turnover or 1 percent of the turnover of the company or organization with which the director is associated; or

A business relationship may be material if the transaction value (of all outstanding financing operations) entered into between the company and the company or organization with which the director is associated is more than 10 percent of the company's shareholder equity or the transaction value (of all outstanding financing operations) compared to the company's total assets is more than 5 percent.


<sup>4</sup> For example, in continental Europe, directors with a tenure exceeding 12 years will be considered non-independent. In the United Kingdom, Ireland, Hong Kong and Singapore, directors with a tenure exceeding nine years will be considered non-independent, unless the company provides sufficient and clear justification that the director is independent despite his long tenure.

<sup>5</sup> For purposes of Sustainability' director independence classification, "material" will be defined as a standard of relationship (financial, personal, or otherwise) that a reasonable person might conclude could potentially influence one's objectivity in the boardroom in a manner that would have a meaningful impact on an individual's ability to satisfy requisite fiduciary standards on behalf of shareholders.

<sup>[6]</sup> For purposes of independence classification of directors incorporated in the Middle East and Africa region, this criterion will be taken into account in accordance with market best practice and disclosure standards and availability.

<sup>[7]</sup> For MEA markets, directors' past services as statutory auditor/partner of the statutory audit firm will be taken into account, with cooling-off periods in accordance with local market best practice.

## Contested Director Elections


 **Sustainability Policy Recommendation:** For contested elections of directors, e.g. the election of shareholder nominees or the dismissal of incumbent directors, the Sustainability policy will make its recommendation on a case-by-case basis, determining which directors are considered best suited to add value for shareholders.

The analysis will generally be based on, but not limited to, the following major decision factors:

- › Company performance relative to its peers;
- › Strategy of the incumbents versus the dissidents;
- › Independence of directors/nominees;
- › Experience and skills of board candidates;
- › Governance profile of the company;
- › Evidence of management entrenchment;
- › Responsiveness to shareholders;
- › Whether a takeover offer has been rebuffed; and
- › Whether minority or majority representation is being sought.

When analyzing a contested election of directors, Sustainability will generally focus on two central questions: (1) Have the proponents proved that board change is warranted? And if so, (2) Are the proponent board nominees likely to effect positive change (i.e., maximize long-term shareholder value).

## Discharge of Board and Management

 **Sustainability Policy Recommendation:** Generally vote for discharge of directors, including members of the management board and/or supervisory board, unless there is reliable information about significant and compelling controversies that the board is not fulfilling its fiduciary duties such as:



- › A lack of oversight or actions by board members which invoke shareholder distrust related to malfeasance or poor supervision, such as operating in private or company interest rather than in shareholder interest;
- › Any legal issues (e.g. civil/criminal) aiming to hold the board responsible for breach of trust in the past or related to currently alleged actions yet to be confirmed (and not only the fiscal year in question), such as price fixing, insider trading, bribery, fraud, and other illegal actions; or
- › Other egregious governance issues where shareholders will bring legal action against the company or its directors.

For markets which do not routinely request discharge resolutions (e.g. common law countries or markets where discharge is not mandatory), analysts may voice concern in other appropriate agenda items, such as approval of the annual accounts or other relevant resolutions, to enable shareholders to express discontent with the board.

Vote against proposals to remove approval of discharge of board and management from the agenda.

### **Director, Officer, and Auditor Indemnification and Liability Provisions**

#### **Sustainability Policy Recommendation:**

- › Vote proposals seeking indemnification and liability protection for directors and officers on a case-by-case basis.
- › Vote against proposals to indemnify auditors.

### **Board Structure**


#### **Sustainability Policy Recommendation:**

- › Vote for proposals to fix board size.
- › Vote against the introduction of classified boards and mandatory retirement ages for directors.
- › Vote against proposals to alter board structure or size in the context of a fight for control of the company or the board.

## 3. CAPITAL STRUCTURE

### Share Issuance Requests

#### General Issuances:

 **Sustainability Policy Recommendation:** Vote for issuance authorities with preemptive rights to a maximum of 100 percent over currently issued capital and as long as the share issuance authorities' periods are clearly disclosed (or implied by the application of a legal maximum duration) and in line with market-specific practices and/or recommended guidelines (e.g. issuance periods limited to 18 months for the Netherlands).

Vote for issuance authorities without preemptive rights to a maximum of 20 percent (or a lower limit if local market best practice recommendations provide) of currently issued capital as long as the share issuance authorities' periods are clearly disclosed (or implied by the application of a legal maximum duration) and in line with market-specific practices and/or recommended guidelines (e.g. issuance periods limited to 18 months for the Netherlands).

For UK and Irish companies, generally vote for a resolution to authorize the issuance of equity, unless:

- › The general issuance authority exceeds one-third (33%) of the issued share capital. Assuming it is no more than one-third, a further one-third of the issued share capital may also be applied to a fully pre-emptive rights issue taking the acceptable aggregate authority to two-thirds (66%); or
- › The routine authority to disapply preemption rights exceeds 5% of the issued share capital.

For French companies, vote for general issuance requests with preemptive rights, or without preemptive rights but with a binding "priority right," for a maximum of 50 percent over currently issued capital.

For French companies, generally vote for general authorities to issue shares without preemptive rights up to a maximum of 10 percent of share capital.

For Hong Kong companies, generally vote for the general issuance mandate for companies that:

- › Limit the aggregate issuance request – that is, for the general issuance mandate and the share reissuance mandate combined – to 10 percent or less of the relevant class of issued share capital;
- › Limit the discount to 10 percent of the market price of shares; and
- › Have no history of renewing the General Issuance Mandate several times within a period of one year.

Generally vote for a general issuance of equity or equity-linked securities without preemptive rights when the share issuance limit is not more than 10 percent of the company's issued share capital and 50 percent with preemptive rights for all Singapore companies, with the exception of Catalist-listed companies and Real Estate Investment Trusts.

For Singapore companies listed on the Catalist market of the SGX, generally vote for a general issuance of equity or equity-linked securities without preemptive rights when the share issuance limit is not more than 20 percent of the company's issued share capital and 100 percent with preemptive rights. For Real Estate Investment Trusts, generally vote for a general issuance of equity or equity-linked securities without preemptive rights when the unit issuance limit is not more than 20 percent of its issued unit capital and 50 percent with preemptive rights.

For companies listed on the Main Market and ACE Market of the Bursa Malaysia Securities Bhd (Exchange), vote for issuance requests without preemptive rights to a maximum of 10 percent of currently issued capital.

For real estate investment trusts (REITs), vote for issuance requests without preemptive rights to a maximum of 20 percent of currently issued capital.

Evaluate other share issuance requests on a case-by-case basis taking into consideration market-specific guidelines as applicable.

### Increases in Authorized Capital

- ▶ **Sustainability Policy Recommendation:** Vote for non-specific proposals to increase authorized capital up to 100 percent over the current authorization unless the increase would leave the company with less than 30 percent of its new authorization outstanding.

Vote for specific proposals to increase authorized capital to any amount, unless:

- › The specific purpose of the increase (such as a share-based acquisition or merger) does not meet Sustainability guidelines for the purpose being proposed; or
- › The increase would leave the company with less than 30 percent of its new authorization outstanding after adjusting for all proposed issuances.

Vote against proposals to adopt unlimited capital authorizations.

### Reduction of Capital

- ▶ **Sustainability Policy Recommendation:** Vote for proposals to reduce capital for routine accounting purposes unless the terms are unfavorable to shareholders.

Vote proposals to reduce capital in connection with corporate restructuring on a case-by-case basis.

### Capital Structures

- ▶ **Sustainability Policy Recommendation:** Vote for resolutions that seek to maintain or convert to a one-share, one-vote capital structure.

Vote against requests for the creation or continuation of dual-class capital structures or the creation of new or additional supervoting shares.

### Preferred Stock

- ▶ **Sustainability Policy Recommendation:**
  - › Vote for the creation of a new class of preferred stock or for issuances of preferred stock up to 50 percent of issued capital unless the terms of the preferred stock would adversely affect the rights of existing shareholders.
  - › Vote for the creation/issuance of convertible preferred stock as long as the maximum number of common shares that could be issued upon conversion meets the guidelines on equity issuance requests.
  - › Vote against the creation of a new class of preference shares that would carry superior voting rights to the common shares.
  - › Vote against the creation of blank check preferred stock unless the board clearly states that the authorization will not be used to thwart a takeover bid.
  - › Vote proposals to increase blank check preferred authorizations on a case-by-case basis.

## Debt Issuance Requests

- ▶ **Sustainability Policy Recommendation:** Vote non-convertible debt issuance requests on a case-by-case basis, with or without pre-emptive rights.

Vote for the creation/issuance of convertible debt instruments as long as the maximum number of common shares that could be issued upon conversion meets the guidelines on equity issuance requests.

Vote for proposals to restructure existing debt arrangements unless the terms of the restructuring would adversely affect the rights of shareholders.

## Pledging of Assets for Debt

- ▶ **Sustainability Policy Recommendation:** Vote proposals to approve the pledging of assets for debt on a case-by-case basis.

## Increase in Borrowing Powers

- ▶ **Sustainability Policy Recommendation:** Vote proposals to approve increases in a company's borrowing powers on a case-by-case basis.

## Share Repurchase Plans

- ▶ **Sustainability Policy Recommendation:** Generally vote for market repurchase authorities (share repurchase programs) if the terms comply with the following criteria:

- › A repurchase limit of up to 10 percent of outstanding issued share capital;
- › A holding limit of up to 10 percent of a company's issued share capital in treasury ("on the shelf"); and
- › Duration of no more than 5 years, or such lower threshold as may be set by applicable law, regulation, or code of governance best practice.

Authorities to repurchase shares in excess of the 10 percent repurchase limit will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. The Sustainability policy may support such share repurchase authorities under special circumstances, which are required to be publicly disclosed by the company, provided that, on balance, the proposal is in shareholders' interests. In such cases, the authority must comply with the following criteria:

- › A holding limit of up to 10 percent of a company's issued share capital in treasury ("on the shelf"); and
- › Duration of no more than 18 months.

In markets where it is normal practice not to provide a repurchase limit, the Sustainability policy will evaluate the proposal based on the company's historical practice. However, the Sustainability policy expects companies to disclose such limits and, in the future, may recommend a vote against companies that fail to do so. In such cases, the authority must comply with the following criteria:

- › A holding limit of up to 10 percent of a company's issued share capital in treasury ("on the shelf"); and
- › Duration of no more than 18 months.

In addition, the Sustainability policy will recommend against any proposal where:

- › The repurchase can be used for takeover defenses;
- › There is clear evidence of abuse;
- › There is no safeguard against selective buybacks;

- › Pricing provisions and safeguards are deemed to be unreasonable in light of market practice.

### Market-Specific Exceptions

For Italy and Germany, vote for share-repurchase plans and share reissuance plans that would use call and put options if the following criteria are met:

- › The duration of the authorization is limited in time to no more than 18 months;
- › The total number of shares covered by the authorization is disclosed;
- › The number of shares that would be purchased with call options and/or sold with put options is limited to a maximum of 5 percent of currently outstanding capital (or half of the total amounts allowed by law in Italy and Germany);
- › A financial institution, with experience conducting sophisticated transactions, is indicated as the party responsible for the trading; and
- › The company has a clean track record regarding repurchases.

### Reissuance of Shares Repurchased

- ▶ **Sustainability Policy Recommendation:** Vote for requests to reissue any repurchased shares unless there is clear evidence of abuse of this authority in the past.

### Capitalization of Reserves for Bonus Issues/Increase in Par Value

- ▶ **Sustainability Policy Recommendation:** Vote for requests to capitalize reserves for bonus issues of shares or to increase par value.

### Private Placement

- ▶ **Sustainability Policy Recommendation:** For Canadian companies, vote case-by-case on private placement issuances taking into account:
  - › Whether other resolutions are bundled with the issuance;
  - › Whether the rationale for the private placement issuance is disclosed;
  - › Dilution to existing shareholders' position:
    - › issuance that represents no more than 30 percent of the company's outstanding shares on a non-diluted basis is considered generally acceptable;
  - › Discount/premium in issuance price to the unaffected share price before the announcement of the private placement;
  - › Market reaction: The market's response to the proposed private placement since announcement; and
  - › Other applicable factors, including conflict of interest, change in control/management, evaluation of other alternatives.

Generally vote for the private placement issuance if it is expected that the company will file for bankruptcy if the transaction is not approved or the company's auditor/management has indicated that the company has going concern issues.

## 4. COMPENSATION

### Compensation Guidelines

#### Preamble

The assessment of compensation follows the Sustainability Global Principles on Executive and Director Compensation which are detailed below. These principles take into account global corporate governance best practice.

The Global Principles on Compensation underlie market-specific policies in all markets:

- › Provide shareholders with clear, comprehensive compensation disclosures;
- › Maintain appropriate pay-for-performance alignment with emphasis on long-term shareholder value;
- › Avoid arrangements that risk “pay for failure;”
- › Maintain an independent and effective compensation committee;
- › Avoid inappropriate pay to non-executive directors.

### European Guidelines

In line with European Commission Recommendation 2004/913/EC, Sustainability believes that seeking annual shareholder approval for a company's compensation policy is a positive corporate governance provision.

In applying the Five Global Principles, the Sustainability policy has formulated European Compensation Guidelines which take into account local codes of governance, market best practice, and the Recommendations published by the European Commission. The Sustainability policy analyzes compensation-related proposals based on the role of the beneficiaries and has therefore divided its executive and director compensation policy into two domains:

- › Executive compensation-related proposals; and
- › Non-executive director compensation-related proposals

#### Executive Compensation-Related Proposals



**Sustainability Policy Recommendation:** The Sustainability policy will evaluate management proposals seeking ratification of a company's executive compensation-related items on a case-by-case basis, and will generally recommend a vote against a company's compensation-related proposal if such proposal fails to comply with one or a combination of several of the global principles and their corresponding rules:

- › Provide shareholders with clear and comprehensive compensation disclosures:
  - › Information on compensation-related proposals shall be made available to shareholders in a timely manner;
  - › The level of disclosure of the proposed compensation policy shall be sufficient for shareholders to make an informed decision and shall be in line with what local market best practice standards dictate;
  - › Companies shall adequately disclose all elements of the compensation, including:
    - › Any short- or long-term compensation component must include a maximum award limit.
    - › Long-term incentive plans must provide sufficient disclosure of (i) the exercise price/strike price (options); (ii) discount on grant; (iii) grant date/period; (iv) exercise/vesting period; and, if applicable, (v) performance criteria.
    - › Discretionary payments, if applicable.
- › Maintain appropriate pay-for-performance alignment with emphasis on long-term shareholder value:
  - › The structure of the company's short-term incentive plan shall be appropriate.

- › The compensation policy must notably avoid guaranteed or discretionary compensation.
- › The structure of the company's long-term incentives shall be appropriate, including, but not limited to, dilution, vesting period, and, if applicable, performance conditions.
  - › Equity-based plans or awards that are linked to long-term company performance will be evaluated using Sustainability' general policy for equity-based plans; and
  - › For awards granted to executives, Sustainability will generally require a clear link between shareholder value and awards, and stringent performance-based elements.
- › The balance between short- and long-term variable compensation shall be appropriate
  - › The company's executive compensation policy must notably avoid disproportionate focus on short-term variable element(s)
- › Avoid arrangements that risk “pay for failure”:
  - › The board shall demonstrate good stewardship of investor's interests regarding executive compensation practices.
    - › There shall be a clear link between the company's performance and variable awards.
    - › There shall not be significant discrepancies between the company's performance and real executive payouts.
    - › The level of pay for the CEO and members of executive management should not be excessive relative to peers, company performance, and market practices.
    - › Significant pay increases shall be explained by a detailed and compelling disclosure.
  - › Severance pay agreements must not be in excess of (i) 24 months' pay or of (ii) any more restrictive provision pursuant to local legal requirements and/or market best practices.
  - › Arrangements with a company executive regarding pensions and post-mandate exercise of equity-based awards must not result in an adverse impact on shareholders' interests or be misaligned with good market practices.
- › Maintain an independent and effective compensation committee:
  - › No executives may serve on the compensation committee.
  - › In certain markets the compensation committee shall be composed of a majority of independent members, as per Sustainability policies on director election and board or committee composition.

In addition to the above, the Sustainability policy will generally recommend a vote against a compensation-related proposal if such proposal is in breach of any other supplemental market-specific Sustainability voting policies.

### Non-Executive Director Compensation

- › Avoid inappropriate pay to non-executive directors.



**Sustainability Policy Recommendation:** Generally vote for proposals to award cash fees to non-executive directors.


Vote against where:

- › Documents (including general meeting documents, annual report) provided prior to the general meeting do not mention fees paid to non-executive directors.
- › Proposed amounts are excessive relative to other companies in the country or industry.
- › The company intends to increase the fees excessively in comparison with market/sector practices, without stating compelling reasons that justify the increase.
- › Proposals provide for the granting of stock options, or similarly structured equity-based compensation, to non-executive directors.
- › Proposals introduce retirement benefits for non-executive directors.

Vote on a case-by-case basis where:

- › Proposals include both cash and share-based components to non-executive directors.
- › Proposals bundle compensation for both non-executive and executive directors into a single resolution.

### Equity-Based Compensation Guidelines

 **Sustainability Policy Recommendation:** Generally vote for equity based compensation proposals for employees if the plan(s) are in line with long-term shareholder interests and align the award with shareholder value. This assessment includes, but is not limited to, the following factors:

The volume of awards transferred to participants must not be excessive: the potential volume of fully diluted issued share capital from equity-based compensation plans must not exceed the following Sustainability guidelines:

- › The shares reserved for all share plans may not exceed 5 percent of a company's issued share capital, except in the case of high-growth companies or particularly well-designed plans, in which case we allow dilution of between 5 and 10 percent: in this case, we will need to have performance conditions attached to the plans which should be acceptable under Sustainability criteria (challenging criteria). In addition, for companies in Hong Kong and Singapore, Sustainability will support a plan's dilution limit that exceeds these thresholds if the annual grant limit under the plan is 0.5 percent or less for a mature company (1 percent or less for a mature company with clearly disclosed performance criteria) and 1 percent or less for a growth company;
- › The plan(s) must be sufficiently long-term in nature/structure: the minimum vesting period must be no less than three years from date of grant;
- › The awards must be granted at market price. Discounts, if any, must be mitigated by performance criteria or other features that justify such discount.
- › If applicable, performance standards must be fully disclosed, quantified, and long-term, with relative performance measures preferred.

#### Market-specific provisions for France:

- › The potential volume from equity-based compensation plans must not exceed 10 percent of fully diluted issued share capital.
- › In addition, for companies that refer to the AFEP-MEDEF Code, all awards (including stock options and warrants) to executives shall be conditional upon challenging performance criteria or premium pricing. For companies referring to the Middlesnext Code (or not referring to any code) at least part of the awards to executives shall be conditional upon performance criteria or premium pricing. In both cases, free shares shall remain subject to performance criteria for all beneficiaries.

Finally, for large- and mid-cap companies, the company's average three year unadjusted burn rate (or, if lower, on the maximum volume per year implied by the proposal made at the general meeting) must not exceed the mean plus one standard deviation of its sector but no more than one percentage point from the prior year sector cap.

### Compensation-Related Voting Sanctions

Should a company be deemed to have egregious remuneration practices (as a result of one or a combination of several factors highlighted above) and has not followed market practice by submitting a resolution on executive compensation, vote against other "appropriate" resolutions as a mark of discontent against such practices.

An adverse vote recommendation could be applied to any of the following on a case-by case basis:

- › The (re)election of members of the remuneration committee;
- › The discharge of directors; or
- › The annual report and accounts.



Failure to propose a resolution on executive compensation to shareholders in a market where this is routine practice may, by itself, lead to one of the above adverse vote recommendations regardless of the companies remuneration practices.

### Stock Option Plans – Adjustment for Dividend (Nordic Region)

#### Sustainability Policy Recommendation:

Vote against stock option plans in Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden if evidence is found that they contain provisions that may result in a disconnect between shareholder value and employee/executive reward.

This includes one or a combination of the following:

- Adjusting the strike price for future ordinary dividends AND including expected dividend yield above 0 percent when determining the number of options awarded under the plan;
- Having significantly higher expected dividends than actual historical dividends;
- Favorably adjusting the terms of existing options plans without valid reason; and/or
- Any other provisions or performance measures that result in undue award.

This policy applies to both new plans and amendments to introduce the provisions into already existing stock option plans. The Sustainability policy will make an exception if a company proposes to reduce the strike price by the amount of future special (extraordinary) dividends only.

Generally vote against if the potential increase of share capital amounts to more than 5 percent for mature companies or 10 percent for growth companies or if options may be exercised below the market price of the share at the date of grant, or that employee options do not lapse if employment is terminated.

### Share Matching Plans (Sweden and Norway)

#### Sustainability Policy Recommendation:

The Sustainability policy considers the following factors when evaluating share matching plans:

- For every share matching plan, Sustainability requires a holding period.
- For plans without performance criteria, the shares must be purchased at market price.
- “For broad-based share matching plans directed at all employees, Sustainability accepts an arrangement up to a 1:1 ratio, i.e. no more than one free share is awarded for every share purchased at market value..
- In addition, for plans directed at executives, we require that sufficiently challenging performance criteria be attached to the plan. Higher discounts demand proportionally higher performance criteria.

The dilution of the plan when combined with the dilution from any other proposed or outstanding employee stock purchase/stock matching plans, must comply with the Sustainability guidelines.

## Canadian Guidelines

#### Sustainability Policy Recommendation: Evaluate executive pay and practices, as well as certain aspects of outside director compensation on a case-by-case basis.

Vote against management say on pay (MSOP) proposals, withhold from compensation committee members (or in rare cases where the full board is deemed responsible, all directors including the CEO), and/or against an equity-based incentive plan proposal if:

- › There is a misalignment between CEO pay and company performance (pay for performance);
- › The company maintains problematic pay practices; or
- › The board exhibits poor communication and responsiveness to shareholders.

**Pay for Performance:**

- › Rationale for determining compensation (e.g., why certain elements and pay targets are used, how they are used in relation to the company's business strategy, and specific incentive plan goals, especially retrospective goals) and linkage of compensation to long-term performance;
- › Evaluation of peer group benchmarking used to set target pay or award opportunities;
- › Analysis of company performance and executive pay trends over time, taking into account our Pay-for-Performance policy;
- › Mix of fixed versus variable and performance versus non-performance-based pay.

**Pay Practices:**

- › Assessment of compensation components included in the Problematic Pay Practices policy such as: perks, severance packages, employee loans, supplemental executive pension plans, internal pay disparity and equity plan practices (including option backdating, repricing, option exchanges, or cancellations/surrenders and re-grants, etc.);
- › Existence of measures that discourage excessive risk taking which include but are not limited to: clawbacks, holdbacks, stock ownership requirements, deferred compensation practices etc.

**Board Communications and Responsiveness:**

- › Clarity of disclosure (e.g. whether the company's Form 51-102F6 disclosure provides timely, accurate, clear information about compensation practices in both tabular format and narrative discussion);
- › Assessment of board's responsiveness to investor concerns on compensation issues (e.g., whether the company engaged with shareholders and / or responded to majority-supported shareholder proposals relating to executive pay).

**Advisory Vote on Executive Compensation (Say-on-Pay) Management Proposals**

- ▶ **Sustainability Policy Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on management proposals for an advisory shareholder vote on executive compensation. Vote against these resolutions in cases where boards have failed to demonstrate good stewardship of investors' interests regarding executive compensation practices.

In general, the management say on pay (MSOP) ballot item is the primary focus of voting on executive pay practices--dissatisfaction with compensation practices can be expressed by voting against MSOP rather than withholding or voting against the compensation committee. However, if there is no MSOP on the ballot, then the negative vote will apply to members of the compensation committee. In addition, in egregious cases, or if the board fails to respond to concerns raised by a prior MSOP proposal, then vote against or withhold from compensation committee members (or, if the full board is deemed accountable, all directors). If the negative factors involve equity-based compensation, then vote against an equity-based plan proposal presented for shareholder approval.

**Equity Compensation Plans**

- ▶ **Sustainability Policy Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on equity-based compensation plans using an "equity plan scorecard" (EPSC) approach. Under this approach, certain features and practices related to the plan<sup>3</sup> are

<sup>3</sup> In cases where certain historic grant data are unavailable (e.g. following an IPO or emergence from bankruptcy), Special Cases models will be applied which omit factors requiring these data.

assessed in combination, with positively-assessed factors potentially counterbalancing negatively-assessed factors and vice-versa. Factors are grouped into three pillars:

- › **Plan Cost:** The total estimated cost of the company's equity plans relative to industry/market cap peers, measured by the company's estimated Shareholder Value Transfer (SVT) in relation to peers and considering both:
  - › SVT based on new shares requested plus shares remaining for future grants, plus outstanding unvested/unexercised grants; and
  - › SVT based only on new shares requested plus shares remaining for future grants.
- › **Plan Features:**
  - › Absence of problematic change-in-control (CIC) provisions, including:
    - › Single-trigger acceleration of award vesting in connection with a CIC; and
    - › Settlement of performance-based equity at target or above in the event of a CIC-related acceleration of vesting regardless of performance.
  - › No financial assistance to plan participants for the exercise or settlement of awards;
  - › Public disclosure of the full text of the plan document; and
  - › Reasonable share dilution from equity plans relative to market best practices.
- › **Grant Practices:**
  - › Reasonable three-year average burn rate relative to market best practices;
  - › Meaningful time vesting requirements for the CEO's most recent equity grants (three-year lookback);
  - › The issuance of performance-based equity to the CEO;
  - › A clawback provision applicable to equity awards; and
  - › Post-exercise or post-settlement share-holding requirements (S&P/TSX Composite Index only).

Generally vote against the plan proposal if the combination of above factors, as determined by an overall score, indicates that the plan is not in shareholders' interests. In addition, vote against the plan if any of the following unacceptable factors have been identified:

- › Discretionary or insufficiently limited non-employee director participation;
- › An amendment provision which fails to adequately restrict the company's ability to amend the plan without shareholder approval;
- › A history of repricing stock options without shareholder approval (three-year look-back);
- › The plan is a vehicle for problematic pay practices or a significant pay-for-performance disconnect under certain circumstances; or
- › Any other plan features that are determined to have a significant negative impact on shareholder interests.

## Other Compensation Plans

### Employee Stock Purchase Plans (ESPPs, ESOPs)

- ▶ **Sustainability Policy Recommendation:** Generally vote for broadly based (preferably all employees of the company with the exclusion of individuals with 5 percent or more beneficial ownership of the company) employee stock purchase plans where the following apply:
  - › Reasonable limit on employee contribution (may be expressed as a fixed dollar amount or as a percentage of base salary excluding bonus, commissions and special compensation);
  - › Employer contribution of up to 25 percent of employee contribution and no purchase price discount or employer contribution of more than 25 percent of employee contribution and SVT cost of the company's equity plans is within the allowable cap for the company;
  - › Purchase price is at least 80 percent of fair market value with no employer contribution;
  - › Potential dilution together with all other equity-based plans is 10 percent of outstanding common shares or less; and


- › The Plan Amendment Provision requires shareholder approval for amendments to:
  - › The number of shares reserved for the plan;
  - › The allowable purchase price discount;
  - › The employer matching contribution amount.

Treasury funded ESPPs, as well as market purchase funded ESPPs requesting shareholder approval, will be considered to be incentive based compensation if the employer match is greater than 25 percent of the employee contribution. In this case, the plan will be run through the Sustainability compensation model to assess the Shareholder Value Transfer (SVT) cost of the plan together with the company's other equity-based compensation plans.

Eligibility and administration are also key factors in determining the acceptability of an ESPP/ESOP plan.

The Sustainability policy will also take into account other compensation and benefit programs, in particular pensions.

### Deferred Share Unit Plans


 **Sustainability Policy Recommendation:** Generally vote for Deferred Compensation Plans if:

- › Potential dilution together with all other equity-based compensation is ten percent of the outstanding common shares or less.

Other elements of director compensation to evaluate in conjunction with deferred share units include:

- › Director stock ownership guidelines of a minimum of three times annual cash retainer;
- › Vesting schedule or mandatory deferral period which requires that shares in payment of deferred units may not be paid out until the end of three years;
- › The mix of remuneration between cash and equity;
- › Other forms of equity-based compensation, i.e. stock options, restricted stock.

## International Guidelines

 **Sustainability Policy Recommendation:** Evaluate executive and director compensation proposals on a case-by-case basis taking into consideration the Global Principles as applicable.

## 5. OTHER ITEMS

### Reorganizations/Restructurings

- ▶ **Sustainability Policy Recommendation:** Vote reorganizations and restructurings on a case-by-case basis.

### Mergers and Acquisitions

- ▶ **Sustainability Policy Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on mergers and acquisitions taking into account the following:

For every M&A analysis, the Sustainability policy reviews publicly available information as of the date of the report and evaluates the merits and drawbacks of the proposed transaction, balancing various and sometimes countervailing factors including:

- › *Valuation* - Is the value to be received by the target shareholders (or paid by the acquirer) reasonable? While the fairness opinion may provide an initial starting point for assessing valuation reasonableness, Sustainability places emphasis on the offer premium, market reaction, and strategic rationale;
- › *Market reaction* - How has the market responded to the proposed deal? A negative market reaction will cause Sustainability to scrutinize a deal more closely;
- › *Strategic rationale* - Does the deal make sense strategically? From where is the value derived? Cost and revenue synergies should not be overly aggressive or optimistic, but reasonably achievable. Management should also have a favorable track record of successful integration of historical acquisitions;
- › *Conflicts of interest* - Are insiders benefiting from the transaction disproportionately and inappropriately as compared to non-insider shareholders? Sustainability will consider whether any special interests may have influenced these directors and officers to support or recommend the merger;
- › *Governance* - Will the combined company have a better or worse governance profile than the current governance profiles of the respective parties to the transaction? If the governance profile is to change for the worse, the burden is on the company to prove that other issues (such as valuation) outweigh any deterioration in governance.
- › *Stakeholder impact* - Impact on community stakeholders including impact on workforce, environment, etc.

Vote against if the companies do not provide sufficient information upon request to make an informed voting decision.

### Mandatory Takeover Bid Waivers

- ▶ **Sustainability Policy Recommendation:** Vote proposals to waive mandatory takeover bid requirements on a case-by-case basis.

### Reincorporation Proposals

- ▶ **Sustainability Policy Recommendation:** Vote reincorporation proposals on a case-by-case basis.

### Expansion of Business Activities

- ▶ **Sustainability Policy Recommendation:** Vote for resolutions to expand business activities unless the new business takes the company into risky areas.


### Related-Party Transactions

- ▶ **Sustainability Policy Recommendation:** Vote related-party transactions on a case-by-case basis considering factors including, but not limited to, the following:

- › The parties on either side of the transaction;
- › The nature of the asset to be transferred/service to be provided;
- › The pricing of the transaction (and any associated professional valuation);
- › The views of independent directors (where provided);
- › The views of an independent financial adviser (where appointed);
- › Whether any entities party to the transaction (including advisers) is conflicted; and
- › The stated rationale for the transaction, including discussions of timing.


If there is a transaction that is deemed problematic and that was not put to a shareholder vote, Sustainability may recommend against the election of the director(s) involved in the related-party transaction or against the full board.

### Antitakeover Mechanisms

 **Sustainability Policy Recommendation:** Vote against all antitakeover proposals unless they are structured in such a way that they give shareholders the ultimate decision on any proposal or offer.

As of Feb. 1, 2016, for French companies listed on a regulated market, generally vote against any general authorities impacting the share capital (i.e. authorities for share repurchase plans and any general share issuances with or without preemptive rights, including by capitalization of reserves) if they can be used for antitakeover purposes without shareholders' prior explicit approval.

### Social and Environmental Proposals

 **Sustainability Policy Recommendation:** Generally vote in favor of social and environmental proposals that seek to promote good corporate citizenship while enhancing long-term shareholder and stakeholder value. In determining votes on shareholder social and environmental proposals, the following factors are considered:

- › Whether the proposal itself is well framed and reasonable;
- › Whether adoption of the proposal would have either a positive or negative impact on the company's short-term or long-term share value;
- › The percentage of sales, assets and earnings affected;
- › Whether the company has already responded in some appropriate manner to the request embodied in a proposal;
- › Whether the company's analysis and voting recommendation to shareholders is persuasive;
- › What other companies have done in response to the issue;
- › Whether implementation of the proposal would achieve the objectives sought in the proposal.

## 6. FOREIGN PRIVATE ISSUERS

Foreign private issuers ("FPIs") are defined as companies whose business is administered principally outside the U.S., with more than 50 percent of assets located outside the U.S.; a majority of whose directors/officers are not U.S. citizens or residents; and a majority of whose outstanding voting shares are held by non-residents of the U.S. Companies that are incorporated outside of the U.S. and listed solely on U.S. exchanges, where they qualify as FPIs, will be subject to the following policy:

Vote against or withhold from non-independent director nominees at companies which fail to meet the following criteria: a majority-independent board, and the presence of an audit, compensation, and a nomination committee, each of which is entirely composed of independent directors. Where the design and disclosure levels of equity compensation plans are comparable to those seen at U.S. companies, U.S. compensation policy will be used to evaluate the compensation plan proposals. All other voting items will be evaluated using the relevant regional or market proxy voting guidelines.

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