

# Sustainability Watch - March 2021

How Important is ESG to Capital Markets? Investor and Lender Perspectives  
March 18, 2021 10:00 AM ET (03:00 PM CET)

THE CONFERENCE BOARD  
**SUSTAINABILITY WATCH**



# Panelists



**Hervé P. Duteil**

Chief Sustainability Officer, Americas  
BNP Paribas



**Rahul Ghosh**

Managing Director, ESG Outreach & Research  
Moody's Corporation



**Suzanne Smetana**

Head of ESG Investment Integration  
State Street Global Advisors

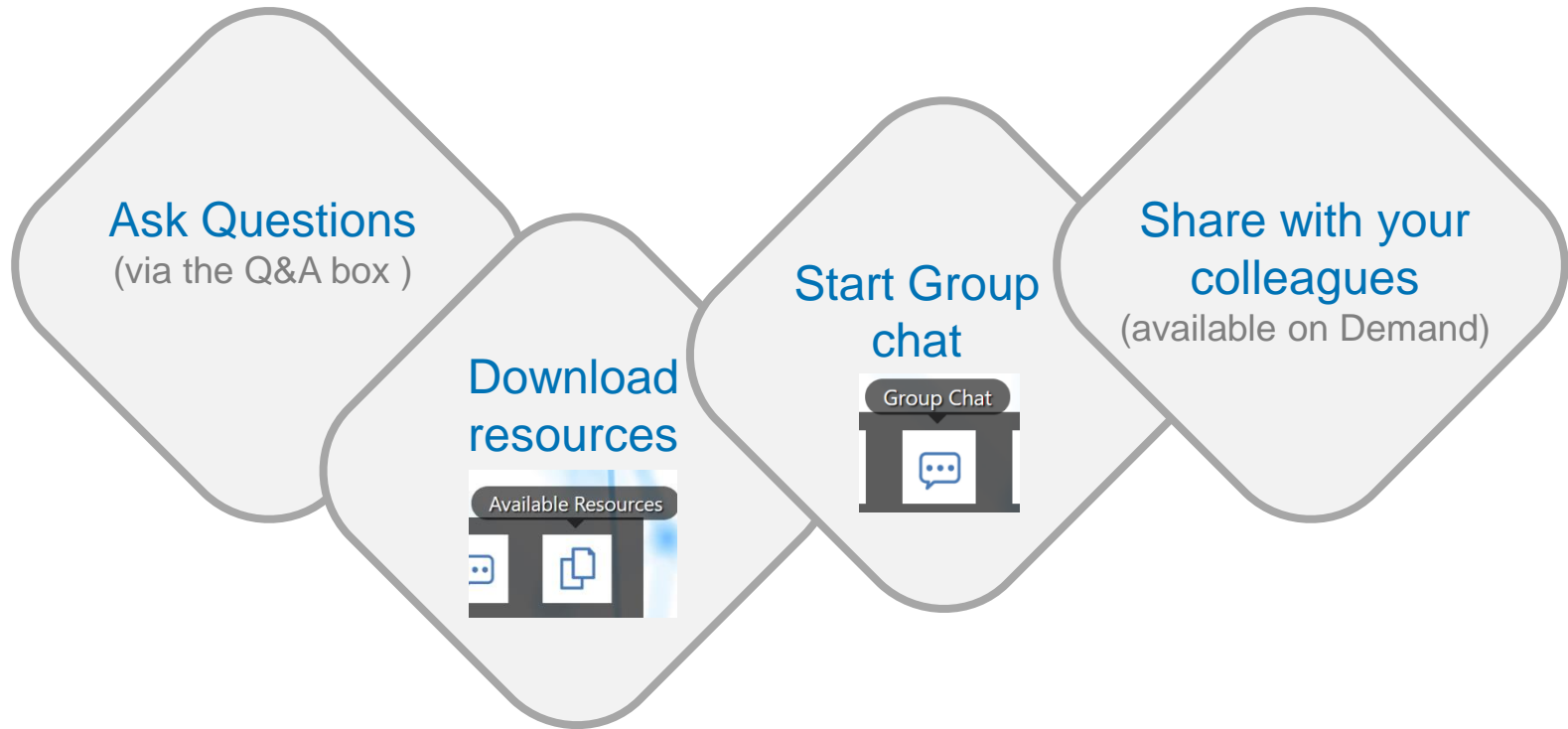


**Paul Washington (Moderator)**

Executive Director, ESG Center  
The Conference Board



# Making the most of the webcast



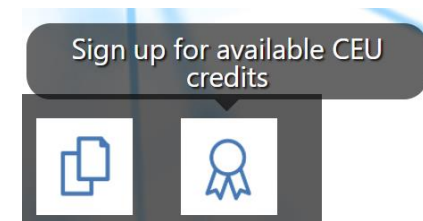
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- ✓ Click the link in the **CEU Request Widget** to sign up for credit
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- ✓ Credit available for participation in live webcast only



# Related Resources from The Conference Board

## **[Webcast: How to Talk to Your Finance Team about Sustainability](#)**

The integration of sustainability and finance remains a challenge for many organizations. In this webcast, leaders from Autodesk, Equinix, Starbucks, and The Prince's Accounting for Sustainability Project (A4S) discuss how companies' sustainability and finance functions can work together more effectively.

## **[Essay: Five Ways a Sustainability Strategy Provides Clarity in a Time of Crisis](#)**

This essay highlights how companies with robust sustainability programs are more likely to perform well during a downturn and discusses why a fully developed sustainability program—a defined corporate purpose, a clear view of what is material (and what is not), an awareness of broader societal challenges, a robust level of engagement and transparency with stakeholders, and a collaborative culture—should improve a company's ability to prosper in the long run.

## **[Essay: Four Key Steps to Drive Sustainability-Focused Innovation](#)**

Even company that have integrated sustainability into their business strategies sometimes find their efforts stalled or not delivering the results they hoped. This essay offers insights based on a recent survey of sustainability and innovation executives to unlock the potential for growth.

## **[Report: Sustainability Practices](#)**

This edition of *Sustainability Practices* summarizes the key findings from sustainability disclosure data on 92 environmental and social practices tracked by Bloomberg for more than 6,000 companies across North America, Europe, and Asia-Pacific. The analysis reveals some notable increases compared to last year, such as in disclosure of climate-related business risks and water stress exposure. The representation of women on corporate boards has also increased, as has the number of companies linking executive compensation to sustainability metrics.



# Upcoming Research and Programs from The Conference Board

## MARCH

### ***Report: Under a Microscope: A New Era of Scrutiny for Corporate Political Activity***

In the wake of the 2020 US election, The Conference Board ESG Center held a roundtable to discuss the current regulatory environment for corporate political activity, the prospects for shareholder proposals on the topic, and best practices in addressing this era of scrutiny and polarization. Following the events of January 6, the ESG Center also conducted a survey of 84 large public and private firms on how companies and their employee-funded PACs are responding to the Capitol riot and objections to the election certification. The discussion and survey generated a soon to-be-published report with insights on corporate political activity.

### ***Roundtable: How Companies Make Decisions on Social Issues (ESG Center Members only): March 25, 2021 - 2:00-4:30 p.m. (Eastern)***

From LGBTQ equality to Black Lives Matter, and from gun rights to gun control, companies have been asked to take public positions on social issues, but the process for doing so hasn't always been clear or consistent. In this upcoming roundtable, we'll discuss how companies decide whether, when, and how to take a stand on social issues – including who is involved in raising and deciding the company's stance; the criteria used in deciding whether and how to respond; how companies ensure that there is appropriate follow-through; and lessons learned from 2020 and what companies are doing differently in 2021. Contact Merel Spierings at [Merel.Spierings@tcb.org](mailto:Merel.Spierings@tcb.org) for more information.



# Upcoming Programs and Research from The Conference Board (continued)

## APRIL

### **Working Group (ESG & M&C Members only): April 28, 2021 - Telling Your Sustainability Story**

Our final session of the Sustainability Story working group will discuss how to cope with the various reporting frameworks and rating agencies. Questions include: How do you match up your story with these rubrics? What potential regulation is on the horizon? How can companies achieve what they want to do given the existing and proposed regulations? Contact Lindsay Beltzer at [Lindsay.Beltzer@tcb.org](mailto:Lindsay.Beltzer@tcb.org) for more information.

### **Report: Sustainability Matters: Is the EU Clearing the Path Towards More Effective Sustainability Report?**

This forthcoming report will highlight key features of the European Non-Financial Reporting Directive (NFRD) and the potential changes that may feature in the forthcoming revised version.



# Related Resources from State Street and Moody's

## COVID-19 and ESG: Four Dimensions

**By: Carlo M. Funk, Head of EMEA ESG Investment Strategy, State Street Global Advisors**

The COVID-19 pandemic is having devastating effects on almost all areas of our lives, both professional and personal. This paper sheds light on four important dimensions on how the COVID-19 pandemic can influence ESG adoption, namely: The significance of ESG criteria, Impact on climate initiatives, ESG performance, and Stewardship and Engagement.

## COVID-19 and ESG: Four Dimensions

**By: Kingsmill Bond, New Energy Strategist, Carbon Tracker Initiative & Carlo M. Funk, Head of EMEA ESG Investment Strategy, State Street Global Advisors**

In this paper, the authors highlight why the COVID-19 pandemic will catalyze the shift from fossil fuels to renewables and why this transition is both needed and inevitable.

## ESG and the Biden Presidency

**By: Suzanne Smetana, Head of ESG Investment Integration, State Street Global Advisors**

In a dramatic change from the previous administration, this article examines several themes that could arise under the Biden presidency: Rising Calls for ESG Disclosure, Stricter Climate Regulations, Changing Operational Backdrops in Various Industries, Investors Increasingly Pricing ESG Criteria into Decision-Making, and US Department of Labor (DOL) ESG Rule.





# Related Resources from State Street and Moody's (continued)

## **The New Normal: ESG Investing in 2021**

**By Carlo M. Funk, Head of EMEA ESG Investment Strategy, State Street Global Advisors**

In a year dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a renewed focus from governments and companies on the need to address climate change and other sustainability challenges. For their part, many investors are integrating ESG and climate considerations across their portfolios in response to changing attitudes and regulations. Where will all this take us? This report highlights five ESG themes for 2021.

## **Moody's ESG hub**

Moody's has launched Climate Solutions to provide market participants with enhanced risk measurement and evaluation tools to better understand, quantify and manage climate risks and opportunities. Watch the video and [click here](#) to learn more.

