
INDEPENDENT REGULATORY BOARD FOR AUDITORS
COMMITTEE FOR AUDITING STANDARDS

Exposure Draft on a Proposed Global Sustainability Assurance Standard

Johannesburg / 1 September 2023

The International Auditing and Assurance Standards Board (IAASB) has issued the proposed International Standard on Sustainability Assurance (ISSA) 5000, *General Requirements for Sustainability Assurance Engagements* (ED-ISSA 5000), and consequential amendments to other IAASB standards, for public comment.

In its media release on the consultation process, the IAASB states that ED-ISSA 5000 is a principles-based, overarching standard suitable for both limited and reasonable assurance engagements on sustainability information reported across any sustainability topic. It drafted the standard to work with sustainability information prepared under any suitable reporting framework, including the ones that are already in place and those still under development. The existing ones include the frameworks that have been issued by the European Union, the International Sustainability Standards Board, the Global Reporting Initiative and the International Organization for Standardization, among others.

The standard is profession agnostic, supporting its use by both professional accountant and non-accountant assurance practitioners when performing high-quality sustainability assurance engagements.

"Our proposed ISSA 5000 is a crucial step in enhancing confidence and trust in sustainability reporting," noted IAASB Chair Tom Seidenstein. "This proposal directly responds to the International Organization of Securities Commissions recommendations and complements the work of other standard setters, including the International Ethics Standards Board for Accountants."

Investors and other stakeholders are increasingly calling for high-quality, transparent, reliable and comparable reporting by entities on sustainability matters, including climate and other environmental, social and governance information. This has been accompanied by questions regarding the assurance thereof and the ethical responsibilities of preparers and assurance providers. It is for these reasons that the Independent Regulatory Board for Auditors (IRBA) views this as an important project that responds to the rapid developments in sustainability reporting.

The IRBA's Committee for Auditing Standards (CFAS) will continue to influence the international standard-setting process, so as to maximise South Africa's input and ensure that the IAASB Standards will be appropriate for use by registered auditors locally. This includes tracking and providing input to global standard setting such as this Exposure Draft; as well as providing relevant input to the IAASB's processes, through stakeholder consultation, and regulatory insights.

In preparing for a response to this Exposure Draft, the IRBA will consult with a range of stakeholders, to inform its comment letter. Due to the prevalence of integrated reports, including sustainability reports in South Africa respondents may want to consider the following matters in commenting to the IRBA and/or IAASB:

- Any regulatory requirements that could affect the implementation of ED-ISSA 5000 in South Africa;
- Whether there are any proposals that need to be added to ED-ISSA 5000 in respect of its practical application and, if so, what those amendments should be and reasons for the amendments;
- Whether there are any proposals that need to be deleted; and
- Whether there is a necessity to eliminate options (alternatives), if any, provided for in ED-ISSA 5000.

Auditors are also reminded of the following IRBA publications on sustainability engagements that are available on its website:

- [South African Assurance Engagements Practice Statement 1, Sustainability Assurance Engagements: Rational Purpose, Appropriateness of Underlying Subject Matter and Suitability of Criteria](#), that was effective for periods beginning on or after 15 December 2020; and
- [IRBA Staff Audit Practice Alert 8: Frequently Asked Questions on Sustainability Assurance Engagements](#).

Request for Comments

The IRBA's CFAS welcomes comments on all matters addressed in ED-ISSA 5000, including responses to the specific questions set out in the Explanatory Memorandum. Comments should be submitted via email to standards@irba.co.za by **3 November 2023**. All comments will be considered as a public record.

Alternatively, we invite registered auditors and other interested parties to submit their comments directly to the [IAASB https://www.iaasb.org/publications/proposed-international-standard-auditing-570-revised-202x-going-concern-and-proposed-conforming-and](https://www.iaasb.org/publications/proposed-international-standard-auditing-570-revised-202x-going-concern-and-proposed-conforming-and) by **1 December 2023**.

A PDF copy of ED-ISSA 5000 is available and may be downloaded from the exposure draft page of the [IRBA website](#). Should you have any other queries or experience any technical difficulties in downloading the document, please do not hesitate to email the [Standards Department](#).

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About the IRBA

The objective of the IRBA is to endeavour to protect the financial interests of the South African public and international investors in South Africa through the effective and appropriate regulation of audits conducted by registered auditors, in accordance with internationally recognised standards and processes.

The statutory responsibilities of the CFAS are to assist the IRBA to develop, maintain, adopt, issue or prescribe auditing pronouncements; consider relevant international changes by monitoring developments by other auditing standard-setting bodies and sharing information where requested; and promote and ensure the relevance of auditing pronouncements.