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Announcing the First Certified Companies to the EDGE Global Standard for Workplace Gender Equality

Geneva, Switzerland, October, 2013 – EDGE Certified Foundation (formerly The Gender Equality Project), a Swiss-based Foundation, today announced the names of the first certified companies to its EDGE global standard in workplace gender equality: Deloitte Switzerland, IKEA Switzerland, Banco Compartamos Mexico and CEPD N.V. Poland.

“These companies have the seal of approval telling employees, job seekers, consumers and investors that they are authentically committed to workplace gender equality”, said Aniela Unguresan, co-founder of EDGE Certified Foundation (formerly The Gender Equality Project).

Lombard Odier & Cie Switzerland and L’Oréal (in eight of its countries of operations in North America, South America, Asia and Australia) are equally in the process of completing the certification procedures to the EDGE global standard.

“The EDGE certification system provides a milestone in our work on creating corporate gender equality--and efficiency. Gender equality is the right and the smart thing to do. Often, gender gaps, for example, in hiring or promotion, are the result of unintentional biases that lead employers to base their decisions on stereotypes rather than individual performance, thus hurting productivity and creating inequity. EDGE enables companies to identify and weed out such mistakes.” said Professor Iris Bohnet, academic dean of Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government and director of its Women and Public Policy Program, member of the Academic and Scientific Advisory Council of EDGE Certified Foundation.

“Measurement against a global standard is a critical step in closing the corporate gender gap. The EDGE certification provides a necessary universal benchmark and seal of approval to certify a company’s commitment and progress on gender equality” said Herminia Ibarra, Professor of Organizational Behavior at INSEAD, member of the Academic and Scientific Advisory Council of EDGE Certified Foundation.

Gender equality has been on the corporate agenda for a number of years, but progress did not match aspirations. Only 4% of Fortune 500 CEOs are women, the global average gender pay gap is 17.5% and there is a steep price to pay for deviating from a traditional, uninterrupted, full-time career path for both men and women. “The current corporate gender gap is a reflection of the lack of alignment between the cultural norms of the workplaces – mostly unchanged since the 19th century - and current the needs and expectations of the workforce”, said Nicole Schwab, co-founder of EDGE Certified Foundation (formerly The Gender Equality Project). “Closing the corporate gender gap means first and foremost fostering a working environment where all employees, men and women are encouraged to fulfil their potential, are valued and can take pride in the different perspective they bring to the table or the different ways they advance their careers and develop the career’s of others while carrying on their responsibilities outside work.”



The EDGE (“Economic Dividends for Gender Equality”) certification system is the first and only global certification system in workplace gender equality, universally applicable across industries and regions. It is based on a groundbreaking assessment methodology launched by the EDGE Certified Foundation

(formerly The Gender Equality Project) at the Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos in January 2011, and it provides a clear picture of a company’s commitment and progress on gender equality as measured in terms of equal pay for equivalent work, recruitment and promotion, leadership development training and mentoring, flexible working, and the company culture.

EDGE is a tiered certification system recognizing the commitment and progress of companies through 3 different stages of certification – **ASSESS, MOVE** and **LEAD** – in their journey to achieve excellence in workplace gender equality. The EDGE Certification system is an independent, third party certification scheme which offers the highest level of assurance and means that the outcome is unbiased.

By becoming EDGE Certified, companies can reap the following benefits:

1. Increase financial performance through better utilization of human resources.
2. A competitive edge in terms of talent management, thereby making it easier to attract, develop, motivate and retain the best female and male talents.
3. Create a modern, dynamic corporate brand associated with equal opportunities, flexibility and sustainability.

About the EDGE Certified Foundation

EDGE Certified Foundation (formerly The Gender Equality Project) is a Swiss Foundation committed to creating a world where women and men are equally valued and respected in all aspects of economic, political and social life. The Foundation believes that a society can only be prosperous and sustainable if women and men are granted equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities.

Its mission is to use the EDGE global certification system to engage large corporations across the world in fostering equal career opportunities for women and men in the workplace. Its focus is to create tangible sustainable value for companies that are closing the gender gap, for their employees and their stakeholders.

Statements from the certified companies , Foundation Board Members and Advisors

“The EDGE certification process and the insights revealed by the assessment are a critical step for organisations to understand what is holding them back and provides a roadmap to achieve better performance and a more diverse organisation”. Sarah Kane, Partner at Deloitte.

“We are very happy about the outcome of the certification process and the work we have done in our company. Together with the EDGE Certified Foundation, we took another step to further develop and support workplace gender equality in Switzerland.” Simona Scarpaleggia, CEO IKEA Switzerland.

“We believe that diversity in workplace and equal opportunities strengthen our creativity, build and motivate a team to be competitive in the very demanding pharmaceutical distribution market. We are very proud to be one of the first organizations certified for gender equality in the workplace and to become ambassadors of workplace gender equality in Central and Eastern European markets where we mainly operate.” Jacek Sz wajcowski, CEO of Pelion Healthcare Group.



"We are very proud to be the first company in Mexico certified on Workplace Gender Equality. This certification reflects Compartamos Banco's commitment with gender equality and social inclusion. At the same time, this will provide us with a competitive edge in terms of talent management, making it easier for us to attract, develop, motivate and retain the best female and male talents in order to serve our more than 2.5 million clients, being 94% of them women dedicated to provide a better life quality for their families. This certification is a good sign that we're on the right track with our believes in our companies in Mexico, Guatemala and Peru". Carlos Labarthe, CEO of Gentera, the holding company owner of Compartamos Banco.

"The EDGE Certification is like LEED certification for buildings- but instead of shrinking the carbon footprint- EDGE breaks the glass ceiling by insuring workplace policies free up the pipeline to allow women to ascend to leadership." Megan Beyer, Foundation Board Member EDGE Certified Foundation.

"The EDGE certification provides corporations a much needed tool to guide them in their goals of enhanced diversity and gender equality. It helps organizations identify the headwinds that slow them down and block progress. In ways not previously available, they can now use the certification to capture the tailwinds and speed up their ability to make more rapid progress on these important initiatives. Companies now have the necessary information and measurements to focus on the key drivers of change. " Laura Liswood, Secretary General, Council of Women World Leaders and Member of the Global Advisory Board of EDGE Certified Foundation.

"When it comes to closing the corporate gender gap, we feel that there is a necessity to bring new perspectives and bold ideas in order to find effective solutions to not-so-new problems. This is precisely what the EDGE Certification system does: it encourages companies to take a close look into their company culture, structures and metrics. EDGE Certification is a nudge to overcome the current belief systems. Carolina Müller-Möhl, President of the Müller-Möhl Foundation and Member of the Global Advisory Board.

"The EDGE certification process promises to intensify and inspire much more corporate commitment and progress on behalf of diversity and inclusion strategies. Most of these strategies could clearly benefit from a rigorous, third-party analysis that integrates a whole host of programmatic and policy variables into a coherent road map for real business impact." Eleanor Tabi Haller-Jorden, President & CEO, The Paradigm Forum.