

Joint Sustainability Project Puts Focus on Small Businesses



The Watch & Jewellery Initiative (WJI) 2030 is partnering with the UN Global Compact to help small and medium-size businesses become more sustainable.

Using the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a baseline, the two groups have formed the Small Medium Enterprise (SME) SDG 2030 Solutions Lab. The program aims to educate the jewelry and watch industry on issues such as sustainable design, proper labor practices, human-rights due diligence, climate action, biodiversity, and inclusiveness.

SMEs constitute an estimated 70%-plus of businesses in the global watch and jewelry sector, WJI 2030 said Thursday in its announcement of the launch. Such companies play a “pivotal role in driving economic development, poverty reduction, job creation, economic emancipation, and overall well-being.”

The Solutions Lab, it continued, is an attempt to “prove that it is possible — and profitable — for small businesses [in the industry] to do the right thing, the right way.”

The UN Global Compact is an effort to get companies to align their operations with 10 principles relating to human rights, labor, the environment and anti-corruption. WJI 2030, meanwhile, is an initiative that Cartier and luxury holdings company Kering founded last year to build climate resilience, preserve resources and foster inclusiveness in the trade.

The two organizations plan to launch a working group next month in collaboration with the World Jewellery Confederation (CIBJO), the French Union of Jewellery (UFBJOP), and the design department at Italy’s Politecnico di Milano university.

“The objective is to develop a replicable and scalable framework to enhance responsible supply-chain practices,” said WJI 2030. This “should lead to a value-creation strategy for all SMEs in the global jewelry and watch industry, increase transparency reporting, and show progress over time.”

In the project’s initial stages, SMEs will receive hands-on, personalized guidance, the trade body added. There will be a formal consultation process where NGOs and industry players can contribute to content development, and best practices will be shared both in the Solutions Lab and with the broader industry.

Another aspect of the program is innovation and technology, with the aim of bringing more young people into the trade.

“We have an enormous opportunity and duty to attract young talent [and] inspire them to work for our industry,” said WJI 2030 executive director Iris Van der Veken on Thursday. “That will require a new mind-set of design thinking in [terms of] sustainability, and more cooperation than ever.”

Cartier president Cyrille Vigneron affirmed the importance of cooperation “between

clients and suppliers through the entire value chain. This implies large corporations as well as small and medium-size companies.”

Image: Marie-Claire Daveu, chief sustainability officer and head of institutional affairs at Kering, with Iris Van der Veken, executive director and secretary general of WJI. (Watch & Jewellery Initiative 2030).