



## BUILDING CONSUMER CONFIDENCE

### A public-private partnership to bolster the integrity of the global supply chain

Citizens of the United States rely on a partnership between the public and private sectors to uphold the highest possible level of consumer product safety. However, a growing influx of consumer goods is failing to meet our nation's rigorous health, safety and environmental standards and regulations. Working closely with the government, the U.S. voluntary standards and conformity assessment community is rallying to address this pressing issue.

#### About ANSI

The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) is the coordinator of this nation's private-sector led and public sector-supported voluntary consensus standards and conformity assessment system. ANSI speaks as the U.S. voice in standardization and conformity assessment forums around the globe. Through its diverse network of members, the Institute represents the interests of more than 125,000 companies and 3.5 million professionals worldwide.

#### Addressing Consumer Product Safety Concerns

On September 26, 2007, ANSI convened *Building Consumer Confidence*, an open forum to identify how voluntary standards and compliance programs can be leveraged to ensure the safety of imported products. Over one-hundred representatives of consumer groups, industry, government—including members of the Interagency Working Group on Import Safety—examined collaborative tactics that would help restore consumer confidence in the public-private partnership that regulates, and self-regulates, our consumer marketplace.

#### Moving Forward: Recommendations and Actions

The current public-private system of import oversight remains a strong model to use as the baseline for any reform efforts. Where design standards problems have been discovered, they have been rectified. And where testing and inspection gaps have been revealed, the private sector—including manufacturers, compliance groups, and retailers—brings important resources to bear.

Compliance gaps have been identified as the major focus of private-sector led reform efforts. ANSI is already working closely with the U.S. Toy Industry Association and a working group of safety experts and industry, government, and consumer leaders to develop a new safety assurance program for toys. Slated for release on February 1, 2008, the program prescribes procedures and provides audit mechanisms that will help to ensure that products entering the U.S. market meet this nation's rigorous toy safety requirements – whether those requirements are defined in standards or regulations.

The integrity of the global supply chain is critical, from the smallest sub-sub contractor to the retail shelves. Educational efforts need to be significantly increased up and down the supply chain, and gap analysis and continuous and rigorous testing and inspection regimes need to involve all parties at all levels – everyone has a role and responsibility in the process. Government and industry need to work at a single purpose to identify “carrots” that will help encourage proper behavior by suppliers and “sticks” that will provide credible disincentives for violations.

ANSI will continue to work with the conference participants and other relevant stakeholders to develop a consensus structure that expands upon and implements these recommendations. The Institute will keep the Working Group informed of our progress, and stands ready to act as a resource as the public and private sectors work in parallel to address these important policy issues.

#### For More Information

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