ISO/TMB/WG on Social Responsibility News Letter

ISO/SR UPDATE

Issue#0: April 2005

Long and Winding road – the way to 1st plenary meeting–

ISO, as a non-governmental international standards developing organization, develops voluntary standards on expressed and demonstrated need. Clearly articulated requirements from the market are sought before launching new ISO standards development activities. ISO also depends on these market stakeholders and interested parties to provide the expert resources needed to develop the standards as these are the groups that will ultimately implement or be affected by the work.

Today, there is widespread concern among many stakeholder groups, including governments, non-governmental organizations, consumers, labour unions and the public at large that organizations should respect the social, economic and environmental dimensions that make up sustainable development, and behave in an ethical manner.

ISO's examination of the SR issue has certainly been in the context of a general recognition that SR is an integral part of sustainability. This recognition was articulated at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit on the environment which actually focused on a broader set of issues, including poverty reduction and social development. As more and more organizations decide that they must address the principles of SR, there is a growing need for tools to help them implement SR related practices.

ISO Committee on Consumer Policy (COPOLCO)

With this context, the ISO Committee on Consumer Policy (COPOLCO) decided in May 2001 to consider the viability of International Standards on what was then referred to as "corporate social responsibility". Through several of its regular meetings and a special workshop in Trinidad and Tobago in June 2002, COPOLCO reached the conclusion that, from the perspective of the consumer, ISO as an organization is well positioned to take leadership in the development of international SR standards. COPOLCO thus submitted a recommendation to ISO Council that ISO establish an advisory group involving all key stakeholders to investigate the issue further.

ISO Advisory Group on Social responsibility (SAG)

ISO set up its advisory group (AG) on social responsibility in early 2003 to help decide

whether eventual ISO involvement in the field of SR would add any value to already existing initiatives and programs. The group comprised representatives from around the world and from a wide spectrum of stakeholder interests including business, government, labour, consumers and non-governmental organizations. Over 18 months of intensive debate and development, the group developed a comprehensive report that included an overview of SR initiatives worldwide and identified issues that should be taken into account by ISO. The AG concluded that ISO should go ahead with work on SR on the condition that a set of key recommendations are met.

The AG's work provided the major focus of an international ISO conference on social responsibility held in Stockholm on 21-22 June 2004 and hosted by the Swedish Standards Institute (SIS). The aim of the conference was to obtain further international input to contribute to ISO's decision on whether to proceed with SR standardization work. The conference was attended by 355 participants from 66 countries, representing the major stakeholder groups. The issues and challenges raised were remarkably in alignment with those identified in the AG's report.

ISO Technical Management Board (TMB) and

Working Group on Social Responsibility

Given the AG's report and recommendations, as well as the positive and consistent feedback from the conference, the ISO Technical Management Board (TMB) proposed that a new working group (WG) be established to prepare an International Standard giving guidance on social responsibility. The TMB has also assigned the leadership of the working group collectively to the national standards institutes of Brazil (ABNT) and Sweden (SIS). This new system, twinning a developing country member of ISO with a developed country member, is one of the measures applied by the TMB to strengthen the participation of the developing countries that make up 110 of our current total membership of 146 member bodies. The ISO members recently voted on the approval of new work item proposal to develop the standard. A total of 37 countries submitted replies. A comfortable majority of 32 countries expressed their intention of participating in the work.

The new SR Working Group will be a balanced, multi-stakeholder group comprised of experts nominated by ISO's members. Each ISO member body is also encouraged to establish a "mirror committee" with a well-balanced membership that includes these same interest categories.
At the first full meeting scheduled for in Salvador, Brazil on 7-11 March 2005. (See ISO/SR UPDATE Issue1)

New Work Item Proposal 26000 "Guidance on social responsibility"

NOTE: The information below is a part of NWIP 26000.
See http://www.iso.org/sr NWIP for the full information.

Scope of st

- Assist an organization in addressing its social responsibilities
- Provide practical guidance related to
  - operationalizing social responsibility
  - identifying and engaging with stakeholders and
  - enhancing credibility of reports and claims made about SR
- Emphasize performance results and improvements
- Increase customer satisfaction and confidence
- Promote common terminology in the SR field
- Be consistent with and not in conflict with existing documents, treaties and conventions and other ISO standards

T

- The document shall be an International Standard providing guidance
- It will not be intended for third-party certification
- Throughout the standard, the verb form "should" shall be used
- Only one standard shall be developed

WG p

The WG is made up of experts nominated by ISO member bodies that wish to actively participate, internal ISO/IEC committee liaisons, and external liaisons (D-liaisons) which are open to any relevant international or broadly-based regional organization that wishes to participate in this work.

- An ISO member body may nominate a maximum of 6 experts to serve on the WG. It is desirable that a balanced representation of industry, government, consumer, labour, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other interests should be ensured.
- Internal and External liaisons may nominate a maximum of 2 representatives each to serve on the WG.

REFERENCE: Website for ISO Social Responsibility http://www.iso.org/sr

- *Background information*

  Presentations made at the COPOLCO workshop on Social responsibility

  (Trinidad and Tobago, 2002)

- *Advisory Group's report*
- *Resolutions*

  ISO Technical Management Board resolution 35/2004 (Stockholm, 24-25 June 2004)

- *NWIP*