Press releases

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'Dynamic' launching of work on ISO 26000 - future guideline on social responsibility

"Dynamic!" That was how the Brazil-Sweden leadership team of the ISO Working Group on Social Responsibility (WG SR) described its first meeting to launch the development of the future ISO 26000 standard giving SR guidelines, for publication in 2008.

"As well as giving a focus to the development of the SR standard by providing it with a designation, ISO 26000, this first meeting was the scene for the essential first phase of 'team forming' which must take place before 'team performing' can swing into action," commented ISO Secretary-General Alan Bryden.

The meeting, held on 7-11 March 2005, in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil, was the "kick-off" of ISO's first venture into the area of SR and, fittingly for a new initiative, achieved a high attendance and set a fresh benchmark for innovation in stakeholder participation.

The WG SR meeting was attended by 43 ISO member countries (including 21 developing countries) plus 24 organizations with liaison status, all together represented by 225 experts. They were joined by many observers from ISO members or from international organizations, for a grand total of more than 300 delegates.

The innovation came with the new approach by ISO to ensure that the WG SR standard will benefit from broad input by all those with a serious interest in social responsibility. This is being achieved by the balanced representation of six designated stakeholder categories: industry, government, labour, consumers, nongovernmental organizations and others, in addition to geographical and gender-based balance.

"Despite the large numbers and the fact that for many participants, it was their first-ever contact with the ISO standards-development systems, a good, balanced representation was achieved and the meeting was very productive, formulating resolutions that begin to pave the path forward for the actual work on the standard itself," commented the WG SR Chair, Mr. Jorge E.R. Cajazeira, nominated by ISO's member body for Brazil, ABNT, which forms a "twinned" leadership with the ISO member for Sweden, SIS. He and Vice Chair Ms. Catarina Munck af Rosenschöld, agreed that the group's inaugural meeting was "intensive" and "dynamic".

Catarina Munck added: "The traditional ISO method of developing standards is for the work to be carried out by delegations from ISO member bodies that each presents a national consensus. The method introduced for the WG SR allows for the participating ISO members to nominate up to six experts, one for each of the stakeholder categories

- so these categories have significant possibilities for input. In addition, the delegates representing international organizations can participate directly - so there was a lot that was new not only for the delegates, but for the WG officers and for ISO too!"

"There was a lot of hands raised, questions and long debates," confirmed Jorge Cajazeira. "However, the delegates worked with great enthusiasm and commitment, including during coffee breaks, lunch and after hours. By the end of the week, the WG had formulated 32 resolutions, which is a good achievement for the first meeting and important for what follows since most of these resolutions will shape the future work of the WG SR."

The first meeting of the WG SR was primarily focussed on discussion and decisions on the scope of the future standard; the terms of reference of the WG; the structure of the WG; allocation of the leadership of its subgroups; the development of special working procedures; a target date for publication, and on communicating its work to meet the intense interest in this ISO initiative.

The WG decisions included the following:

- Establishment, terms of reference and membership of a Chair's Advisory Group.
- Establishment of the following Task Groups (TG):
  - TG 1, *Funding and stakeholder engagement*, to find money to increase the participation by groups with limited resources, such as developing countries and consumers;
  - TG 2, *Communication*, to make available information on the WG in order to ensure transparency and openness, to develop supporting tools for disseminating information, to help other TGs with their communication and to develop a plan for strategic promotion and communication;
  - TG 3, *Operating procedures*, to work on revising or developing new procedures for the WG processes.
- Establishment of three interim Task Groups on aspects related to the future SR standard itself. These will each first explore the issues specific to its area, then make suggestions on how they might be reflected in a design specification, and subsequently developed. The interim task groups, which will decide on their title at their first meeting, will address the following aspects:
  - interim TG 4 will explore stakeholder identification, engagement and communication;
  - interim TG 5 will explore the core context of SR: issues, definitions, principles (differing types), and the interface of organization and society;
  - interim TG 6 will explore how the standard could potentially address (e.g., what wording might be used):
    - guidance appropriate for all organizations to understand and apply the SR core context, and
    - guidance appropriate for specific kinds of organizations.
- Establishment of an Editing Committee.
- Agreement to establish a Spanish Translation Task Force (STTF) to translate working documents considered essential for effective participation, as well as final documents of ISO 26000.
- Adoption of operating procedures for decision-making in the WG and all its subsidiary groups.

- Adoption of operating procedures to help implement the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on SR that ISO has reached with the International Labour Organization (ILO). The MoU defines cooperation between the organizations to help ensure that ISO 26000 is consistent with and complements ILO international labour standards.

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