



Handled by, email:
Jonathon Hanks
jonhanks@gsb.uct.ac.za

TG 4, 5 and 6 Liaison Task Force

Statement by WG Chairs and TG Convenors

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In accordance with the proposed way forward outlined in LTF Memo-8, this document contains a clarifying statement by the WG Chairs and the Convenors of TG 4, 5 and 6, clarifying the leadership's current view on the elements relating to the following two Liaison Key Topics (LKTs):

- the principal objectives and identified “end-user” of ISO 26000 (LKT 1); and
- the Management System Standard (MSS) issue (LKT 6).

This clarification is based on what is outlined in the NWIP and other relevant documents, and with consideration to the experts' comments on WD.2 and the advice of the LTF stakeholder representatives. This clarification is intended to inform the further drafting of the standard.

1 The principal objectives and identified “end-user” of ISO 26000

On the basis of a review of the NWIP – and with consideration to the experts' comments on WD2 and the advice of the LTF – the WG Chairs and the Convenors of TGs 4, 5 and 6 have identified the following as being their considered understanding of the principal objectives and identified “end-user” of ISO 26000:

- ISO 26000 shall be a guidance standard, the use of which is voluntary, that provides practical guidance in plain language to organisations on: the concept of SR; identifying and prioritizing SR issues; identifying and engaging with stakeholders; and on means for implementing and integrating SR practices within the organisation.
- The standard is not intended for third party certification, or regulatory or contractual use.
- The targeted end-users are all organisations. This is read in an inclusive manner: it does not mean that only those aspects applicable to all organisations should be included in this standard.
- The standard will seek to promote the integration of SR activities into existing organisational systems, practices and processes, rather than being a separate add-on, and it will emphasise performance results and improvements
- The standard shall complement and avoid conflicts with existing documents, international treaties and conventions and existing ISO standards.
- The standard is intended to assist organisations in addressing their social responsibilities and in contributing to sustainable development, fostering greater awareness and wider observance of agreed sets of universal principles as expressed in United Nations conventions and declarations, while respecting cultural, societal, environmental and legal differences and economic development conditions.
- The standard is intended to become a useful global reference on the scope and core issues pertaining to social responsibility, on appropriate terms and definitions, and on means for implementing and integrating SR practices within an organisation.



2 The Management System Standard (MSS) issue

The issue of ISO 26000 being used as a management system standard has been on the table since work on the standard commenced in 2004. Despite statements on this issue by the Technical Management Board (TMB) and within the New Work Item Proposal (NWIP) it continues to be the subject of some debate and the source of a number of comments on WD 2.

Some experts have expressed concern that Clause 7 – which was written prior to the completion of Clauses 5 (SR Principles) and 6 (SR Issues) – too closely resembles an MSS. An analysis has shown for example that Clause 7 makes provision for all of the six elements as required by *ISO Guide 72: Guidelines for the justification and development of management system standards*. (These six elements are: policy; planning; implementation and operation; performance assessment; improvement; and management review). It is recognised, however, that the NWIP makes explicit reference to four of the six elements as required by Guide 72 to be an MSS.¹

In light of this concern, the question has arisen as to how the drafters of ISO 26000 should develop a clause on “implementation” in the standard that does not too closely resemble an MSS.

On the basis of a review of the NWIP – and with consideration to the expert comments on WD2 and the advice of the ISO Central Secretariat and the LTF – the WG Chairs and the Convenors of TGs 4, 5 and 6 have identified the following as being their considered understanding on this issue:

- The future ISO 26 000 standard shall be a guidance standard and not a management system standard. ISO 26000 is not intended to be used for third party certification, conformity assessment, or regulatory or contractual use. While these issues have been stated several times previously – including in the NWIP – this is being restated to halt further uncertainty, and to highlight the importance of having this clearly stated in the text of the standard.
- Although this is not an MSS, it is recognised that some MSS language and concepts can be used *if* this is deemed necessary and useful in clarifying the guidance, particularly as regards the implementation of substantive issues. It is recognised that the use of such language and concepts may be necessary if the Standard is to provide guidance on “operationalizing social responsibility”, as required by the NWIP.
- The standard will focus on performance aspects, and will include guidance relating specifically to the implementation of the social responsibility issues identified by TG5. Clause 7 will use a predominantly generic approach, though may include guidance that is specific to issues identified by TG5.
- The current drafting work of TG6 will continue. Ongoing assessments will be undertaken by the WG – with consideration to the independent advice of the ISO Central Secretariat – as to whether the draft too closely resembles an MSS.

¹ The NWIP states in Annex B a): “The proposed standard accordingly seeks to assist organizations in establishing, implementing, maintaining and improving social responsibility frameworks.” NWIP states in Annex A that the standard should “emphasize performance results and improvements.” (Four of the six elements as required by ISO Guide 72 to be an MSS are thus explicitly mentioned in NWIP). The ones that are not mentioned are “policy” and “management review.”