

November, 2006

Working Group on Social Responsibility
Secretariat Kristina Sandberg

As we are aware, the 4th Plenary of the WG of SR is to be held at the end of January 2007, in Sydney, Australia. With this forthcoming plenary meeting in mind, we wish to acquaint you with a proposal that will allow all non-English speaking participants at the Plenary to overcome the language barrier, and thus be able to contribute to, and have a bearing on, the construction process of the ISO 26000 Guidance.

We acknowledge the considerable openness shown by ISO in proposing a scheme which, unlike the traditional model used in creating standards, promotes the involvement of six sectors (Government, Industry, Labor, NGOs, Consumers, SSRO) in preparing this guide. ISO has clearly been very careful to ensure balanced participation by those six sectors, taking geographical and gender representation into account.

Now, since the First WG SR Plenary in Bahia, Brazil, a certain barrier has consistently proved to be an obstacle to full participation, and that is the question of language. On that occasion, representatives of various sectors (NGOs, Consumers, Labor) made it clear that language was a factor which restricted their effective participation. ISO took up this question and in the interests of remedying the situation, different *Translation Task Forces* were created, within the structure of the *Working Group*. (STTF, ATTF, RTTF, FTF)

A further challenge appears at the plenary meetings, where during debates and when seeking agreement the language barrier is once more an obstacle for the non-English speaking participants, preventing effective and efficient participation in some cases, weakening it in others.

Understanding that ISO proposed creating these guidelines on Social Responsibility, in whose construction all stakeholders will be able to participate efficiently and effectively, **we propose that at the forthcoming plenary to be held at the end of January 2007, in Sydney, Australia, simultaneous interpretation should be provided throughout the whole meeting.** This will no doubt lead to a higher degree of participation during the plenary debates and the different *Task Groups*. As a first step in organising a simultaneous interpretation service, we suggest taking those languages that are already being translated in the different translation groups, i.e. Spanish (STTF), French (FTF), Arabic (ATTF) and Russian (RTTF). Funding for this simultaneous interpretation perhaps, could be taken from the TRUST FUND or in next meeting the organizers shall be required to get governmental or private sponsoring for this.

Far from making the whole process more expensive, we believe that the proposal responds to the need to achieve the objectives proposed by ISO, such as guaranteeing effective participation and equity, between the different sectors invited to contribute in the construction of the ISO 26000.

We trust that you will consider and implement this proposal and, as a result we are convinced that during the meeting in Sydney there will be a significant increase in participation of non-English speakers, who will have been able to overcome the language barrier thanks to simultaneous interpretation, a tool so commonly used in international meetings.

Sincerely yours,