

# *Origins and Development of ISO 26000 Social Responsibility Standard*

Presentation by: Dr. Kernaghan Webb, LL.B., LL.M., LL.D.

Associate Professor, Department of Law and Business, Ted Rogers School of Management, Ryerson University

Director, Ryerson University Institute for the Study of Corporate Social Responsibility

June 9, 2016

Ryerson University,  
Toronto Canada

# Roadmap: ISO 26000 Origins & Development discussion

- Brief background about ISO, Standards Council of Canada and the CSA Group
- The state of social responsibility and standardization: inter-governmental law, inter-governmental instruments, the proliferation of process, performance and single focus standards
- ISO COPOLCO Global Markets Group-2001
- ISO COPOLCO feasibility and desirability report- 2002
- ISO online forum-2002
- ISO COPOLCO workshop and recommendations-2002
- ISO multistakeholder Advisory Group and report-2002-2004
- ISO Social responsibility Conference- Stockholm-2004
- ISO Technical Management Board resolution (2004) and ISO vote (2005)
- 2005-2010 – ISO Social Responsibility Working Group – seven stakeholder categories
- Inter-governmental participation (MOUs), governmental participation, competitor standards, industry, labour, consumer, environmental, other
- ISO 26000 standard published November 2010
- ISO 26000 Post Publication Organization
- Adoption of ISO 26000 as national standards, and variations

# ISO & National Standards Bodies: Background

- ISO is a federation of more than 160 national member, affiliated and subscriber standards bodies. It is not part of the United Nations. It is the world's largest independent, non-state standards body dedicated to the development of standards, intended to facilitate global trade
- ISO has developed more than 19,000 standards, and is perhaps best known for ISO 9001 (quality) and ISO 14001 (environmental management) series. Over 1.5 million operations have been certified to these 2 standards alone
- The Standards Council of Canada (SCC) is the national standards body of Canada participating in ISO, established by statute and funded by the federal government. The Swedish Standards Institute and ANSI are the national standards bodies of Sweden and USA. The CSA Group engaged in standards development and related activity and meets criteria set by the SCC.
- While ISO is not a governmental body, many of its national standards body members are connected to or affiliated with government

# Origins and early development of ISO 26000

- By the year 2000, there were many standards addressing one part or another of social responsibility: e.g., Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), UN Global Compact (UNG), OECD MNE Guidelines, ISO 14001, OHSAS 18001, SA 8000, AA 1000
- But no standard attempted to comprehensively address all relevant aspects of social responsibility, no multistakeholder definition of social responsibility, and no entity attempted to act as a bridge among the diverse inter-governmental bodies, developed and developing country governments, private competing standards bodies, labour, environmental, consumer, national standards bodies, others
- ISO had the credibility to attract all these entities to participate in development of ISO 26000: transformative moment when key inter-governmental bodies participated in development of a non-governmental ISO standard
- Work started by ISO Consumer Policy Committee in 2000-2001, with reports, online consumer forum, workshop, which lead to a recommendation for a broader ISO stakeholder group exploration, leading to 2005 Stockholm conference, ISO Technical Management Board recommendation, and vote by national standards bodies to proceed with development of standard

# Formative development of ISO 26000

- ISO mandated that ISO 26000 Social Responsibility International Standard provide guidance on operationalization of social responsibility, to work with inter-governmental bodies, governments and others through transparent multistakeholder process
- the “C” (corporate) was dropped from “Social Responsibility” because ISO standards are typically intended to be available to all types of organizations, not just corporations (similarly, ISO 14001 is about environmental management for all organizations, not just “corporate” environmental management)
- By 2010, over 450 members from 99 countries in ISO 26000 Working Group (WG) and 210 observers, co-hosted by Brazil and Sweden, with majority participants from developing countries, financial assistance for developing country participants
- Participants included: UNGC, UNCTAD, OECD, WHO, ILO, SA 8000, AA 1000, ISEAL Alliance, governments of all G20 countries and many more, peak industry bodies (ICC, IOE, ICMM, WBCSD, IPIECA), labour (ICFTU), Ethos Institute, Transparency International, WWF, Ecologia, Consumers International, African Institute for Corporate Social Responsibility, Red Puentes

# Process of development of ISO 26000

- Memorandum of Understanding with each of UNGC, ILO, OECD, GRI
- Draft versions of standard publicly accessible to this day, comments of all participants publicly accessible, process involved both those who wanted the standard and those opposed
- WG reached a consensus (no sustained opposition)
- Then national members bodies voted in favour of the standard through ISO voting process. ISO 26000 published in November 2010.
- Because ISO is a non-state body, it is incapable of producing binding laws (mandatory standards). ISO 26000 is an International Standard that provides guidance concerning operationalization of social responsibility
- Limited number of copies of ISO 26000 are available at no cost, by participating in a training session, with priority given to less advantaged organizations/individuals. Contact: [admin@iso26000.info](mailto:admin@iso26000.info)
- ISO 26000 Post Publication Organization (PPO) now monitors use of standard
- More than 75 countries have adopted ISO 26000 as national standard

# Comments and questions? Thank you!

Dr. Kernaghan Webb, LL.B., LL.M., LL.D.

Associate Professor, Law and Business Department, Ryerson  
University's Ted Rogers School of Management

Director, Ryerson University Institute for the Study of Corporate Social  
Responsibility

Contact: [kernaghan.webb@ryerson.ca](mailto:kernaghan.webb@ryerson.ca)