



# ISO tackles a standard for sustainability

ISO has embarked on its most ambitious and multi-lateral project ever – to develop a sustainability standard for business – and *Mind Shift's* associate editor is chairing the international process.

In a bold move, the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) – traditionally seen as the staid preserve of white-coated technicians and tick-box auditors – has taken on the challenge of developing a global standard that addresses all aspects of social responsibility. Building on their success in developing international management standards, such as ISO 9000 and ISO 14001, the Geneva-based standards body is currently developing a global guidance standard that covers such issues as human rights, labour practices, environmental management, climate change, organisa-

tional governance and community development – in essence all things to do with 'sustainable development'. Not only is the scope of the standard ambitious, but so too is their proposed manner of developing it. Instead of being drafted by national standards bodies (as is typically the case), ISO 26000 is being developed through the largest ever international, multi-stakeholder process undertaken by ISO, with contributions coming from global representatives of six stakeholder groups: industry; government; labour; NGOs; consumers; and one called 'service, support, research and

others'. The standard, which is intended for publication in 2010, will seek to provide guidance to all types of organisations in both the public and private sectors. It is not a management system

responsible practices within an organisation's core activities and not on how they spend a (typically very small) percentage of profits. At their recent meeting in Vienna during November 2007 which was

tive team with the mandate of completing this process. *Mind Shift's* associate editor, Jonathon Hanks – founder of South African consultancy Incite Sustainability – has been appointed to chair

CREATING A GLOBAL STANDARD FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT WILL PROVIDE AN INCENTIVE FOR NON-COMPLIANT COMPANIES AND REMOVE ANY CLAIMS TO IGNORANCE.

standard and – unlike ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 – is not intended for certification. The standard explicitly does not focus on the philanthropic activities associated with corporate social investment, but on embedding socially

attended by a record 400 experts and observers from 80 countries, significant progress was made in finalising the drafting of this standard. A principal outcome of this meeting was the appointment of a globally representa-

these delicate negotiations and tasked with delivering a global standard that is acceptable to all stakeholder groups before the next full meeting of ISO working group experts in Santiago, Chile, in September 2008. ■

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