GUIDE 82

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Guidelines for addressing sustainability in standards

Lignes directrices pour la prise en compte de la durabilité dans les normes

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see www.iso.org/patents).

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation of the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html.

This document was prepared by the ISO Technical Management Board Sustainability Guidance Drafting Group.

This second edition cancels and replaces the first edition (ISO Guide 82:2014), which has been technically revised. The main changes compared to the previous edition are as follows:

— addition of reference to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (Annex C);

— addition of the relevant sections of the guidance on partnership developed by TMB Task Force 16.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html.

Introduction

Sustainability is the goal of sustainable development. It refers to any state of the global system in which the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The concept of sustainability is continually evolving. Understanding and achieving a balance between environmental, social and economic systems, ideally in mutually supporting ways, is considered essential for making progress towards achieving sustainability. The achievement of sustainability is now recognized as one of the most important considerations in all human activities.

The term "sustainable development" is often used to describe development that leads to sustainability, and the term "social responsibility" is often used to describe how an individual organization (e.g. a company) can contribute to sustainable development.

ISO standards impact on the achievement of sustainability, either directly (where they specifically address sustainability issues) or indirectly (e.g. where they relate to testing, products, procedures, services, terminology, management systems or auditing). However, since sustainable development and progress towards sustainability are heavily dependent on a multitude of variables, including social, environmental, economic, geographic and technical conditions, it is important that standards developers do not reach overall conclusions that particular activities (including processes) or products (including services) are "sustainable."

NOTE 1 In this document, the term "activities and products" includes "processes and services".

This document is intended for use by anyone involved in the development of ISO standards and similar deliverables. It aims to:

a) raise awareness of sustainability issues arising from the application of ISO standards;

b) provide standards developers with a systematic approach to addressing sustainability issues in a coherent and consistent manner, with regard to both new and revised standards, and in a manner related to the objective and scope of the standard being developed;

c) promote consistency and compatibility, as far as is practical, among standards that directly or indirectly address sustainability.

This document makes reference to related ISO deliverables, as appropriate, e.g. ISO Guide 64 (which addresses environmental issues in product standards) and ISO 26000 (which provides guidance on social responsibility).

This document also makes references to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, which is known as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs)[23].

NOTE 2 Annex C contains an overview of the UN SDGs.

Standards developers are strongly encouraged to consider sustainability issues in their work at all stages in the standards development process. If sustainability issues have not been considered, this can be a valid reason to start the revision of a standard. In addition, the significance or relevance of specific issues can have changed since the previous edition of a standard was drafted or reviewed. Whenever a new standard is drafted or an existing standard is revised, all standards developers (including project proposers, project leaders, convenors, committee chairs and managers) are encouraged to actively promote the application of this document, and thereby involve experts knowledgeable in the subject.

Guidelines for addressing sustainability in standards

1 Scope

This document provides guidance to standards developers on how to take account of sustainability in the drafting, revision and updating of ISO standards and similar deliverables.

It outlines a methodology that ISO standards developers can use to develop their own approach to addressing sustainability on a subject-specific basis.

2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes requirements of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO/IEC Guide 2, *Standardization and related activities — General vocabulary*

ISO 14050, *Environmental management — Vocabulary*

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISO/IEC Guide 2, ISO 14050 and the following apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

— ISO Online browsing platform: available at https://www.iso.org/obp

— IEC Electropedia: available at http://www.electropedia.org/

3.1
sustainability
state of the global system, including environmental, social and economic aspects, in which the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs

Note 1 to entry: The environmental, social and economic aspects interact, are interdependent and are often referred to as the three dimensions of sustainability.

Note 2 to entry: Sustainability is the goal of *sustainable development* (3.2).

3.2
sustainable development
development that meets the environmental, social and economic needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs

Note 1 to entry: Derived from the Brundtland Report[18].

3.3
stakeholder
individual or group that has an interest in any decision or activity of an organization

[SOURCE: ISO 26000:2010, 2.20]

3.4
social responsibility
responsibility of an organization for the impacts of its decisions and activities on society and the environment, through transparent and ethical behaviour that

— contributes to *sustainable development* (3.2), including the health and the welfare of society;

— takes into account the expectations of *stakeholders* (3.3);

— is in compliance with applicable law and consistent with international norms of behaviour; and

— is integrated throughout the organization and practised in its relationships.

Note 1 to entry: Activities include products, services and processes.

Note 2 to entry: Relationships refer to an organization's activities within its sphere of influence.

[SOURCE: ISO 26000:2010, 2.18]

3.5
standards developer
individual or group taking part in the development of a standard

4 What is sustainability?

Sustainability is the goal of sustainable development, a widely applied concept that gained international recognition following the publication in 1987 of the *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, Our Common Future* (commonly referred to as the *Brundtland Report*)[18]. Since then, the importance of sustainability and sustainable development has been reiterated in numerous international forums, such as the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 (the "Rio Declaration"), the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, and the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012 ("Rio+20"). In 2015, the UN General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. These goals are of an integrated and indivisible nature and call for coherent and holistic consideration.

Sustainability encompasses three dimensions (economic, environmental and social) which are interdependent and can be mutually reinforcing. The environment sets natural limits to the social system, which is made up of human institutions, organizations and individuals. The economy, as one part of the social system, includes the use and consumption of resources, employment, meeting the needs of populations (which are typically growing), income, and the distribution and use of products. Sustainability has been misunderstood by some as being primarily an environmental concept, including issues such as climate change, non-sustainable resource use or depletion, and loss of fertile soil and biodiversity. However, sustainability also includes social and economic issues, such as social structures, standards of living, peace and justice, income distribution, production, distribution and use of resources, products and services, and employment. Sustainability relates to the interaction with, and relationship between, these issues.

Sustainability is relevant to all levels of human activity, from the global level to the national, regional and community levels, as well as to the behaviour of individuals. It is also affected by all kinds of organizations, including governments, non-governmental organizations, companies, co-operatives, federations and unions. Sustainability is much more likely to be achieved by society as a whole if social, economic and environmental aspects are addressed in an integrated manner.

NOTE Annex B provides examples of how to develop provisions on environmental aspects within a specific standard.

As defined in 3.1, sustainability refers to a state of the global system, encompassing the environmental, social and economic subsystems, in which the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Given the intergenerational nature of sustainability (i.e. the needs of future generations cannot be fully defined by the present generation) and the

constant changes in the environmental, societal (e.g. population growth) and economic subsystems, sustainability cannot be described purely in terms of a single fixed end point. From this perspective, sustainability is a characteristic of the planet as a whole, and not of any particular activity or organization. However, sustainable development addresses the activities and products of particular organizations (or, for example, communities, nations) and the ability to engage in such development in a manner that contributes to sustainability. Such development is needed to meet the needs of both present and future generations, and it is therefore essential to sustainability.

In this context, sustainability and sustainable development issues can be viewed as concerns about changes (adverse or beneficial) to the environmental, societal or economic subsystems as a result of development, which can affect the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainability issues can arise from a wide range of activities and products that interact with, or can have an impact on, society, the economy or the environment.

The terms “sustainability”, “sustainable development” and “social responsibility” are used interchangeably by some stakeholders, but even though there is a close relationship between them, they are three different concepts and are therefore not interchangeable. Since sustainable development relates to the economic, social and environmental goals common to all people, it can be used to refer to the broader expectations of society.

Social responsibility encompasses an organization's responsibility for the impact of its decisions and activities on society, the environment and economy, and therefore the organization's contribution to sustainable development and sustainability. Although the term “corporate social responsibility (CSR)” is possibly a more familiar term than “social responsibility”, the view has emerged that “social responsibility” is applicable to all organizations, as different types of entities or groups of people and facilities recognize that they also have a responsibility to contribute to current sustainable development and future sustainability.

The standards development process provides standards developers with the opportunity to contribute to sustainable development, and in particular to encourage sustainable production and consumption.

5 Addressing sustainability in standards

There are parallels between addressing sustainability in standards and addressing the sustainability issues of an organization, even though there are some unique challenges in standards due to the nature of standards writing (e.g. it is largely done by volunteers from a variety of organizations who meet only occasionally, and often disband after a particular project is completed). Once the relevant principles of the work have been discussed, the main task is to identify sustainability issues that are relevant and significant (see 7.4.2 and 7.4.3) and to address them by integrating specific provisions into standards.

Existing information related to sustainable development, including information that has already been the subject of standardization, can be used to identify and evaluate relevant issues.

EXAMPLE 1 ISO/TC 59/SC 17 has published several deliverables on sustainability issues related to buildings and civil engineering works.

EXAMPLE 2 ISO/TC 268 has published several deliverables on sustainable cities and communities, including the management system standard ISO 37101. ISO/TC 268 has committed to link its standardization work directly to the UN SDGs and assesses all new work item proposals against the UN SDGs applying specified criteria.

NOTE 1 The document “Contributing to the UN SDGs with ISO standards”[25] contains specific examples of standards that relate to each UN SDG.

However, it can sometimes be necessary to involve experts who are knowledgeable on the subjects related to sustainability, e.g. in complex fields such as human rights, the environment or economics as SDG 17 – *Partnerships for the goals,* underlines. It can also be useful to include other relevant, current sector-specific guidance on environmental, social or economic provisions identified in related ISO standards.

Guidance on identifying partnerships to enhance the ability to take into account the UN SDGs in standards writing is provided in Annex D. These same principles can be applied in seeking partnerships for the purpose of enhancing the use of sustainability generally in standards writing. This clause (Clause 5) discusses how sustainable development can be addressed at the planning stages of standards work. Clauses 6 and 7 provide specific guidance on identifying sustainable development issues (including principles and approaches). Clause 8 discusses how those issues can be addressed in the standards writing or revision process.

Figure 1 illustrates a process for identifying and addressing sustainability issues.

NOTE 2 Other approaches than the linear depiction represented in Figure 1 can be used.

NOTE 3 The numbering in Figure 1 refers to the clauses and subclauses in this document.

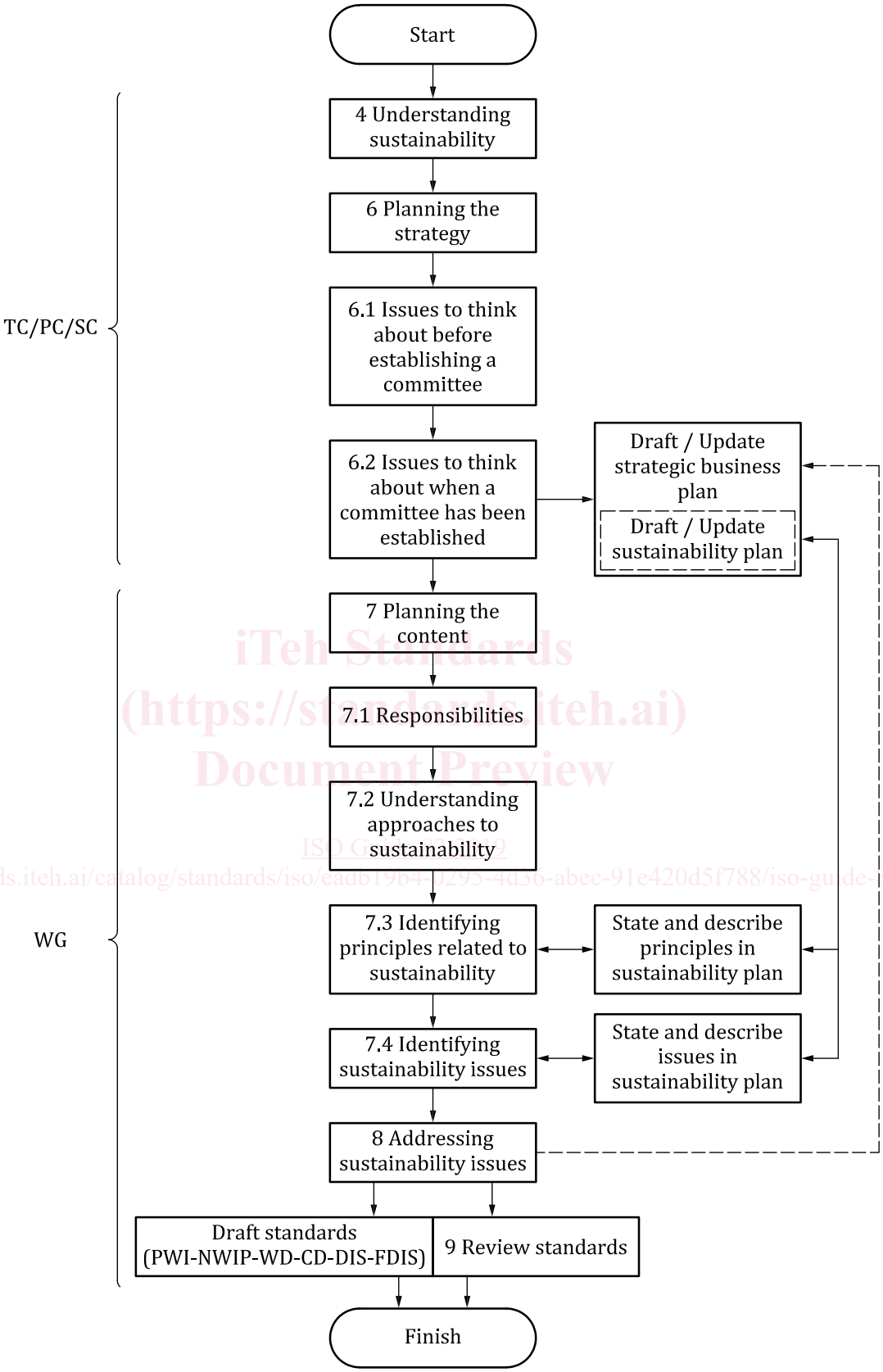

Figure 1 — ISO Guide 82 process flow