



Sergio Mujica
Secretary General
International Organization for Standardization
ISO Central Secretariat
Chemin de Blandonnet 8
CP 401, 1214 Vernier, Geneva, Switzerland

18 June 2020

Dear Mr Mujica,

We are writing as organisations focused on strengthening corporate respect for human rights around the world to add our perspectives to those who have raised questions and concerns with respect to proposals made by AFNOR, the French national organisation for standardisation, relating to ISO 26000. **We are concerned that revisions to ISO 26000, as well as the establishment of a technical committee, will distract from important legislative processes and urge ISO not to proceed in this way. The standards developed by bodies such as the United Nations, OECD, and European Union have the broad support of business, civil society, and trade unions and the introduction of further private standards risks causing confusion and undermining legal efforts.**

The process that led to the adoption of ISO 26000 in 2010 and the standard itself constitute significant steps forward in clarifying the social responsibilities of businesses. The general alignment of ISO 26000 with international standards, including the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, make it among the most widely referenced and used standards by countries and organisations in all regions.

It is important to recall the many developments in responsible business policies and practices since 2010, as well as new concepts and strategies to ensure effective implementation of international standards in this area.

As ISO member countries consider options in the lead up to the planned July vote on this matter, we wish to stress that any decision relating to ISO 26000 could risk undermining ongoing efforts at national, regional, and international levels to strengthen implementation of existing responsible business standards with respect to international human rights and labor rights obligations.

In particular, we wish to draw attention to growing momentum at national and regional levels concerning mandatory due diligence. This includes the recent announcement by European Commissioner for Justice, Didier Reynders, that the European Commission will introduce legislation on mandatory corporate environmental and human rights due diligence as part of the Commission's 2021 work plan. Any decision to revise ISO 26000 could divert attention from this and other crucial efforts.

We are concerned that the reopening of ISO 26000 will become a major distraction from the development of international and national law in relation to environmental and human rights due diligence. We very much hope that ISO will decline this opportunity at this point of time.

Yours sincerely,

John Morrison
Chief Executive
Institute for
Human Rights and Business

Phil Bloomer
Executive Director
Business and Human
Rights Resource Centre

Claudia Saller
Coordinator
European Coalition for
Corporate Justice

Caroline Rees
President
Shift