



## Brazil-Sweden 'dream team' to lead development of ISO's SR standard

by Roger Frost

ISO has assigned the leadership of the working group that will develop an International Standard giving guidelines for social responsibility (SR) collectively to the national standards institutes of Brazil (ABNT) and Sweden (SIS).



**Ricardo Fragoso**, Chief Executive Office and General Director of ABNT, the Brazilian national standards institute.

This twinning of a developing country member of ISO with a developed country is one of the measures being applied by the organization to strengthen the participation of the developing countries that make up 110 out of its total membership of 146.

In a recent message to ISO, United Nations Secretary-General Mr. Kofi Annan welcomed ISO's decision to develop a standard on social responsibility, describing it as "an initiative which dovetails

well with the universal principles of the UN Global Compact on human rights, labour conditions, the environment and anti-corruption."

**Ricardo Fragoso:**  
**'This standard has a great potential to really contribute to making our world a better place to live.'**

The working group on social responsibility will report directly to the ISO Technical Management Board (TMB), which oversees the organization's standards development programme.

ISO will shortly issue a new work item proposal for development of the SR standard to its member bodies. They will have three months to vote on the proposal which will be accepted if approved by a majority of the members voting and a commitment by at least five members to participate actively in the work.

Member bodies who decide to participate will be encouraged to the extent possible to nominate up to six experts, one for each of the following six categories of stakeholders: industry, government, labour, consumers, nongovernmental organizations and others.

At the same time, ISO will issue invitations to a number of international organizations to participate as "liaison organizations" by nominating up to two experts each to serve on the working group. Other interested international or broadly-based regional organizations may apply at any time to participate and such applications will be considered case-by-case by the TMB whose objective is to ensure a balance of stakeholder representation within the working group.

In accordance with the normal ISO working methods, the working group will be charged with developing a draft standard that represents a consensus of the views of the participating expert. At the same time, ISO expects that the member bodies who nominate experts will also establish national "mirror committees" and that these will formulate national positions on the successive drafts developed by the working group.

**The objective is to ensure a balance of stakeholder representation**

The ultimate aim is that the consensus reached in the working group is validated through the ISO member body votes on the draft International Standard (DIS). Although under ISO's rules liaison organizations cannot vote, the rules do provide for their full and formal backing to be sought and ISO will explicitly implement this provision on the



social responsibility standard at both DIS and final draft International Standard (FDIS) stages.

It will be the responsibility of ABNT-SIS to organize and convene the first meeting of the working group. ISO expects the standard to be completed for publication in 2007.

Ricardo Fragoso, General Director of ABNT ([www.abnt.org.br](http://www.abnt.org.br)), commented for *ISO Management Systems*: "We are very glad with the choice of ABNT and SIS since this partnership will run on a road paved by a long history of suc-

cessful cooperation between Brazilian and Swedish enterprises, governments and people.

"Social responsibility has been a major issue in both countries and they have been taking an active part in all discussions on the subject within ISO from the very beginning.

"ABNT and SIS have now the challenging, but pleasurable duty of leading the group of experts that will prepare

(Continued on page 24)

## Kofi Annan's message

The UN Secretary General's remarks on ISO's SR initiative were included in his message to the ISO 27<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, 14-16 September 2004, in Geneva, Switzerland, delivered on his behalf by Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, Director-General, United Nations Office at Geneva.

Mr. Annan stated in his message: "ISO makes a unique contribution in a range of vital areas – health, safety, security, the environment, transport and information technology.

"ISO standards are crucial to sustainable development, as they are a key source of technological know-how, especially for developing countries and economies in transition. They are invaluable in helping countries develop their economies and build capacities to compete on global markets. Producers and consumers everywhere benefit from your efforts.

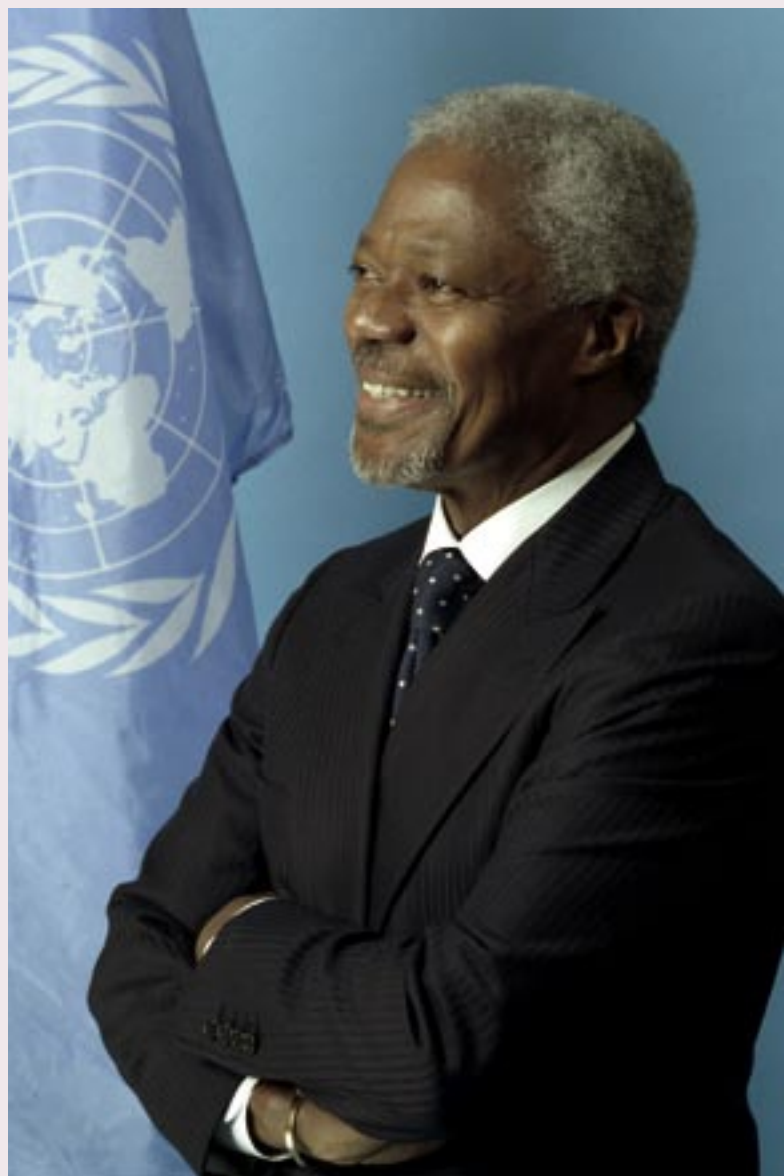
"We know that one of the most effective ways of building bridges between nations is to encourage people to work together towards mutually beneficial goals. It is heartening, therefore, that thousands of women and men of all political convictions, religious beliefs, and national as well as ethnic origins, collaborate within ISO to achieve consensus on standards that make a positive difference to our world.

"That collaboration also characterizes the relationship between ISO and the UN family – a relationship which I hope will grow even stronger in the future. We have a shared interest in the development and dissemination of standards that can help to improve the lives of people everywhere, and in building capacity for standardization activity in developing countries and economies in transition.

**Kofi Annan:**  
**'ISO standards are crucial to sustainable development'**

"Let me also commend ISO for broadening the scope of its work in the area of social and environmental performance. In this way, too, you are making an important contribution towards a more sustainable world. I welcome, in particular, ISO's recent decision to develop a standard on social responsibility – an initiative which dovetails well with the universal principles of the UN Global Compact on human rights, labour conditions, the environment and anti-corruption.

"Since the Compact's principles are derived from international instruments, such as the Universal Declaration of



*United Nations Secretary-General Mr. Kofi Annan has welcomed ISO's decision to develop a standard on social responsibility.*

Human Rights, which already enjoy international consensus, they offer a strong foundation on which to build international standards on social responsibility.

"The United Nations family looks forward to working ever more closely with the International Organization for Standardization for many years to come. I thank you for your commitment to our common mission, and wish you a most productive 27<sup>th</sup> General Assembly."

this so important International Standard on social responsibility, which, I am sure, has a great potential to really contribute to making our world a better place to live.”



*Lars Flink, Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director of SIS, the Swedish Standards Institute.*

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**Lars Flink:**

**‘An objective to achieve,  
not an obstacle to avoid’**

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Lars Flink, Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director of SIS ([www.sis.se](http://www.sis.se)), commented for *ISO Management Systems*: “First of all, to be in charge of this project with our friends in Brazil, ABNT, is an honour for all of us at SIS. We are also well aware that we have a demanding task in front of us. All of us involved are looking forward to co-operating with our ABNT.

“I also would like to emphasize that these standards will be based on voluntariness, consensus and openness. Therefore, the result will not be a restraining limitation, but a self-imposed commitment: more exactly, an objective to achieve, not an obstacle to avoid.” •