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Comments of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) provided at the "Second Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development" held March 7/8, 2011 at UN Headquarters, NYC (intervention made on 7 March at 18h00 under "Session 2 – Green Economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication")

Kevin McKinley, ISO Deputy Secretary-General

"ISO - the International Organization for Standardization - proposes that UNCSD can achieve more rapid progress towards an effective global green economy through the increased use of voluntary, international standardization that is transparent, consensus-based, multi-stakeholder and with implementation that makes use of market forces that encourage organizations to take action - action that fuels and sustains green economy objectives.

As a global NGO comprising the national standardization institutes of 163 countries, ISO is one of a number of organizations well-placed to bridge the interests of public and private sector stakeholders, in both developed and developing countries, to establish coherent international agreement on detailed approaches that address sustainable development issues at the organizational level.

I provide one concrete example - the development of a voluntary standard that provides definitive international terminology and guidance on "social responsibility" - ISO 26000. The Working Group that developed this Standard involved more than 450 participating experts, from 99 countries (most of these developing countries) and 42 international governmental and non-governmental organizations in liaison. These experts came from six specifically identified stakeholder categories of: government, industry, labour, consumers, NGOs and a final category of 'service, support, research and others'. Over five years, these experts addressed more than 26000 international comments that were received on various drafts of the standard.

In the final vote, national members approved the Standard by a resounding margin and ISO 26000 was published on 1 November 2010 providing social responsibility terms and definitions; and guidance on the core subjects which include not only the environment, but also organizational governance, human rights, labour issues, fair operating practices, consumer issues and community involvement and development.

This is one example of how an international, consensus-based, multi-stakeholder standards-setting system can achieve global agreement on the pragmatic implementation of green economy issues at the organizational level. Other examples include International Standards on energy performance, water services, environmental management and greenhouse gas measurement and verification.

In closing, we recommend increased support and promotion of international standardization as a strategic instrument in the tool-box of UNCSD's efforts to enhance global, voluntary actions that can have an important impact on achieving green economy objectives, and the sustainable development objectives of Agenda 21."