

Guest View

Daniel Gagnier

Daniel Gagnier is *Chair of the Board of Directors of the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)*, a Canadian-based, not-for-profit organization founded in 1990.

Chief of Staff to Canadian Premier Jean Charest since September 2007, Mr. Gagnier was previously Alcan Inc.'s Senior Vice President, Corporate and External Affairs. In this role, his responsibilities included corporate communications, government relations, and environment, health and safety.

Prior to joining Alcan in 1994, Mr. Gagnier held a number of positions with the governments of Canada and the Canadian provinces of Ontario and Saskatchewan.

Mr. Gagnier has served as President of the Brewers Association of Canada, Chair of the Board of Directors for Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, Chair of the Canadian Standards Association, Chair of the International Emissions Trading Association, and Director of the Canadian Council on Learning. He was also Chair of ISO technical committee ISO/TC 207, Environmental management, from 2001-2007.

Mr. Gagnier is a graduate of Loyola College and McGill University, and a fellow of the Australian National University in Canberra.



“As someone who has been privileged to work at the intersection of business, standards and sustainable development, I have gained an appreciation of the importance of standards as a fundamental necessity in an increasingly challenging, interdependent global reality.”

ISO Focus: Can you tell us about IISD’s mission and its vision of sustainability? What are the main challenges that must be addressed and how do you view the contribution that ISO can make in this regard?

Dan Gagnier: The IISD vision is simple: “better living for all – sustainably”. Our mission is thus to champion innovation, enabling societies to live in a sustainable manner.

The world is challenged by a changing climate, loss of biodiversity, abject poverty and environmental degradation. What can make a difference? Good ideas, creativity, passion, innovation and the application of standards in order to achieve – in a consistent manner – positive change.

As a policy research institute dedicated to the effective communication of its findings, the IISD engages decision-makers – in government, business, NGOs and other sectors – in the development and implementation of policies that are simultaneously beneficial to the global economy, the global environment and social well-being. Standards are the means to ensure that our actions lead to a better quality of life and to a safer evolution of humankind.

The pursuit of sustainable development requires that attention be paid to the interactions between the environment, society and the economy. As such, IISD explores how the environment is valued; how public policy instruments can be better designed; and how abject poverty can be addressed.

To meet such a broad challenge, each IISD programme includes economic as well as environmental and social inquiry. This interconnected endeavour requires the use of multiple methods and analytical tools. Economics is increasingly interconnected with other fields of inquiry, thus providing fertile ground for research on how environmental and social issues are affected by our economic choices and vice versa.

ISO helps us improve our ability to apply the results of this research in the best possible way across cultures, jurisdictions and governmental responsibilities.

Championing sustainable development



Reporting at the Commission on Sustainable Development, United Nations, New York, USA.
(Photograph courtesy of IISD/Earth Negotiations Bulletin)

In short, International Standards are indispensable to our ability to execute and operationalize our findings. We can even say that sustainable development and International Standards are a synergistic combination.

“Sustainable development and International Standards: a synergistic combination.”

ISO Focus : *The recent economic crisis has shed light on the weaknesses of our current economic model. SMART, an IISD initiative, looks at how to promote sustainable markets and responsible trade, addressing, among other things, the role of International Standards. Can you tell us more about SMART? How, in your view, do ISO standards contribute to supporting more sustainable economic markets? What role can they play in addressing the current recession?*

Dan Gagnier : The Sustainable Markets and Responsible Trade (SMART) initiative aims to improve the sustainability of international trade by promoting economies of scale, efficiency, equity and transparency in the design and implementation of standards and voluntary initiatives.

These initiatives can set rules for production, processing, trade, transport, marketing, etc. To the extent that they establish common conditions for market participation across multiple supply chain players, they operate in a manner analogous to public policy and legislation. Good governance across such initiatives is key to ensuring that they have a positive impact on sustainable development.

Through its direct work with standards and voluntary initiatives, IISD's SMART programme promotes transparency, inclusiveness and continual improvement in their design and implementation. These are, simply put, pre-conditions as we position our economies to be better performing entities while we rebound out of this global recession and financial crisis.

ISO Focus : *IISD is actively involved in the development of ISO 26000 on social responsibility. Can you tell us why IISD seized the opportunity to participate, and the value that it sees in the final deliverable? What impression has this first-hand experience with the ISO standards development system made, and how has it shaped IISD's understanding of the challenges of international standardization?*

Dan Gagnier : ISO 26000 on social responsibility is a major contribution to the humanization of the standards offering. The experience, from an IISD perspective, reminds us that our common mission is to better the condition of the human community while preserving our planet for the benefit of the present and, most importantly, future generations.

As many more organizations decide that they must address the principles of corporate social responsibility (CSR), there is a growing need for tools to help them define and address what CSR means and how to implement it throughout their organizations.

At its General Assembly in Stockholm, Sweden, in September 2002, ISO decided that the time had come to consider the value of developing management standards on CSR. This resolution recognized the value of the ISO 14001 environmental management systems standard in improving the efficiency of

Established in 1990, the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) is a Canadian-based, not-for-profit organization with a diverse team of 150 people located in more than 30 countries. Through its portfolio of projects, IISD partners with over 200 organizations throughout the world.

The Institute contributes to sustainable development by advancing policy recommendations on international trade and investment, economic policy, climate change and energy, measurement and assessment, and sustainable natural resources management.

With a focus on effective communication and a commitment to electronic communications technology to share knowledge and build relationships, IISD makes maximum use of the Internet to report on international negotiations and to share knowledge gained through collaborative projects with global partners, resulting in more rigorous research, capacity building in developing countries, and better dialogue between North and South.

IISD receives core operating support from the Government of Canada, provided through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Environment Canada, and from the Province of Manitoba. The Institute receives project funding from numerous governments inside and outside Canada, United Nations agencies, foundations, and the private sector.

www.iisd.org

corporate environmental management, and was built on a report prepared by the ISO Committee on consumer policy on the value of CSR standards.

Through their collaboration, this wider group is providing advisory input to IISD while working to build understanding on key issues surrounding ISO's

organizations that are often excluded from the development of social responsibility standards

- Equitable and effective engagement of producers based in developing countries, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises that are so important in the economies of many low-income and middle-income countries
- The standard should not : discriminate against small producers, become a discriminatory barrier to market access, restrict innovation
- The standard must be flexible in its ability to respond to the rapid pace of developments in the social responsibility agenda more broadly, without locking in a "status quo" that is likely to become quickly outmoded.

Together, and with the support of the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), IISD has been a major contributor to the development of ISO 26000, *Guidance on social responsibility*.

The IISD report *How material is ISO 26000 Social Responsibility to Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs)?* is based on a global survey of SMEs and national cleaner production centres.

ISO Focus : *Climate change and energy efficiency are oft-cited challenges to sustainability. What is your view on the contribution that ISO's numerous standards – on environmental management, energy efficiency, renewable sources, biofuels, measuring carbon footprints, etc. – can make in this regard? What value has IISD seen in its participation in ISO/TC 207?*

Dan Gagnier : As companies and others revise their business models to move towards the monetization of carbon in order to meet the challenges of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and climate change impacts, IISD is dedicated to identifying and promoting innovative solutions that support the transition to a clean, secure and sustainable future.

Our approach seeks to bring together developing and developed country issues; corporate and social needs; energy and environment priorities; mitigation



Getting ice,
Banks Island,
Northwest Territories,
Canada.

(Photograph courtesy
of IISD)

As part of its participation in the work of ISO's strategic advisory group on CSR¹⁾, IISD committed itself to helping other organizations get involved and become aware of the implications of ISO work in this area. In turn, we have engaged in a partnership with leading NGOs from around the world.

1) Having successfully completed its task, ISO Technical Management Board's strategic advisory group on corporate social responsibility was disbanded in 2004. The ISO working group on social responsibility (ISO/WG SR) was created shortly thereafter: www.iso.org/sr

potential entry into social responsibility. A key objective is for each of the partners to begin to build a debate in their own country and among their own constituencies on the pros and cons of engagement and the substantive content of any ISO social responsibility standard.

There is an urgent need to widen discussion and engagement around ISO's role in social responsibility. Each partner recognizes a need for ISO's engagement in the agenda to be conditional on progress in a number of key areas, including :

- Equitable representation of civil society from the South and the North – to include voices of community-based



(Photograph courtesy of Anne Hammill/IISD)

an appreciation of the importance of standards as a fundamental necessity in an increasingly challenging, interdependent global reality.

Industry understands the value of standards, even if they take them for granted too often. The marriage between continuous improvement and the evolution of standards is a value-laden proposition on which industry can lead. The alternative is to abdicate its leadership, in which case governments and regulators will have no choice but to impose solutions as citizens become more demanding in the articulation of their needs.

“Standards are the means to ensure that our actions lead to a better quality of life and a safer evolution of human kind.”

ISO Focus : Looking ahead, it is clear that much has to change in terms of how we live and do business in order to promote a truly sustainable world. How should we envision the future partnership of IISD and ISO to meet this goal?

Dan Gagnier : The type of partnership and virtual alliances represented by the IISD, ISO and other organizations represents the mobility of capacity and know-how to provide better information, more pertinent analysis and better solutions in a world that is in search of solutions. Our shared responsibility is to provide solutions, to put in place the tools that will anchor sustainable development in order to ensure the economic, and social well-being of our peoples, and to secure the quality of the planet we share. In plain words, the partnership has to be maintained and continually renewed. NASA’s slogan for Apollo 13 applies in these circumstances : “Failure is not an option”.

Men talking in a training session on the use of CRiSTAL, a screening tool that helps the developers and managers of rural livelihoods and ecosystem management projects in developing countries ensure that their work contributes to reducing the vulnerability of communities to the impacts of climate change.

and adaptation strategies; and economic, social and environmental well-being.

Actively engaged in the international climate change arena since the signing of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in 1992, IISD’s unique perspective and effectiveness have earned the institute recognition as an international and national leader in climate change policy research.

We are on the cusp of a very innovative decade in which the work done meticulously by both the ISO and the IISD on climate change and related standards will fulfil their potential to help clear thinking on the nature of both the mitigation and adaptation requirements that challenge us.

We cannot revert to living in caves, nor can we condemn developing country burgeoning populations to aspire to less prosperity. We are constrained to pushing positive change to innovate through technology and to do so while preserving our resources and coping with the stresses on the planet we share. Research to provide clarity and consensus based on facts rather than opinions, and standards to provide a turntable and a toolkit to ensure consistency of application should be non-negotiable.

ISO Focus : Given your previous experience in industry, as well as your familiarity with the ISO system (as former Chair of ISO/TC 207, Environmental

management, and of the ISO advisory group on social responsibility), you are in a position to both fully understand the requirements of industry as well as what ISO has to offer. What advice would you give to industry on how to best take advantage of the solutions that ISO standards provide to address the economic, environmental and social dimensions of sustainability?

Dan Gagnier : As someone who has been privileged to work at the intersection of business, standards and sustainable development, I have gained

Fairtrade coffee producer in San Martín, Peru.

(Photograph courtesy of Kathleen Sexsmith/IISD)

