

Dear AccountAbility Management Team,

Re: Clarification for the AA1000SES revision finalisation

We are writing to seek clarification on the completion process to go from the **AA1000SES (2011) Final Exposure Draft** to a published **AA1000SES (2011)**.

With due concern for our mandate as the Technical Committee (TC) for the AA1000SES (see <http://www.accountability.org/images/content/0/0/008.pdf> and reproduced in **Note 1** below of this letter) and following the clear statement from AccountAbility Management upon our invitation to join the TC:

“AccountAbility’s new AA1000 governance structure was formally constituted on October 21, 2009. The new governance structure is comprised of an independent Standards Board and two Technical Committees. The new structure will ensure the independence of the AA1000 standards and play an important role in building on the recent successful developments to the standards. This new governance structure is crucial in ensuring AA1000 standards retain their identity as internationally accepted, credible, multi-stakeholder standards. It will also help push the standards to the next level in terms of international understanding and influence. AccountAbility will remain the secretariat of the AA1000 standards.

*At the heart of the new governance structure is a new independent AA1000 Standards Board. The Board is multi-stakeholder in nature and will strive for geographic representation. The Board will have decision-making power in relation to the standards strategy and development. Financial decision making will remain with the AccountAbility Partnership.” **Note 2.***

and given that the Standards Board felt that the current direction of AccountAbility Management forced them to recently resign as captured in AccountAbility Management’s words:

*“While we shared the mutual goal of strengthening Standards, there were fundamental disagreements between AccountAbility’s Management Team and the Standards Board over the future governance of the Standards function, the propriety of certain Board members and others in leadership positions maintaining competing business interests, and ongoing concerns about breaches of independence. As a result, AccountAbility’s Management Team deemed that the viability of the Standards Board was untenable.” **Note 3,***

and observing AccountAbility Management’s recent statement that you intend to create a strategy development “nomination committee” comprised of eight members, four of which will be representing AccountAbility (4 AccountAbility + 4 Independent Members) **Note 4,**

we need to know the following:

1. If, as can be interpreted by the above, AccountAbility is no longer focused on fulfilling its role in the development of the standard as exclusively providing ‘stewardship and secretariat’, can you please tell us who is now fulfilling this primary role? The Stewardship role is essential not only to support the engagement process for the Standard’s TC, but also to assist in preserving the legitimacy of the AA1000 and to act as a neutral convening platform to which those individuals and organizations who are developing the standard

can convene under a multi-stakeholder governance and continue to freely share their resources and experience.

2. Does AccountAbility Management Team wish to urgently support the reconvening of an independent multi-stakeholder Standards Board that is crucial to provide independent direction and to protect the credibility and brand of the AA1000 series and of all the work and resources the TC and other stakeholders have invested in this?

To fulfil our mandate, the AA1000SES TC requests that we:

3. Review all the final comments that have been received on the AA1000SES (2011) Final Exposure Draft and incorporate those that are in line with our mandate.
4. Approve the document as required by our mandate.
5. Support the stakeholders of the AA1000SES in its proliferation.
6. Continue our mandate on further developments linked to the finalised AA1000SES, (guidance notes, wiki-hub, etc, as mentioned in the introduction to the standard).

It is our understanding that the deadline for the AA1000SES (2011) to be published is already past, and therefore, to protect the credibility and integrity of all the work done to date under the development process agreed with AccountAbility and other stakeholders in late 2009, we feel an urgency to finalise steps 3. to 5. as soon as possible.

We ask you that we focus on these steps together this week and we need to receive from you:

7. The comments received during the final review period which terminated 4th February 2011.
8. The final document as per our November 2010 TC meeting in London plus the comments as track changes (or we can do this on the document if this is not yet done by the secretariat).
9. A mutually agreed date for publication for the very near future; a publication date for say the end of February would already be over two months later than that discussed in 2010 and expected by our stakeholders.

So that we can realistically finalise the publication in the very near future, and so remove the standard from its current limbo, can you please provide us with a clear response to 1 and 2 above by Thursday 17th February 2011 (the short deadline reflects that this process was already agreed in writing in 2009). Can we please also agree the deadline for points 7 to 9 by Friday 18th February 2011.

From our side we commit to fulfil our mandate and to support you and all other organisations who wish to work for the successful proliferation of the AA1000 series. **We firmly believe that we now need to focus together on the above so as not to risk further losing credibility towards our stakeholders and the large investment of many individuals and organisations in the multi-stakeholder supported creation of the AA1000SES.**

Yours sincerely,

The Technical Committee of the AA1000SES.
15th February 2011.

Notes to this letter:

Note 1: Mandate of the AA1000SES TC:

“The mandate of a *Technical Committee* shall be to oversee the development of the technical content of the AA1000 Series. There may be different technical committees for different elements of the AA1000 Series. Each technical committee shall,

1. Guide the development of the AA1000 Series standards agreed by the Standards Board;
2. Ensure the technical quality of all AA1000 Series standards and the formal Guidance Notes that support the standards;
3. Follow the standards development procedure approved and stewarded by the Standards Board
4. Recommend to the Standards Board the approval of AA1000 Series standards; and
5. Have the opportunity to comment on ‘secondary’ AA1000 Series publications, including user notes, research reports, discussion papers, web-based forums.”

Note 2: from the formal personal invitation from the Accountability Management Team to members of the Technical Committee in late 2009.

Note 3: from the AccountAbility Management Team to AA1000 stakeholders on 15th January 2011.

Note 4: from the presentation during AccountAbility’s Outreach this past week by the AccountAbility Management Team.