

To
The Board of Directors of
AccountAbility

AccountAbility
Standards Board
250 – 252 Goswell Road
London EC1V 7EB

11 January, 2011

Dear Directors of AccountAbility,

It is with extreme regret that the Standards Board (SB) of AccountAbility (AA) has collectively decided to resign.

The SB was established in late 2009 to act as guardians and promoters of the AA1000 standards. Its members believe the standards are a relevant and important vehicle for building sustainability principles into organisations' practices. Safeguarding credibility and trust in the standards has been the overriding objective for the SB.

However, during 2010, discussions between AA's senior management team and the SB regarding the nature of the AA1000 standards as a public good and the need for multi-stakeholder governance and clear independence of standards from AA's commercial activities have left us convinced that we can no longer effectively exercise our mandate under the SB Terms of Reference. While we fully respect the need for AA to operate a sustainable business model for the organisation, as the SB we have tried to ensure that the credibility and independence of the standards are not placed at risk in this context.

Furthermore, we have noted with great concern the resignation of the remaining Governing Council members in November of 2010, resulting from lack of responsiveness by AA's senior management team to their requests for dialogue, and the resignation in December of David Simpson, the Director of Standards, whose role was also to support the work of the SB.

In accordance with sections 2.4 and 4.2 of the SB Terms of Reference, we engaged with the Director of Standards regarding our concerns during the Autumn. However, we were disturbed to learn that this contact was later restricted by the AA senior management team, without this (and the underlying reasons) being communicated directly from the senior management team to the SB members. We believe that in his contacts with the SB the Director acted in good faith to implement his terms of reference inside AA and to support the AA 1000 standards' development within its current governance structure.

Given the loss of trust between the parties, and the SB's lack of confidence that AA senior management team will give sufficient and constructive consideration to concerns expressed by the broader AA1000 user community regarding governance, credibility and independence of standards, we have concluded that our role as the SB and as representatives of the broader AA1000 stakeholder community is no longer meaningful.

The resignation of the SB is in no way prompted by a lack of confidence in the future importance of the standards. Indeed, trends in the market place are placing more relevance on further development of the standards, and it remains the hope of the individual members of the SB that the present difficulties can be overcome quickly, so that the users of the standards can be assured that the standards will continue to be supported and enhanced.

Please remove the names of the SB members from your website and any other communications where they are listed. Please also adjust your description of governance at AccountAbility to acknowledge the resignation and the reasons for the resignation of the SB and the Council.

The SB will share the news of its resignation with relevant stakeholders.

Yours sincerely,

Jermyn P Brooks, Chair
Helena Barton
Richard Boele
Olaf Brugman
James Farrar
Alan Knight
Anant Nadkarni
Kazatuka Okubo
Carsten Schmitz-Hoffmann