

**Seventh Intergovernmental Group of Experts on
Consumer Law and Policy
Room XIX, Palais des Nations, Geneva
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**Roundtable:
Consumer protection and the transition to clean energy**

Presentation

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The role of standards in protecting and empowering consumers for a sustainable future

Julie Hunter

ISO's Consumer Policy Committee (COPOLCO)

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Public

iso.org

We all recognize the need for swift action and meaningful changes in behaviour



**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS**



All world citizens have a right to a healthy, equitable and sustainable future, including those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged.

- Global challenges require global solutions
- Implementation of all three is essential to ensure a sustainable future for all world citizens

Who's responsible for driving change?

Research shows that consumers want to be more sustainable BUT cannot make meaningful changes to behaviour without the right help, support and protection.

UNGCP recognize important role of:

- Governments
- Legal systems
- National policies
- Regulatory frameworks
- Good business practices
- **Voluntary standards**

Consumer protection 'toolkit'

Together these tools can build foundations, set rules and define best practice to empower and protect consumers



Need to choose the right tool for the job – each has strengths and limitations

Standards promote responsible business practices, which are critical to delivery of UNGCP and SDG goals

Voluntary standards can set good practice for responsible businesses to:

- Think about sustainability at all stages of **product lifecycle** and **consumer journeys**
- Adopt **ethical behaviour** and sustainable patterns of **production** and **consumption**
- Enable consumers to make **informed choices** about 'green' products/services
- **Protect** consumers/society from negative impacts of organizational behaviour

Can be certified by independent third party

Standards can cover:

- Design
- Procurement
- Manufacture
- Packaging and materials

- Information and labelling
- Comparative testing
- Monitoring and assessment
- End of life – recycling, disposal

Advantages of standards over other 'tools'

Multi-stakeholder approach - obligation to include all relevant stakeholders, including consumer and societal (WTO and NSB)

Consensus – content developed by working groups, which must reach shared agreement on content

Sustained opposition – formal process for objection

Detailed requirements/guidance - to improve quality, safety, accessibility and SUSTAINABILITY – **PROVIDING THE 'HOW'**

Defined process – opportunity for public comment and regular review – quicker/easier to amend than legislation

Consumer stakeholders have a right to:

- Participate
- Be heard
- Formally 'object'
- Input at key stages

Standards response to climate crisis

The London Declaration 2021

- ISO's Climate Commitment - 165 countries
- Promise to: 'embed key climate considerations into every new and revised standard'

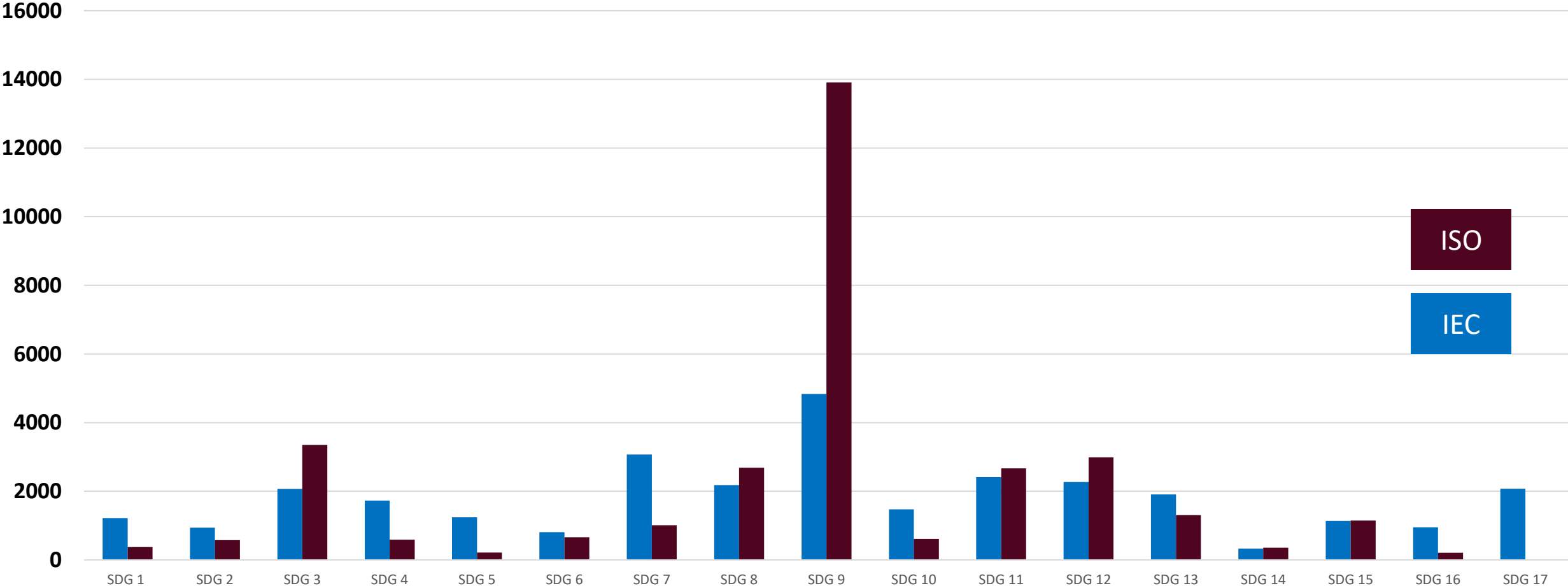
Actions to date...

- ISO/IEC mapping of standards related to SDGs
- Top 100 sustainability standards with greatest impact
- ISO online SDG search tool
- COPOLCO Plenary May 2023 - Focus on Sustainability



International standards mapped to SDGs

www.iso.org/sdgs



Standards relevant to clean energy.....some examples

- **Organizational management** - governance, procurement, operation
- **Buildings** - design, construction, materials
- **Transport** - electric vehicles, emissions
- **Renewable Energy** - solar, wind power
- **Services** - sustainable events, finance, tourism
- **Products** - use of energy in manufacturing process and energy efficiency of appliances

And many more.....

Sustainability standards can protect consumers across a range of sectors breaking down barriers to changing behaviour



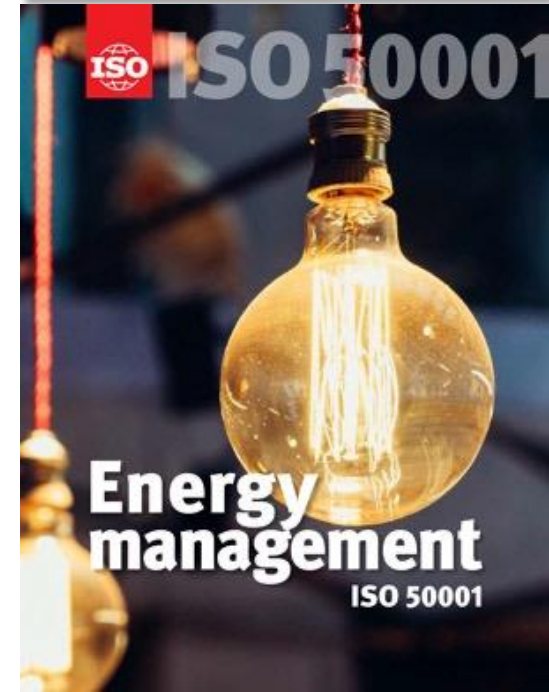
1047 ISO/IEC standards relate to SDG 7 – Clean Energy



1) 'Big picture' overarching standards

Standards can:

- Help organizations manage their impact on the environment and meet sustainability goals e.g. by giving detail about how to reduce emissions, waste, energy and water consumption.
- IWA 42: 2022 - NetZero Guidelines #COP27
- ISO 26000: 2010 - Social Responsibility
- ISO 50001: 2018 – Energy Management Systems
- ISO 14001: 2015 – Environmental Management Systems



2) Sustainable production and consumption

Standards can:

- Improve consumer access to clean energy alternatives for homes and transport
- Help organizations improve sustainability of everyday consumer goods/services, making green choices easier.



For example.....

- Energy smart appliances
- Electric vehicles
- Clean cookstoves

Need more standards that focus on sustainable consumption

Clean cookstoves and clean cooking solutions



Health, pollution - protecting consumers in developing countries

3) Green claims, information and labelling (1/2)



Multiple marks and logos
lead to consumer
confusion?!??

40%

Online green claims from
companies across sectors
found to be exaggerated,
false or deceptive, and
potentially unfair
commercial practices

Data: International Consumer Protection
Enforcement Network (2021)

“We must have zero
tolerance for net-zero
greenwashing”

António Guterres, UN Secretary General



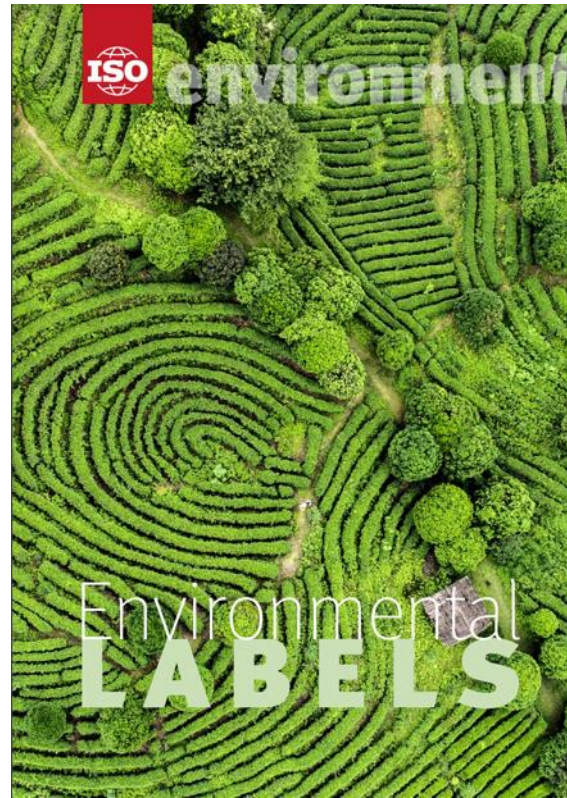
3. Green claims, information and labelling (2/2)

Standards can:

- Set requirements for clear, consistent, comparable, trustworthy information
- Reduce risk of consumer harm from false and misleading green claims
- Help consumers to make informed choices e.g. about energy use and performance

Existing standards

- ISO 14020 series - Environmental labels and declarations
- ISO/TS 17033 - Ethical claims and supporting information



New proposal for ISO standard for online green claims

- ‘Born in’ COPOLCO – consumer focus
- How to substantiate and communicate green claims used in e-commerce
- Based on One Planet Network guidelines



Effective consumer participation in standards is vital

Consumer and societal stakeholders must be at the heart of standards.

Consumer participation creates standards that:

- ✓ **Benefit consumers** by reflecting priorities, needs, behaviour, experiences of real people
- ✓ **Help organizations** deliver safer, fairer, more sustainable goods and services
- ✓ **Help governments, regulators, policy makers** achieve consumer protection and sustainability goals

COPOLCO – link between grassroots consumer voice and ISO standards

COPOLCO Chairs Advisory Group
consumer policy, direct influence to ISO governance and agenda – link with IGE

Valuable international collaboration and coordination of consumer interests **must be supported and strengthened at NATIONAL level**

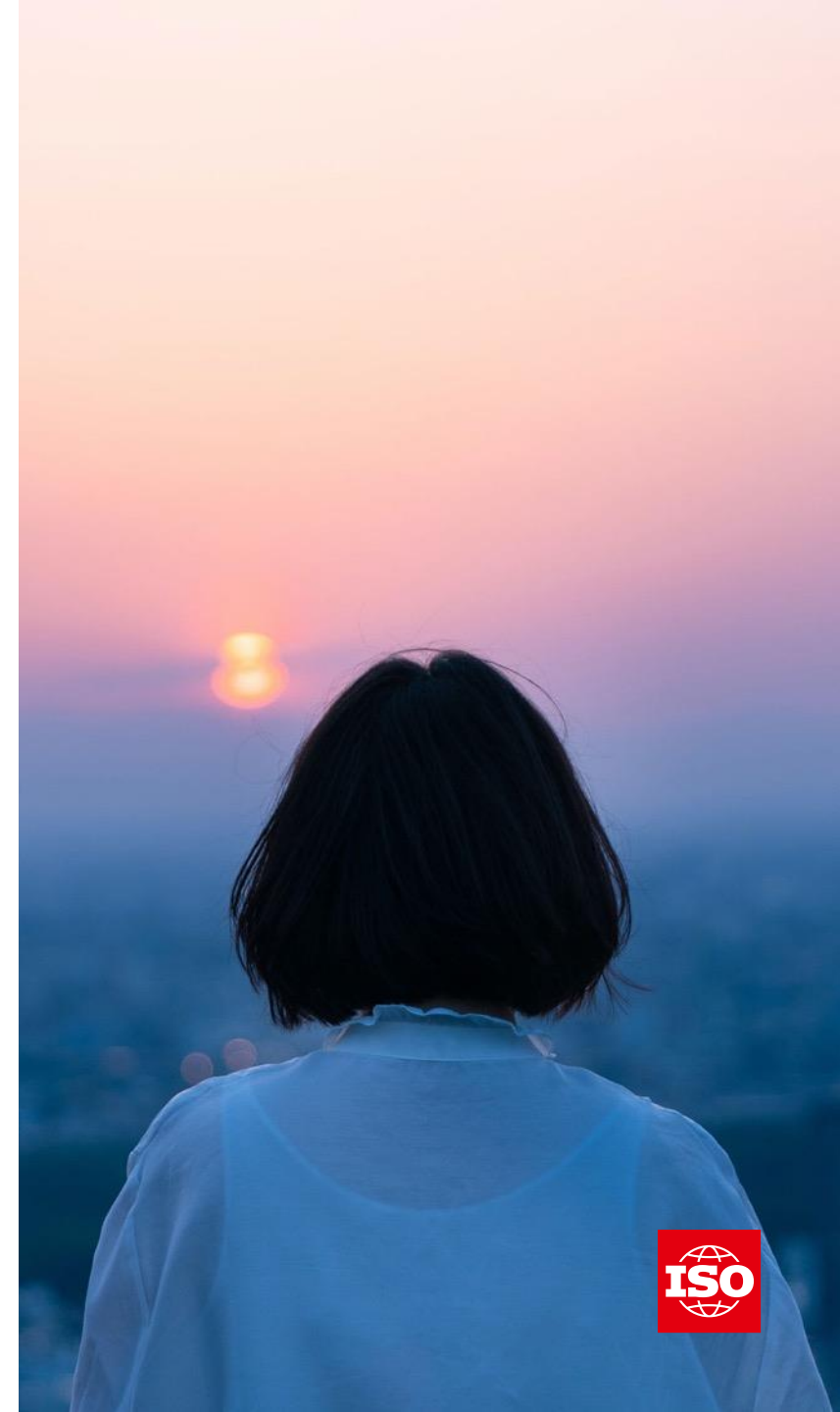


Looking to the future

Consumer experts – please get involved with **COPOLCO** and your **National Standards Body** to help shape sustainability standards of the future!

- Identify gaps in standardization
- Propose standards solutions and ideas for new work
- Advocate for consumer interests
- Strengthen consumer voice – national and global
- Deliver standards that genuinely empower and protect consumers

Find out more about COPOLCO: www.iso.org/copolco





Thank you.

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