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First edition  
2008-05-01

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## **Sustainability in building construction — General principles**

*Développement durable dans la construction — Principes généraux*



Reference number  
ISO 15392:2008(E)

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Published in Switzerland

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## Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

International Standards are drafted in accordance with the rules given in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2.

The main task of technical committees is to prepare International Standards. Draft International Standards adopted by the technical committees are circulated to the member bodies for voting. Publication as an International Standard requires approval by at least 75 % of the member bodies casting a vote.

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights.

ISO 15392 was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 59, *Building construction*, Subcommittee SC 17, *Sustainability in building construction*.

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## Introduction

This International Standard presents general principles of sustainability related to buildings and other construction works. These general principles form the basis for a suite of standards intended to address specific issues and aspects of sustainability relevant to building and civil engineering of construction works.

The issue of sustainable development is broad and of global concern, and, as such, involves all communities and interested parties. Both current and future needs define the extent to which economic, environmental and social aspects are considered in a sustainable development process.

The built environment (buildings and civil engineering works) is a key element in determining quality of life, and contributes to cultural identity and heritage. As such, it is an important factor in the appreciation of the quality of the environment in which society lives and works.

The building and construction sector is highly important for sustainable development because:

- it is a key sector in national economies;
- it has a significant interface with poverty reduction through the basic economic and social services provided in the built environment and the potential opportunities for the poor to be engaged in construction, operation and maintenance;
- it is one of the single largest industrial sectors and, while providing value and employment, it absorbs considerable resources, with consequential impacts on economic and social conditions and the environment;
- it creates the built environment, which represents a significant share of the economic assets of individuals, organizations and nations, providing societies with their physical and functional environment;
- it has considerable opportunity to show improvement relative to its economic, environmental and social impacts.

Construction activities may or may not take place within a legal and regulatory, or other administrative framework present within a country or region. In either case, aspects of governance are relevant to sustainable development, in addition to those aspects related specifically to building construction. Well established administrative frameworks may contain requirements that can act as drivers and help to move the building and construction sector towards sustainability.

Over their life cycle, construction works absorb considerable resources and contribute to the transformation of areas. As a result, they can have considerable economic consequences, and impacts to the environment and human health.

While the challenge of sustainable development is global, the strategies for addressing sustainability in building construction are essentially local and differ in context and content from region to region. These strategies will reflect the context, the preconditions and the priorities and needs, not only in the built environment, but also in the social environment. This social environment includes social equity, cultural issues, traditions, heritage issues, human health and comfort, social infrastructure and safe and healthy environments. It may, in addition, particularly in developing countries, include poverty reduction, job creation, access to safe, affordable and healthy shelter, and loss of livelihoods.

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Applying the principles of sustainability in building construction, including all related processes and activities, requires the direct and responsible involvement of all interested parties. While their legal responsibility and liability is subject to national or regional regulation, individual commitment and responsibility is voluntary. Nevertheless, this commitment is a basic principle of the application of sustainable development, including application in the building and construction sector.

Applying the concept of sustainability to specific buildings or other construction works includes an holistic approach, bringing together the global concerns and goals of sustainable development and the demands and requirements in terms of product functionality, efficiency and economy. Different target audiences will have a different perspective on these challenges and the preferred solutions.

This International Standard establishes internationally recognized principles for sustainability in building construction and establishes a common basis for communication of the information required. Interested parties, such as product manufacturers and designers will then be able to provide information. Such information can then be communicated internationally and to a wide range of target audiences, extending from policy makers and regulators to manufacturers, building owners and consumers.

The recipients of information can elaborate and interpret information according to their own perspective, reflecting other aspects of decision making, including fields of responsibility or constraints.

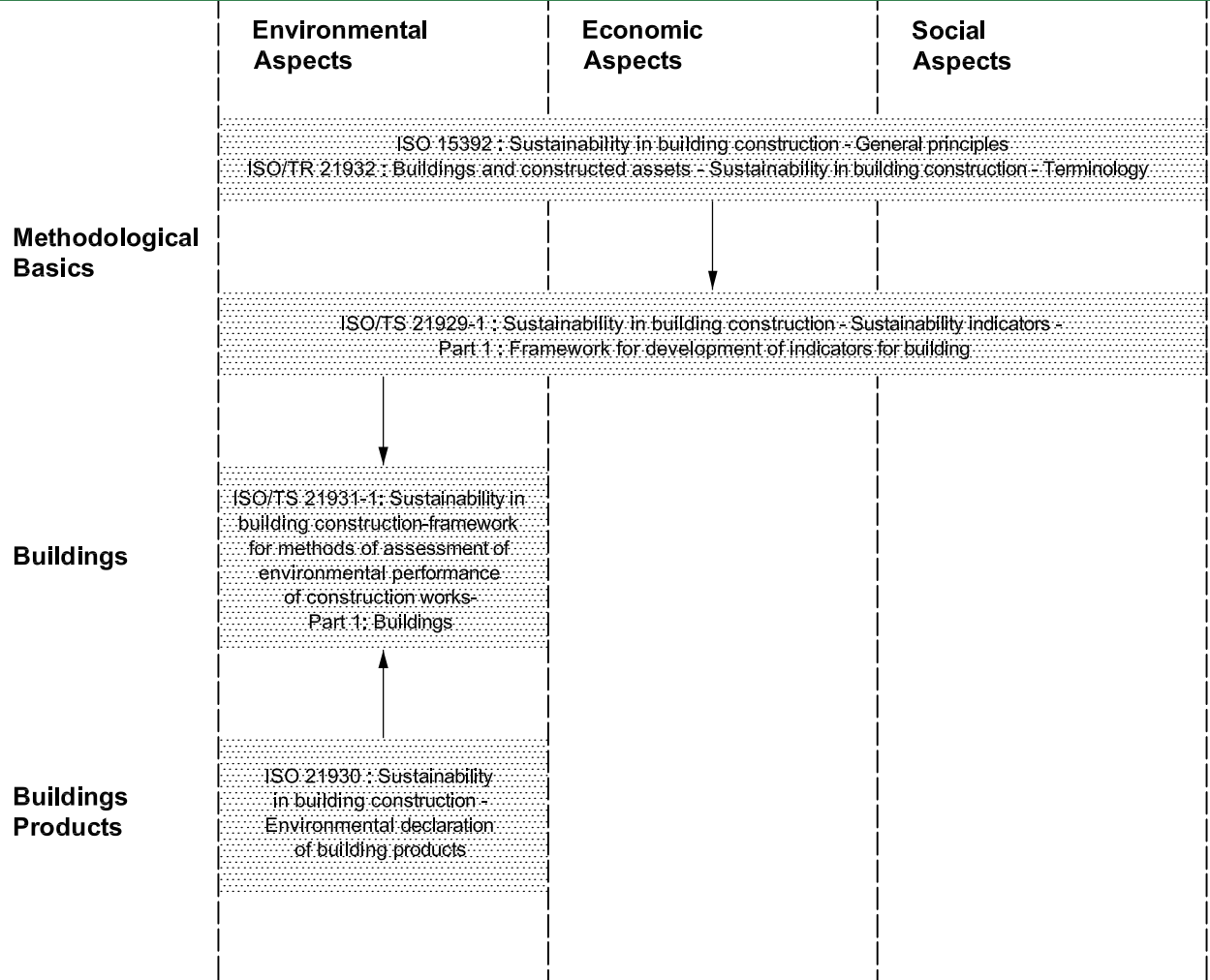
The concepts involved in sustainability are highly complex and under constant study. There are no definitive methods for measuring sustainability or confirming its accomplishment. These general principles do not provide a benchmark against which a claim of sustainability can be made. Nevertheless, they may be useful when considering the completeness and validity of claims of, or calls for, sustainability.

The aim of this International Standard is to set out the objectives for sustainability in building construction and from these derives general principles. For the current standardization work, see Figure 1. This International Standard forms the basis for deriving evaluation criteria and indicators for the assessment of the contribution of buildings to sustainable development, and it enables decision makers to apply the principles in their decision making.

This International Standard does not set the political agendas, or provide priorities related to specific concerns which are established in international agendas, e.g. Agenda 21. However, requirements and targets related to political goals can be related to the identified general principles for sustainability in building construction.

This International Standard is not intended to provide the basis for assessment of organizations or other stakeholders, but does acknowledge the importance of their role in the context of sustainability in building construction.

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**Figure 1 — Suite of related International Standards for sustainability in buildings and construction works**

NOTE For a description of the suite of International Standards, see Annex A. This suite of standards currently contains the documents indicated in Figure 1.

Intended users of the suite of International Standards include (in alphabetical order): builders, certification bodies, clients, contractors, designers, facility managers, fund providers, governmental and non-governmental organizations associated with the United Nations (NGOs), insurers, manufacturers, owners, planners, policy makers, promoters, real estate agents, regulators, researchers, standards developers, users (tenants as well as public), etc.