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Statement from John Graham, Convener JTC1 WG6 Corporate Governance of IT

The recent notification (N 9447) from the Secretariat of JTC1 invites National Bodies and Liaison Organisations to join the new ISO/IEC JTC1 Working Group 6 – Corporate Governance of IT, and to nominate representatives for the Working Group. This working group is independent of any Sub Committee and reports directly to JTC1.

This exciting development provides a new and different forum for the development of standards and other documents within the scope of the Corporate Governance of IT. It enables the working group to build on the success of the first international Corporate Governance of IT standard, ISO/IEC 38500:2008.

The purpose of this document is to provide some context for the group and guidance on the expertise that is sought in order to produce documents and standards that will be relevant, appropriate and well-accepted.

As part of the working group's brief it will be held to the principles set out in the Study Group report that resulted in the formation of the working group. These are:

“All standards within the domain of the Corporate Governance of IT:

- should be anchored in accepted fundamental concepts of Corporate Governance such as those of the OECD;
- should be equally applicable to large and small organisations, both public and private, profit and not for profit;
- should be “principles based” wherever appropriate and sensible;
- should be as short and simple as appropriate;
- must use a common vocabulary with clear definitions;
- must conform to a common framework (e.g. Evaluate, Direct, Monitor) for both individual documents and sets of documents;
- must be both internally and externally consistent, external consistency should be with other relevant products;
- should be able to be applied on a consistent basis without prescribing a particular organisation or process;
- must clearly show objectives and minimise exceptions.”

These principles will guide the working group's document development work and provide a framework for a unique set of documents.

One of the first tasks the working group has been charged with is the development of a model defining the relationships of corporate governance in the area of IT and, critically, its relationships with management. The working group has the opportunity to define and develop concepts that will enable it to remove some of the ambiguities surrounding the ideas of governance and management.

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The working group is not dealing with highly technical IT matters. In order to perform its tasks effectively, the working group needs expertise that spans both business and IT perspectives. The working group needs people who have hands-on practical experience in corporate governance, executive management and senior management roles as well as consultants and academic researchers. The working group also needs expertise in public administration and, at the other end of the scale, small and medium enterprises. It is important to ensure that there is credible and visible input from both the IT and business perspectives so that the authority of the documents produced is recognised by the target audience.

The working group should reflect the diversity of cultures and legislative structures, and it should reflect the diversity of opinion about standards and their application.