New Certification Program Addresses Aluminum Sustainability

Interview with Dr. Fiona Solomon, ASI

The Aluminium Stewardship Initiative (ASI), formed in 2009, is a global organization aimed at developing and implementing standards and certifications in order to provide an accurate means of measuring the overall stainability of the aluminum industry. The organization recently launched its first certification program for the aluminum value chain, following almost six years of multi-stakeholder discussions and standards-setting work. The certification is focused on assessing whether companies meet standards for responsible production, sourcing, and stewardship of aluminum.

Dr. Fiona Solomon (Figure 1) joined ASI as ceo in 2015 in order to establish the program as a legal entity and develop this formal certification program. In her career, she has specialized in growing new and innovative initiatives in mineral supply chains, including serving ten years at Australia's CSIRO, leading research into mining and sustainability. In this interview, Solomon discusses ASI's intended role in the aluminum industry, and provides an overview of the programs the organization is offering.

Figure 1. Dr. Fiona Solomon.

How was the ASI formed? What is the organizational structure and who are the main players?

A group of stakeholders came together in 2009 to explore 'responsible aluminum,' and in 2012 a number of those initiated a standards-setting program coordinated by International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), a non-governmental organization based in Geneva, Switzerland. Following a multi-stakeholder and consultative process, the ASI Performance Standard was published in late 2014. When I joined in 2015, the first priority was to incorporate as a not-for-profit organization and establish the formal governance model. ASI was established as a registered charity in Australia with an international membership, and is governed by an elected board, with standards work overseen by an elected Standards Committee.

What is the main objective of ASI?

Our vision is to maximize the contribution of aluminum to a sustainable society. Our mission is to recognize and collaboratively foster responsible production, sourcing, and stewardship of aluminum. We aim to do this through ASI's independent certification program against standards for sustainability performance and chain of custody of metal, to create market drivers for action in these areas.

How many members does ASI have? Does the organization hold annual meetings? Are these open to non-members?

As of January 2018, ASI has 60 members. We hold meetings that include an annual general meeting for members and general sessions open to all interested stakeholders. To support our global outreach, we hold these in different regions with a connection to the aluminum value chain each year. In 2018, our meetings will be held in Perth, Australia, and will include site visits to a bauxite mine and alumina refinery.

How has ASI progressed since it was launched?

From 2015-2017, we were focused on building both the new entity and its governance, and developing the technical program of standards, assurance, and desired impacts. We formally launched the ASI certification program in December 2017, meeting our planned timeline. In 2018, we will be launching educationAl, our training and support program for the certification process and beyond. We expect the first ASI certifications by mid-2018.

In early 2017, the organization introduced an online assurance platform, known as elementAl. What aid or benefits does it provide for those who access it?

ASI's assurance platform, elementAl, is essentially an online application that streamlines the certification process for both ASI members and auditors, and centralizes the information flow. It takes members through an initial self-assessment process against ASI's standards and then enables this information to be shared pre-audit with the company's appointed auditors, enhancing efficiency and preparation on both sides. It also features a built-in Help Desk, where the ASI team can quickly respond to questions and issues.

ASI's certification program for the aluminum value chain was launched in December 2017. Tell us about this program and how it works.

Certification programs are built on assurance of performance against agreed standards. ASI's two standards are a Performance Standard, covering a broad range of sustainability issues, and a Chain of Custody Standard, which connects this to the flow of aluminum through certified entities, enabling claims about responsibly produced and sourced metal. ASI member companies commit to certify at least some part of their operations within two years of the launch of the program, or two years of joining. They prepare for the audit by ensuring they comply with the applicable requirements, and then commissioning an independent third party audit firm that has been accredited by ASI to verify performance. ASI does not carry

Figure 2. Steps required by companies to achieve certification.

out audits—instead its role is to design and oversee the whole process. The steps companies need to take in order to be certified are shown in Figure 2.

Have any companies begun the process of receiving certification or been certified at this point?

Nearly all ASI members have initiated self assessments in elementAl, and are working towards finalizing these. ASI also continues to accredit new audit firms. We anticipate the first certifications by mid-2018, and for these to continue to grow in the coming years.

ASI also plans to implement a monitoring and evaluation plan in conjunction with the certification program. What does ASI hope this plan will achieve?

A monitoring and evaluation (M&E) program is a key tool for ASI to gain insight into the impact of its efforts and that of its members and, over time, to support continual improvement of its program. Implementing an effective M&E program will enable ASI to both communicate its progress and value, and inform the design and regular revision of its standards and assurance model so that it adapts to changing contexts and expectations. Thus, M&E has a dual role: to provide evidence of outcomes and impact (to prove) and to learn from implementation and feedback (to improve).

How do you expect sustainability concerns to develop in coming years? What are the next steps ASI will take following the launch of its certification program?

Looking forward, the Standards Committee and related working groups will continue to focus on key topics such as biodiversity, climate change, recycling, and human rights, to prepare for future revisions of ASI Standards and Guidance and support peer learning and implementation. The ASI Indigenous Peoples Advisory Forum will also be continuing to develop its work program, which has intersections with these areas. A particular focus in 2018 is the establishment of a Biodiversity and Ecosystems Services Working Group to enable input and engagement with biodiversity experts, members and stakeholders on mining and protected areas, and ecosystem services frameworks.

What value does ASI provide for its members?

ASI gives its members value in the areas of reputation, engagement and learning. Being an ASI member is a commitment to sustainability and responsible practices in the aluminum value chain. Achieving ASI certification demonstrates an important achievement and promotes a company's reputation with stakeholders and business partners. With a multi-stakeholder membership, ASI also functions as a valued engagement platform with a range of supply chain participants, associations and civil society organizations. Finally, ASI explicitly seeks to support learning, through both the engagement and certification pathways, and provides tailored training and peer learning opportunities to members. ■

ASI Members

ASI currently has 60 members, representing the aluminum industry, OEMs, and civil service organizations. The current list of members is as follows:

Production and Transformation: Alcoa Inc., Aleris, Aludium, AMAG Austria Metall AG, Amcor, Ball Corporation, Bridgnorth Aluminium, CBA – Companhia Brasileira de Alumínio, Constantia Flexibles, Constellium, Emirates Global Aluminium (EGA), EUROFOIL, Gulkula Mining Company, Jiangsu Zhongji Lamination Materials Stock, Jupiter Aluminum, Norsk Hydro, Novelis, Rio Tinto, Shanghai Shenhuo Aluminium Foil, SNTO Aluminium Foil Company, UC Rusal

Industrial Users: Arconic, Audi, BMW, Jaguar Land Rover, Lavit, Nestle Nespresso, Schueco International, Tetra Pak

Downstream Supporters: Apple, Fromageries Bel

Associations: The Aluminum Association, ABAL – Associação Brasileira do Alumínio, Aluminium Association of Canada, Aluminium Federation (ALFED), Aluminium Federation of South Africa, AMS Aluminium, A/U/F, Australian Aluminium Council, Austrian Non-Ferrous Metals Associatio, Can Manufacturers Institute, CII - Sohrabji Godrej Green Business Centre, Council for Aluminium in Building, European Aluminium, European Outdoor Group, Gesamtverband der Aluminiumindustrie e.V., Global Aluminium Foil Roller Initiative (GLAFRI), Gulf Aluminium Council, IGORA, Russian Aluminium Association

Civil Society: Chimbo Foundation, Fauna and Flora International, IndustriALL Global Union, Institute for Human Rights and Business (IHRB), IUCN, Keep America Beautiful, Verité, WWF

General Supporters: Energia Potior Limited, Regain Materials

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