Summary

Following a decision of the UNECE Committee on Trade at its second session, (ECE/TRADE/C/2007/19 para. 47), this document presents an overview of priorities and challenges of Working Party 6. In 2009, the priorities will be: servicing the initiatives underway; organizing forthcoming meetings; identifying areas where new initiatives could be started up; fundraising; outreach and self-evaluation.

The most important constraint that the Working Party encounters are the limited resources allocated to this programme, in terms of human resources and funding. A significant challenge is that regulatory cooperation and standards are often regarded as a technical issue and their relevance as a strategic area of policy is insufficiently recognized.

* This document was submitted late in order to include information on the latest progress in this work.
I. PRIORITIES

1. The priorities of the UNECE Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies for the coming year:
   
   (a) Servicing initiatives underway;
   (b) Organizing forthcoming meetings;
   (c) Identifying areas where new initiatives could be started;
   (d) Fundraising;
   (e) Outreach;
   (f) Self-evaluation.

A. Initiatives underway

2. The most important initiatives underway are the following:
   
   (a) Finalizing the General Market Surveillance Procedure (GMSP), which will provide guidance for authorities in the setting up and maintaining an effective market surveillance system to assist the decision-making process from planning inspections to product recall;
   
   (b) Developing common regulatory objectives in the sector of Equipment for Explosive Environments, with the goal of promoting the safety of workers while reducing barriers to the free trade and use of this equipment;
   
   (c) Launching a survey of existing regulatory practice in the sector of Safety of Oil and Gas pipelines, to evaluate the feasibility of a new sectoral initiative;
   
   (d) Revising common regulatory objectives for the sector of Earth-Moving Machinery, to meet the challenges of implementation in countries that do not accept a supplier’s declaration of conformity;
   
   (e) Furthering discussion on the issue of referencing standards in regulations, with a view to revising Recommendation D on “Reference to standards”.

B. Forthcoming meetings

3. The following meetings are scheduled:

   (a) The Team of Specialists on Standardization and Regulatory Techniques (“START” Team) will meet in Stockholm, from 26 to 28 May 2009, to review the sectoral initiatives underway. The Initiative on Equipment for Explosive Environments and the Initiative on Safety of Oil and Gas Pipelines will meet back to back with this meeting.

   (b) A follow-up meeting of the Sectoral Initiatives on Equipment for Explosive Environments will take place in Melbourne, Australia, on 31 August 2009, parallel to the meetings of the International Electrotechnical Commission Scheme for Certification to Standards relating to Equipment for use in Explosive Atmospheres (IECEX Scheme);

   (c) The Advisory Group on Market Surveillance (“MARS” Group) will meet in Minsk, in September 2009, to review the progress made in the development of the General
Market Surveillance Procedure, in order to present a revised version of the model to the 19th Session of the Working Party.

(d) The 19th session of the Working Party will meet from 24 to 26 November 2009. An international Forum on Risk Management will take place back to back to the session.

C. Areas for new initiatives

4. The Secretariat will present the concept of the International Model at meetings of standardization bodies and other partner institutions such as the World Trade Organization Technical Barriers to Trade (WTO TBT) Committee and the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), in order to identify sectors where new initiatives could be useful.

D. Fundraising

5. Following the adoption, in 2007, of Recommendation M on the Use of Market Surveillance Infrastructure as a Complementary Means to Protect Consumers and Users against Counterfeit Goods, the Working Party and the Secretariat will continue to raise funds for its implementation in countries with economies in transition and developing countries to fight the proliferation of counterfeit and dangerous products on their markets and promote capacity building in the area of market surveillance.

E. Outreach

6. New promotional material for the Working Party will be prepared, including at least one brochure, one poster and the revised publication of the Working Party’s Recommendations. Work on a renewed website for the Working Party will be started.

F. Self-evaluation

7. As required under the 2008-2009 self-evaluation process, the secretariat will continue its self-evaluation by disseminating a survey on the use of the Working Party’s recommendations in national policy frameworks and business environments.

II. CHALLENGES

8. The most important constraints in implementing these agreed priorities are the limited resources available to the programme. Under these circumstances, the Secretariat has little means to promote the implementation of its recommendations in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, although representatives from a number of these countries have expressed interest in having support in this area.

9. Awareness of the proliferation of non-compliant and dangerous products on the market and at the workplace has increased. The number and technical complexity of products marketed every year is such that no country can exercise effective control by itself. Increased financial and human resources are needed for effective coordination of standardization and regulatory policies at an international level.
10. Standards and regulations are key tools for attaining many goals of the United Nations system:

   (a) Preserving the environment;
   (b) Safeguarding the safety of workers and consumers;
   (c) Promoting the transfer of knowledge and technology to developing countries;
   (d) Protecting the rights of intellectual property owners;
   (e) Enhancing the role of small and medium enterprises;
   (f) Reducing obstacles to the free trade of goods and services.

11. However, in spite of their importance, these issues are regarded by many policy-makers as technical matters, meaning they are reluctant to allocate substantial funding to these activities.