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CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT

**Review of Developments in Conformity Assessment at the
International, Regional and National Levels**

This paper has been submitted by the State Committee for Standardization, Metrology and Certification of Belarus.

It contains information on Belarus' experience in using certification procedures as one of the means to combat counterfeit goods. It is recalled that this matter was considered at the ninth session of the Working Party, in connection with UN/ECE activities on the protection of intellectual property rights in transition economies.

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Experience in using certification as a means of removing counterfeit and pirated goods from the Belarusian market

Countries with economies in transition have found themselves faced with a large-scale problem: the origins of some of the goods that have come to fill their shops are not those shown on the labels. Counterfeits of the products of famous firms are extremely numerous and that is adversely affecting the development of an orderly market. Specialists are of the opinion that counterfeiting causes significant economic and social damage, including financial damage to the duped purchaser and damage to the image of the manufacturer of high-quality goods.

The shady business of making forged goods is expanding rapidly because it is highly profitable and very convenient for unscrupulous businessmen: they do not have to pay for expensive advertising, establish a sales network, keep up their firm's image or improve the quality of their products. It is far simpler to make counterfeits of products that purchasers know well, particularly those whose quality they trust. Given that and the fact that goods entering transition economies often come not directly from the manufacturers or their official representatives but through numerous middlemen, transition countries find themselves having to deal with the urgent problem of protecting their markets against unsafe and counterfeit products. Standardization and certification bodies have a role to play in resolving this problem.

Because of the need to protect the domestic market against unsafe and poor-quality products and because of concern for consumers, Belarusian certification authorities, when carrying out mandatory certification, also take steps to identify the product, i.e. to establish that it corresponds to the trademark it bears.

That is done in cooperation with manufacturers interested in protecting their products against counterfeiting.

Thus, Gosstandart is engaged in a range of activities with Philip Morris to identify counterfeit cigarettes put on the Belarusian market under the Philip Morris trademark. During series production at manufacturing plants, specialists from the Belarusian certification authority were instructed in the system for protecting Philip Morris products against counterfeiting, including the product-marking system. As a result, it is now possible when certifying cigarettes for import into Belarus to identify counterfeit batches and to prevent them from entering the country.

Philip Morris is currently financing the drafting of a number of normative instruments laying down requirements for the quality and the marking of cigarettes. This, too, will help to protect the market against poor-quality and counterfeit products. Experience has shown that this type of active cooperation between Gosstandart and a firm concerned about its image is highly effective.

Another topical problem for Belarus, and for other countries, is that of protecting the domestic market against an influx of counterfeit perfumes, cosmetics and detergents. The problem of protecting the market against counterfeit toothpastes is particularly acute.

Products of Procter & Gamble are the ones most frequently imitated. This is because this firm's goods, being of good quality, moderately priced and well advertised in CIS countries, enjoy high sales.

This encourages unscrupulous vendors to try to sell counterfeit goods as Procter & Gamble products.

Gosstandart has, in close cooperation with Procter & Gamble, resolved the problem of protecting the Belarusian market against counterfeit Blend-a-Med toothpaste. For that, Procter & Gamble transmitted to all Gosstandart's perfumes and cosmetics certifying bodies and regional standardization and metrology centres information on the distinguishing features of the counterfeit product: within a month, the problem of removing the counterfeit product from the Belarusian market was over.

Following this success, Procter & Gamble intends to work with Gosstandart to keep counterfeits of its washing powders and of some of its other products off the Belarusian market.

There is practical proof, therefore, of the effectiveness of close cooperation between firms concerned about their image and certification authorities and the national organization for accreditation and certification in protecting the market against counterfeit goods. Gosstandart is willing to work to that end with any manufacturer and having such a concern.
