The objective of the programme of work is to promote trade, as well as industrial and enterprise development, by (a) encouraging the international harmonization of standards and technical regulations, (b) removing or gradually reducing technical barriers to trade, and (c) promoting scientific and technological cooperation through the development of policies for standardization and related activities. This programme of work was prepared taking into consideration the related activities of UNECE subsidiary bodies and of other organizations.

A. COORDINATION

A.1 Regular guidance for international standardization through identification of sectors that are of interest to member Governments

Description: Regular updating at approximately four-year intervals of a list of sectors/product areas that are of interest to UNECE member Governments and of the criteria on the basis of which the list is compiled, with a view to providing guidance on programmes of work for international standardization.
Work accomplished

1. The final version of Revision 5 of the Standardization List, was adopted at the eleventh session. The Standardization List was published in 2002 and disseminated among UNECE member States.

2. At the eleventh session the Working Party considered information provided by a number of delegations on government participation in standardization activities in the area of environmental protection/environmental management and on national adoption/transposition of the resulting standards and decided to continue this exercise.

Work to be undertaken

1. The Working Party will explore the interest of other United Nations regional commissions in using the principles and criteria laid down in the ECE Standardization List as a tool for identifying standardization priorities in other regions.

2. The Working Party will continue to collect information on: (a) the participation of UNECE Governments in standardization activities in the area of environmental protection/environmental management and (b) the national adoption/transposition of the resulting standards with a view to compiling and analysing such information as the basis for conclusions and possible recommendations.


B. HARMONIZATION

B.1 Review of developments, prospects and problems at the international, regional and national levels

Description: Regular reviews of international, regional and national issues related to technical regulation, standardization and conformity assessment policies pursued by UNECE member Governments, as well as by international and regional standardizing organizations and by national standards bodies, with the aim of making appropriate proposals.

Work accomplished:

1. Thanks to the UNECE’s having observer status at the World Trade Organization (WTO) Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade, national standards bodies, especially from the countries in accession to WTO, have been kept informed of relevant developments in WTO.
2. Regular contacts with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Interstate Council on Standardization, Metrology and Certification (including participation of the secretariat in its sessions and the presentation of major Working Party documents and projects to the CIS) have been facilitating the dissemination of information on the Working Party's activities in the CIS. Through an exchange of information, the Working Party has been regularly informed by the CIS Interstate Council of member State initiatives and proposals with regard to the Working Party's activities.

3. The UNECE Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development (CTIED) at its June 2001 session praised the Working Party’s experience in reaching out to regional groupings, thus establishing an active interface between the secretariat and interested Governments.

4. The Working Party sessions have been providing an opportunity for a continuous exchange of information between UNECE member States on the development of their legislation and practices in the areas of technical regulations, standardization and conformity assessment.

5. A workshop on the role of standards and technical regulations in international trade was held in conjunction with the tenth session and the conclusions of the workshop were circulated as an annex to the report from the session.

6. In cooperation with the Working Party, an expert meeting on the creation of quality assurance systems for enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs was organized by the UNECE secretariat in October 2001 in Geneva.

7. In December 2001, in cooperation with the Government of Slovakia, a workshop on standardization and conformity assessment matters in transition economies was held in Bratislava.

Work to be undertaken

1. To continue to consider requests received by the Working Party from a number of Member States, and particularly from Commonwealth of Independent States countries for technical assistance on standardization and conformity assessment related issues.

2. To develop suggestions and/or recommendations regarding how to address such requests.

Duration: Continuing (2002-2006).

B.2 Measures to facilitate the harmonization of principles and practices of standardization and relevant activities and training

Description: Study of ways to achieve more harmonized international standardization principles and practices in the light of new economic and market developments. The relevant provisions of the meetings of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) will be taken into account and the UNECE Recommendations on Standardization Policies will be kept under review and updated as necessary.
Work accomplished:

1. In 1998 the Working Party helped the secretariat to prepare a study on evaluating the role and impact of norms, standards and regulations in international trade for the Round Table held in conjunction with the second session of the Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development (June 1998). The proceedings and background papers of this Round Table were published as “Standards and Regulations in International Trade” (ECE/TRADE/248).

2. First drafts of an international agreement on technical harmonization and of its protocols were considered by the Working Party at its ninth and tenth sessions.

3. Information was provided according to an established format by some delegations on national horizontal legislation and structures for technical harmonization, standardization and related activities at the eleventh session.

4. The new edition of the set of UNECE Recommendations on Standardization Policies which also included also the new recommendation “International Model for Technical Harmonization” went to print in 2002 and is to be disseminated among UNECE member States.

Work to be undertaken

1. To pursue the work concerning different modalities of fostering cooperation in the UNECE region on technical harmonization issues (including the further development of texts for an international agreement on technical harmonization and of its protocols).

2. To continue to collect and analyse information on national horizontal legislation and structures for technical harmonization, standardization and related activities with a view to making a compendium of the information gathered.

3. To encourage the development, coherence and harmonization of international reference documents and standards related to conformity assessment and accreditation practices.

Duration: Continuing (2002-2006).

B.3 Measures to facilitate the implementation of standards and technical regulations, including approval of definitions of terms used internationally in the fields of standardization and related activities

Description: Study of proven ways to facilitate the technical and legal implementation of standards and technical regulations and the approval and promotion of internationally accepted definitions of terms used with regard to technical regulations, standardization, conformity assessment and metrology.

Work accomplished:

1. The Working Party, at its seventh session, endorsed ISO/IEC Guide 2 (7th revision), and revised and adopted a new Recommendation "J" on Definitions based on this revised Guide.
2. During the ninth and tenth sessions respectively, a Workshop on the implementation and use of international standards and a Workshop on the role of international standards and technical regulations in international trade were organized in collaboration with international, regional and national standardizing organizations, regulatory authorities and business operators.

3. At its ninth session, the Working Party decided to examine the relationship between international standardization and regulations and, in particular, how technical regulations can make more effective use of international standardization. This work was started by an ad hoc Team of Specialists on STandardization And Regulatory Techniques (Team “START”), as decided by the Working Party at its ninth session and approved by the Committee at its third session.

4. The “START” Team prepared a draft for an “International Model for Technical Harmonization”, which was presented to the Working Party at its tenth session. An outline of this project was also presented, for information, to different forums, including the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Asia–Europe Meetings (ASEM) and at the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

5. At the eleventh session, the text of the “International Model for Technical Harmonization” was finalized and adopted as a new UNECE Recommendation on Standardization Policies (Recommendation “L”).

6. A dialogue was initiated with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and with experts in a number of sectors with a view to exploring the possibilities for starting pilot projects using the principles/mechanisms suggested in the “International Model”.

7. In June 2001, at its fifth session, the Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development considered and endorsed the Working Party’s proposals:
   - asking other UNECE Principal Subsidiary Bodies (PSBs) to explore the possibilities of using the principles and concept of the “International Model for Technical Harmonization” in their areas of competence with the goal of identifying potential pilot projects;
   - calling on member Governments to consider taking on an obligation of informing the secretariat regarding the national transposition/use of legal instruments, recommendations and standards drawn up by the UNECE.

8. Following WP.6 decisions at its eleventh session, the “START” Team established contacts with companies in the telecom sector, which resulted in a proposal to initiate a dialogue on regulatory convergence in the telecom area (“Industry Telecom Initiative”). Results of these contacts will be reported at the twelfth session.

**Work to be undertaken**

1. To continue to follow up on issues raised at the May 1999 and November 2000 workshops by standardizing bodies, authorities and private companies.
2. To cooperate with interested international and regional organizations on mechanisms which might be used to monitor the extent to which the members of intergovernmental and international standardizing organizations transpose at the national level recommendations, international standards etc. adopted by these organizations; the extent to which such standards etc. are used in national technical regulations; as well as the impact of the standards etc. on international trade.

3. On the basis of the aforementioned, to make appropriate proposals for strengthening the role of international standards and for possible new areas for international technical harmonization. In order to prepare such proposals on strengthening the process of international technical harmonization, international standardizing organizations will be contacted with regard to exploring the possibility of further joint action, including organizing workshops and seminars on this theme.

4. To encourage initiatives for pilot projects using the mechanisms and principles of the “International Model for Technical Harmonization” in cooperation with interested Governments, international organizations and private operators.

5. To foresee necessary activities in cooperation with interested governments related to the revision of the ISO/IEC guide 2 on “Standardization and related activities – General Vocabulary”.

Duration: Results of the analysis and related proposals will be presented to the Working Party at its twelfth session. Continuing (2002-2005).

C. CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT

C.1 Promotion of international arrangements for the acceptance of conformity assessment results and measures to achieve mutual confidence in the technical competence and reliability of conformity assessment systems

Description: Review and promotion of harmonized international conformity assessment principles and practices and of international arrangements for the acceptance of conformity assessment results. Regular review of relevant work in other international and regional organizations.

Work accomplished:

1. A questionnaire on the implementation of the ISO 14000 series of standards in the chemical industry was prepared and distributed among UNECE member States. Based upon the results from this questionnaire, in cooperation with the ad hoc Group of Experts on the Chemical Industry, and at the invitation of the Government of Hungary, a workshop was held in Budapest in March 2000 on the use in the UNECE region of ISO 14000 environmental management system standards in the chemical industry.
2. As decided by the Working Party at its ninth session, representatives of the Working Party took part in the WTO symposium on conformity assessment procedures (June 1999). A background paper addressing the questions and concerns of UNECE member States was prepared by the Rapporteur on Conformity Assessment for the participants.

3. A workshop on conformity assessment and trade facilitation was held during the eleventh session. The conclusions from the workshop identified a number of areas of concern to UNECE Governments and to business operators where further cooperation and where additional initiatives from the Working Party would be useful.

4. A new team of specialists on quality management systems was established in 2002 as a joint activity of Working Party 6 and Working Party 8 (the Working Party on Industry and Enterprise Development)

Work to be undertaken

1. To continue to follow up on issues raised at the October 2001 Workshop by Conformity assessment bodies, authorities and private companies.
2. To review how conformity assessment agreements (voluntary, between Governments etc.) are being implemented and propose ways of improving them.
3. To draw up commonly agreed criteria and procedures for establishing and implementing mutual recognition agreements.
4. To carry out studies on national conformity assessment systems and national accreditation systems with special emphasis on problems experienced by countries in transition.
5. To prepare UNECE recommendations related to conformity assessment as the need arises in the light of work done by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), the International Electro-technical Commission (IEC), the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC), the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) and other international organizations or forums.
6. To review standardization-related quality policy issues, including eco-labelling and the use of management standards (ISO 9000, 14000, etc.), with particular reference to the needs of business operators in transition economies. To work with and provide guidance to a new team of specialists on quality management systems.
7. To collect and analyse information on existing national quality policies, with a view to preparing relevant recommendations.
8. At the request of delegations from member countries at the eleventh session, a Forum on market surveillance will be organized in conjunction with the twelfth session. Related conclusions and proposals will also be presented at that session

Duration: Continuing (2002-2006).
C.2 Aspects of metrology relevant to testing activities

**Description:** Consideration will be given to possible ways of establishing agreed criteria for metrology procedures and harmonized recalibration requirements.

**Work accomplished:**

1. Based on comments from Governments and metrology organizations, a first draft of guidelines on methodology for measuring procedures was presented to the ninth session. Following discussions at its tenth session, the Working Party decided to establish an ad hoc Team of Specialists to pursue further the work in this area. This proposal was also endorsed by the Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development at its fifth session in June 2001.

2. As requested by the Working Party, contacts were established with regional organizations, and the COOMET (“Cooperation for Metrology”) expressed an interest in the project of the guidelines on methodology for measuring procedures. Results of these contacts will be reported at the twelfth session.

**Work to be undertaken**

1. To continue preparing the guidelines on methodology for measuring procedures in cooperation and in consultation with interested government bodies and international and regional organizations.

**Duration:** Continuing (2002-2004).