SECTORAL INITIATIVES BASED ON UNECE RECOMMENDATION “L”

(“INTERNATIONAL MODEL FOR TECHNICAL HARMONIZATION BASED ON GOOD REGULATORY PRACTICE FOR THE PREPARATION, ADOPTION AND APPLICATION OF TECHNICAL REGULATIONS VIA THE USE OF INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS”)

This paper contains information on the activities of the Team of Specialists on STandardization And Regulatory Techniques (“START” Team) and on the current status of sectoral initiatives (including “Telecom Initiative” project).

This document is presented for information to delegations.
INTRODUCTION.

1. It is recalled that the first and subsequent drafts of the “International Model for Technical harmonization” prepared by the “START Team” were submitted for information to a number of international forums (UNECE, World Trade Organization (WTO), Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), etc.).

2. After discussions on the “Model”, the Working Party on Technical Harmonization and Standardization Policies (WP.6) finally adopted it in 2001 as a new UNECE recommendation (Recommendation “L”). In this context, it was noted that there was a clear market need and an interest from Governments in further reducing trade barriers and that this “Model” could contribute to facilitating market access by providing a voluntary framework for establishing sectoral agreements between interested member countries.

3. The “START” Team was also called upon by the Working Party to assist with sectoral initiatives based on the “International Model”, as forthcoming from interested parties and as requested.

“START” TEAM CONTACTS FOR SECTORAL INITIATIVES

4. A number of UNECE member countries responded positively to the adoption of the “International Model” as a UNECE Recommendation, which provides an organizational and legal framework for the “START” Team contacts with interested countries.

5. In 2003, two meetings of the “START” Team (April, Geneva; September, Slovakia) were held. Members of the “START” Team were invited and took part also in meetings devoted to regional/sectoral initiatives (see below). At present, the “START” Team is working in two main directions to assist countries in initiating regulatory convergence dialogue, namely, on a regional and on a sectoral level.

Regional initiatives

6. It is recalled that in preparing the “International Model” the “START” Team established liaison with and has received regularly feedback on its activities from members of the CIS Interstate Council for Standardization, Certification and Metrology. After adopting Recommendation “L”, CIS countries decided (in May 2002) to establish a group of experts under the CIS Interstate Council to draw up a strategy for technical harmonization in the CIS, taking as a basis the principles of the “International Model”.
7. This CIS regulatory group prepared the first draft of the agreement on the harmonization of technical regulations in the CIS grouping which was presented and supported by the CIS Interstate Council for Standardization, Certification and Metrology at its annual session (Armenia, May 2003). The WP.6 Bureau took part in this CIS meeting.

8. Consultations are under way with potential donors with a view to initiating regulatory convergence projects in other regions as well (possibly in the Balkan region).

Sectoral initiatives

"Telecom Industry Initiative"

9. It is recalled that in 2002, the UNECE secretariat and the “START” Team consulted with a number of telecom companies that had demonstrated the industry’s interest in the application of the “International Model”. Informal meetings were held in Geneva to discuss the need for improved market access and to explore the possibilities of a sectoral initiative in telecom. Meetings were attended by members of the “START” Team, delegates from the European Commission (EC) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), and by a number of private company representatives (business associations from Australia and from Japan were also represented).

10. As a result of these discussions, industry participants agreed that there were a number of globally traded product areas where it was possible to facilitate trade significantly and to establish a set of sectoral arrangements following the principles of the “International Model”. They decided to draft proposals for CROs (“common regulatory objectives” as proposed in the “International Model”) based on applicable international and regional standards. This project was named the “Telecom Industry Initiative”.

11. Thus, draft proposals for administrative and technical requirements for CROs for a number of products (GSM, IMT-2000, Wireless LAN, Bluetooth, Personal Computers, Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) Modem) were prepared and agreed upon by industry participants. These draft CROs are available at the WP.6 web page [http://www.unece.org/trade/stdpol](http://www.unece.org/trade/stdpol) under “START” Team and then “Telecom Industry Initiative”).

12. The “Telecom Industry Initiative” and draft CROs were presented to the Working Party at its October 2002 session. The Working Party supported this initiative and invited UNECE member countries to inform the secretariat of their interest in participating in the regulatory convergence activities proposed by the project as an inter-governmental regulatory dialogue.
13. On the basis of responses from UNECE member countries, a meeting with public authorities was held in Geneva in May 2003. The meeting, inter alia, decided to establish a Task Force to continue to draw up CROs for telecom products and to address practicalities on how to implement the “Telecom Initiative“ project. The call to nominate experts to the Task Force has been sent to Governments.

14. The next meeting of the Task Force will be held in Geneva on 13 November 2003 in conjunction with the WP.6 annual session, at which delegations will be informed of progress to date.

New sectoral projects

15. As a result of a presentation of an “International Model” at the UNECE/FAO workshop on the sound use of wood (Romania, March 2003), the participants suggested considering the feasibility of harmonization of building codes in the UNECE region. This proposal will be discussed with the UNECE Timber Committee at its session in October 2003 and the results will be reported to the Working Party.

16. The “START” Team continued to cooperate with the UNCTAD/FAO/IFOAM Task Force on Harmonization and Equivalence in Organic Agriculture and the Working Party will be informed of latest developments in this area.

17. Another sectoral proposal on initiating a similar project in the area of Earth Moving Machinery is under discussions at the “START” Team and will be formally submitted for consideration to the Working Party at its session in November 2003.

18. Information on the “START” Team activities relating to Telecom, Earth Moving Machinery and Building Codes projects was provided to the Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development at its meeting in May 2003. The Committee supported these initiatives as a practical contribution to solving facilitation of trade and market access problems in the UNECE region.

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