ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
COMMITTEE FOR TRADE, INDUSTRY AND ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT
Working Party on Technical Harmonization and Standardization Policies
Thirteenth session, 10-12 November 2003
Item 11 of the provisional agenda

PROGRAMME OF WORK, 2003-2007

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 the identification of sectors 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, so as to provide guidance for programmes of work related to international standardization.

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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 and twelfth sessions 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 the 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 May 2003 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. 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 review and report on developments, projects and problems related to standardization, harmonization and conformity assessment issues.

2. To consider requests received by the Working Party from member States, and particularly from Commonwealth of Independent States countries, for technical assistance on standardization and conformity assessment related issues.

3. To develop suggestions and/or recommendations on how to address such requests.

Duration: Continuing (2003-2006).

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. 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 and twelfth sessions.

2. The new edition of the UNECE Recommendations on Standardization Policies which also included the new recommendation “International Model for Technical Harmonization” was published in 2002 and disseminated among UNECE member States.
Work to be undertaken:

1. 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.

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


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 the twelfth session, preparation of a new ISO/IEC guide of definitions on conformity assessment terms was considered.

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 their impact 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.


5. In conjunction with the thirteenth session (Geneva, November 2003), a workshop on regulatory cooperation issues will be organized.

Duration: Results of these analyses and related proposals will be presented to the Working Party at its thirteenth session.


B.4 Measures to promote regulatory convergence

Description: To support the development of good regulatory practice by providing examples of mechanisms and principles which might be used by countries.

Work accomplished:

1. 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 for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development at its third session.

2. 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 the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

3. 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”).

4. 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”.


5. 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 (the “Telecom Industry Initiative”). At its twelfth session, the Working Party considered and supported proposals for regulatory convergence elaborated in the framework of the “Telecom Industry Initiative”. The first meeting of the “Telecom Industry Initiative” with public authorities was held in May 2003 at which time regulators agreed to consider draft common regulatory objective proposals for a number of telecom products.

Work to be undertaken:

1. In May 2003, at its seventh session, the Committee considered and endorsed the Working Party’s work on regulatory convergence issues in particular supporting its “Telecom Industry Initiative” and endorsing the proposal to initiate a regulatory convergence dialogue in the area of earth-moving machinery.
2. Together with interested UNECE and UN member States to pursue the “Telecom Industry Initiative” project.
3. To support, as requested, other sectoral 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.

Duration: 2003-2004

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. In March 2000, in cooperation with the Government of Hungary, a workshop was held in Budapest on the use in the UNECE region of ISO 14000 environmental management system standards in the chemical industry.
2. 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 additional initiatives from the Working Party would be useful.

3. A new team of specialists on quality management systems was established in 2002 as a joint activity of this Working Party and 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 Electrotechnical 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 (e.g. ISO 9000, 14000), 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.

**Duration:** Continuing (2003-2006).

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 Working Party at its ninth session. Following discussions at its tenth session, the Working Party decided to establish an ad hoc Team of Specialists to pursue the work in this area further. This proposal was endorsed by the Committee 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 on guidelines on methodology for measuring procedures.

Work to be undertaken:

1. To continue contacts with COOMET to explore an interest in joint activities to prepare the guidelines on methodology for measuring procedures in cooperation and in consultation with interested government bodies and international and regional organizations.


D. MARKET SURVEILLANCE

Description: to provide countries with guidance on good practices and mechanisms relating to market surveillance.

Work accomplished:

1. At the request of delegations from transition economies, an international forum on market surveillance was organized in conjunction with the twelfth session. Noting the social importance of the issues discussed the Working Party recommended that a team/group of experts be established to consider market surveillance issues in depth.

2. In May 2003, at its seventh session, the Committee considered and endorsed the Working Party’s proposal for establishing a new ad hoc team/group of experts to advise Governments on market surveillance issues.

Work to be undertaken:

1. To initiate the work of a new team/group of experts and to address the list of issues of concern prepared as a result of the deliberations at October 2002 International forum on market surveillance.