



24 May 2022

(22-3994)

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**Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures**

Original: English

## GSO REPORT ON SPS ACTIVITIES

### GSO REPORT TO THE WTO COMMITTEE ON SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

The following communication, received on 23 May 2022, is being circulated at the request of the secretariat of the GCC Standardization Organization (GSO).

## 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. GCC Standardization Organization (GSO) is a non-profit (intergovernmental) Standardization Organization, established by the resolution of the GCC Supreme Council (22<sup>nd</sup> Session, Muscat, Oman, 30-31 December 2001) and assumed its operation in May 2004 with membership of the governments of the Kingdom of Bahrain, the State of Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen which joined GSO in January 2010.

## 2 GSO MISSION

2.1. The GSO mission is to assist the States of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) to achieve the objectives set forth in its Charter and in the GCC Economic Agreement by unifying the various standardization activities and following up implementation and compliance with the same in cooperation and coordination with the standardization bodies in the member States to develop the production and service sectors, foster intra-GCC trade, protect consumers, the environment and public health, enhance the GCC economy and its competitiveness and meet the requirements of the Gulf Custom Union and Gulf Common Market.

## 3 GSO STRUCTURE

3.1. **The Ministerial Committee for Standardizations affairs (MC):** is the highest authority of GSO, vested with all powers relating to its functioning. The MC consists of respective Ministers of the Commerce, Industry, and Investment in GCC member States.

3.2. **The GSO Technical Council (TC):** consists of the respective Directors of the National Standards Bodies (NSBs) of GSO member States.

3.3. **The Presidency:** is headed by the President and consists of GSO Professional Staff to facilitate the activities of GSO.

3.4. **The GSO Steering and Technical Committees (STCs):** consist of technical experts representing each National Standards Body of the member States. The STCs report to the GSO Governing Board and are responsible for the planning, coordination and monitoring of all the technical work of GSO in standards, conformity assessment, metrology, and notification.

## 4 GSO STRATEGY 2021-2025

4.1. GSO has defined its Strategic Plan for the year 2025, approved by the Ministerial Committee for Standardization, and that is to be the trusted regional organization of excellence in standardization activities, and the first enabler for the Gulf Common Market. To achieve its vision,

GSO relies on the successful implementation of three main strategic themes, the first of which is organizational excellence - "Accurate implementation of GSO's activities and operations with high efficiency, lowest costs and on time, to provide value-added services to GCC member States". The second theme is being a regional organization pioneer- where GSO becomes a major and reliable reference in GCC member States for standardization activities by positioning itself within the global map of standardization organizations and bodies, and building effective strategic partnerships to support trade, industry and economy in GCC member States. Finally, the third theme is to strengthen the economic integration among the GCC member States – by way of GSO's contribution to achieving a common Gulf market and economic growth for member States through standardization activities, conformity procedures, and unified and effective control over products, as the first enablers of the Gulf Common Market. Moreover, all GSO programmes, projects, and activities have been aligned with these themes.

4.2. The GSO's Strategy consists of 10 strategic objectives, 22 strategic key performance indicators (KPIs) and 11 strategic programmes.

## 5 STANDARDS AND METROLOGY

5.1. GSO has developed more than 26,524 [Unified Gulf Standards and Technical Regulations](#), of which 63% are adopted from the International Organization for Standardization (ISO); 20% of those standards are adopted from the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) as endorsement, 4% of food standards are adopted from Codex Alimentarius standards, about 8% prepared by GSO, and the remaining standards are adopted from other regional and international organizations. GSO adopted ISO/IEC directives for technical work as a basis for its own directives to ensure that GSO technical committees follow international practices in the standards development process. At present, there are 44 GSO/TCs and TCs sub-committees representing all GSO member States and covering most of the GCC sectors.

5.2. GSO throughout its technical committees translated more than 750 ISO standards in different categories. Remarkable cooperation is taking place between GSO TC07 and ISO TC 67 (Materials, equipment and offshore structures for petroleum, petrochemical and natural gas industries) which resulted in issuing ISO 16961:2015 and ISO 18797:2016 which are based on GSO 2057/2010 and GSO 2273/2012.

5.3. GSO established and hosted the Gulf Association for Metrology ([GULFMET](#)) as a Regional Metrology Organization (RMO), bringing together National Metrology Institutes (NMIs) of GCC countries. The International Committee of Weights and Measures (CIPM) in [BIPM](#) decided to grant GULFMET full membership in the Joint Committee of the Regional Metrology Organizations and the BIPM (JCRB), with a voice and the right to vote in CIPM meeting No. 110 dated on 22-24 June 2021.

## 6 CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT

6.1. GSO developed [the GCC Conformity Assessment Scheme](#) in pursuance of reducing the technical barriers of trade and facilitating the free movement of commodities across borders within the GCC member States and the rest of the world. Within the framework of the Gulf System for Safety Monitoring of Products in the GCC Common Market, GSO has issued Horizontal Technical Regulations, Vertical Technical Regulations, as well as other Technical Guides. Two Technical Regulations have been implemented with the [Gulf Conformity Marking](#), namely, the GSO Technical Regulation on Toys and the GSO Technical Regulation on Low Voltage Electrical Equipment and Appliances.

6.2. GSO has also developed a Gulf Conformity Tracking System (GCTS) which has proven to be a great success in the implementation of the GSO LV technical regulation, and helps to track both the supply chain and technical conformity.

6.3. More than 480,000 conformity certificates for vehicle, tiers, motorcycles have been issued through [the Electronic Conformity Certificate Scheme \(ECCS\)](#). GSO is the notifying authority by decision of the Board of Directors, May 2013. GSO approved 85 notified bodies in many countries around the world. More than 48,460 products have received the G-Mark through more than 58,629 conformity certificates issued through [the GCC Conformity Tracking System](#). Additionally,

1,001 free Proficiency Testing Programs (PTs) for 672 GCC laboratories have been organized as one of the main activities of the [Gulf Association for Laboratories \(GCCLAB\)](#), which is an open network for laboratories and supporting companies operating in the GCC member States. It was established as an initiative of the GSO and the recommendations of the first GCC Conference for Laboratories Proficiency (Dubai, 13 March 2013).

## **7 CAPACITY BUILDING**

7.1. GSO invests in strengthening the knowledge, skills, and know-how of specialists in NSBs through extensive and blended training and technical assistance programs. GSO established [the GCC Standardization Training Center](#) to meet the needs and requirements of the GSO members, and to aim at helping members participate effectively in the development of international standards, as well as towards increasing their competence in good standardization practices (GSPs). An annual training plan is designed based on the needs of NSBs, and training is to be delivered through highly qualified experts in cooperation with international and regional standardization organizations.

## **8 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT) SOLUTIONS - INTEGRATION WITH INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

8.1. GSO has developed many [platforms and e-services](#) and continuously keeps working on their content development and improvements to meet the needs of the member States covering all standardization activities.

8.2. ISO and GSO have organized many bilateral virtual meetings and workshops related to ISO API Gateway and ISO Global Directory, Standardization Identity Federation (SIF), and Standards Authoring using XML.

8.3. GSO IT Systems are integrated with ISO API Gateway. Starting negotiations with "Inera" for using their "eXtyles" word add-in to convert GSO Standards from Word to XML. Work is still in progress on this initiative.

8.4. Within the adoption agreement signed between GSO and IEC in Shanghai 2019, the IEC provides the GSO access to the FTP server of all IEC standards with a generic watermark and via the library server. GSO and IEC have already started their discussion about using the IEC API Gateway to access the metadata and unprotected standards on behalf of GSO members, for which GSO is hosting their National Standards Stores, such as Oman and Kingdom of Bahrain.

8.5. Also, GSO signed copyright license agreements with the European Committee for Standardization's European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization (CEN-CENELEC) by which both sides have full access to each other's standards metadata, and integrated with the (CEN-CENELEC) API Gateway. GSO IT Systems are integrated with ASTM Standard Publishing Application (SPA) API as well. Such international and regional cooperation enables GSO to develop a unified platform to search different standards catalogues and facilitate the adoption process for standards at the GCC level.

## **9 INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION**

9.1. The GSO, with the objective to establish mutually beneficial cooperation with the relevant international and regional organizations, continues to promote international standards through [67 MoUs and Cooperation agreements](#) with many international and regional organizations, such as ISO, IEC, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the World Trade Organization (WTO): TBT, SPS, the Codex Alimentarius, the International Organization of Legal Metrology (OMIL), CEN-CENELEC, Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries (SMIIC), Arabic Industrial Development and Mining Organization (AIDMO), Pan American Standards Commission (COPANT), African Organization for Standardization (ARSO), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the International Code Council (ICC); etc.

9.2. GSO participated in many key international and regional meetings in the framework of the MoUs signed with its partners.

9.3. GSO participated in the regular meeting of the SPS Committee, held virtually on 23-25 March 2022, as well as at the informal session on 23 March 2022 and the Thematic Session on trade facilitative approaches to pesticide MRLs, including substances not approved for use in an import market on 22 March 2022.

9.4. GSO participated in many SPS online meetings with other related organizations during the period (March-May 2022).

9.5. GSO made Consolidated notification by Member States of some standards drafts related to SPS.

9.6. GSO updated the technical regulation (GSO 1016) related to microbiological standards (NOT Published Standard) which were approved by the relevant Technical Committee during the Gulf Food Week (28 March 2022) and were preceded by a workshop for the committee devoted to discussing the project in its final form (2 March 2022).

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