GSO REPORT ON SPS ACTIVITIES

GSO REPORT TO THE WTO COMMITTEE ON SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

The following communication, received on 19 March 2021, is being circulated at the request of the secretariat of the GCC Standardization Organization (GSO).

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. GCC Standardization Organization (GSO) (http://www.gso.org.sa/) is a non-profit Regional Standardization Organization (RSO), established by the resolution of the GCC Supreme Council (http://www.gcc-sg.org/) (22nd 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, and the United Arab Emirates.

1.2. The mission of GSO is to assist the States of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) (https://www.gcc-sg.org/en-us/Pages/default.aspx) 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 (NSBs) to develop the production and service sectors, foster the intra-GCC trade, protect consumers, the environment and public health, enhance the GCC economy and its competitiveness and meet the requirements of Gulf Custom Union and Gulf Common Market.

2 THE GSO QUALITY INFRASTRUCTURE FRAMEWORK (GQI)

2.1. GSO has issued more than 23,480 Unified Gulf Standards and Technical Regulations (https://www.gso.org.sa/en/standards/standards-store/) so far through 44 Technical Committees and Sub-Technical Committees (https://www.gso.org.sa/en/standards/technical-committees/) representing all GSO member states and covering most of the sectors in GCC member states.

2.2. GSO developed the GCC Conformity Assessment Scheme (https://www.gso.org.sa/en/conformity/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 (TRs) have been implemented with the Gulf Conformity Marking (https://www.gso.org.sa/en/conformity/gcc-conformity-mark/), namely, the GSO Technical Regulation on Toys and the GSO Technical Regulation on Low Voltage Electrical Equipment and Appliances;
- A time plan for the issuance more of GSO Technical Regulations for Product Categories has been developed including industrial products safety, cosmetics, energy consumption efficiency, hazardous substances in electrical and electronic equipment, electromagnetic compatibility, water conservation equipment, machinery, lifts, construction products, medical devices, equipment for explosive atmospheres, simple pressure vessels, personal protective equipment, gas appliances, playgrounds, plastic materials and articles intended

to come into contact with foodstuffs, non-automatic weighing instruments, measuring instruments, and halal products. Many of these TRs are at the final approval stage and have been already notified to the WTO;

- More than 440,000 Conformity Certificates for Vehicle, tiers, Motorcycle have been issued through the Electronic Conformity Certificate Scheme (ECCS) (https://www.gso.org.sa/en/conformity/conformity-certificates-authentication/). GSO is the notifying authority by decision of the Board of Directors, May 2013. GSO approved 69 Notified Bodies in many countries around the world. More than 37,419 Conformity Certificates have been issued through the GCC Conformity Tracking System (https://www.gso.org.sa/en/conformity/conformity-tracking-system/). Additionally, 971 free Proficiency Testing Programs (PTs) for 653 GCC laboratories have been organized as one of the main activities of the Gulf Association for Laboratories (GCCLAB) (https://www.gso.org.sa/en/conformity/gulf-association-for-laboratories/), 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).

2.3. GSO established the GCC Accreditation Center (GAC) (https://www.gac.org.sa/en/) which obtained the international recognition in June 2016. Currently, GAC is an independent organization which provides accreditation services in the areas of calibration, measurement, testing, inspection and certification, commonly known as conformity assessment, to support the GCC joint works and the national economy, and to facilitate trade in all GCC member states, in addition to Yemen.

2.4. GSO has created and hosted the GULFMET (https://www.gulfmet.org/) as a Regional Metrology Organization (RMO), bringing together National Metrology Institutes (NMIs) of the United Arab Emirates, Kingdom of Bahrain, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, State of Kuwait, and Yemen. The International Committee of Weights and Measures (CIPM) granted provisional acceptance of GULFMET as a Regional Metrology Organization (RMO) in accordance with the procedures of the JCRB and within the meaning of the CIPM MRA on its meeting No. 104 (Paris, 15-16 October 2015).

2.5. GSO is qualifying specialists in NSBs, private, and government sectors in GSO member states in the field of standardization and its related activities. GSO established the GCC Standardization Training Center (https://www.gso.org.sa/en/training/gcc-standardization-training-center/). An annual Training Plan is designed to meet the needs and requirements of the NSBs through highly experienced and Qualified experts in cooperation with NSBS, regional, and international standardization organizations. Till now, GSO has trained and qualified more than 14,000 participants through 500 training programs.

3 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE

3.1. GSO's IT systems are integrated with many international and regional standardization organizations. Three initiatives have been discussed and approved between GSO and ISO, including: ISO API Gateway for fetching ISO Standards metadata and files, ISO Global Directory, Standardization Identity Federation (SIF), and Standards Authoring using XML.

3.2. Within the adoption agreement signed between GSO and International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), 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 started already their discussion about using the IE API Gateway to access to the metadata and unprotected standards on behalf of GSO members which GSO is hosting their National Standards Stores such as Oman and Kingdom of Bahrain. On the other hand, GSO signed the copyright license agreements with CEN-CENELEC by which both sides have full access to metadate of each other. Moreover, GSO and ASTM International signed the IT integration agreement for the same purpose.

3.3. Such integrations enable GSO to develop a unified platform to search different Standard catalogues and facilitate the adoption process for standards at the GCC level.

3.4. In addition to that, GSO has developed many platforms and e-services (https://www.gso.org.sa/en/e-services/e-services-catalogue/) and keep working on their contentious development and improvements to meet the needs of the member states.

4 GSO-STAKEHOLDERS' INVOLVEMENT

4.1. GSO is focusing on stakeholders' engagement (https://www.gso.org.sa/en/standards/participation-in-standards-development/) in the standards and Technical Regulations developments process, to ensure their fruitful contribution at the right time. To that end, GSO prepared the necessary infrastructure by holistic revision of respective technical guides and reemphasizing such perception among main key players in the GCC industries and the Economic Operators (EO) around the world.

5 INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION PROGRAMS

5.1. At the regional and international, GSO has an observer membership in ISO, IEC, WTO (TBT, SPS), CODEX, Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries (SMIIC), Arabic Industrial Development and Mining Organization (AIDMO), etc., and regularly attends the annual general meetings of ISO, IEC, CODEX, OMIL, and many other regional standardization organizations such as the European Committee for Standardization's European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization (CEN-CENELEC), AIDMO, African Organization for Standardization (ARSO). Recently, on 23 December 2020, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) approved the full membership of GSO in ITU-T (ITU's Telecommunication Standardization Sector).

5.2. GSO continues its close international cooperation with partners around the world through 62 MoUs and Cooperation agreements (https://www.gso.org.sa/en/about-gso/gsos-mous/) with 50 national, regional, and standardization organizations.

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