

STATEMENT BY ISO ON ITS ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

TBT Committee Meeting of 4 November 2004

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. It is important that developing countries access and participate, as fully as possible, in international standardization and conformity assessment related activities and, consequently, benefit from the transfer of technology that standards make possible, in adapting their products and services to global requirements and in demonstrating their compliance for world markets. This can result in greater competitiveness, growing market share and higher price of exports. It can also result in improved resistance to undesirable low quality imports or in increased competitiveness for attracting investment or procurement and stimulating economic activity. Finally, it may facilitate the development and effectiveness of infrastructures and networks.

2. Sustainable development is not an objective that a country, or a region, can pursue in isolation, leaving others behind. The importance of raising awareness, capacity and participation of developing countries is therefore high on ISO's agenda. Some 110 of the 146 ISO members are from developing countries or economies in transition. This situation has prompted ISO and its members to develop actions to improve the standardization infrastructures and capacities in developing countries and to enhance their participation in relation to international standardization and related conformity assessment activities.

II. ISO ACTION PLAN FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

3. ISO's global vision is for International Standards to contribute to economic and social progress through the facilitation of trade, improvement of products and services together with global dissemination of technologies and good practices. Furthermore, one of the key objectives of the *ISO Strategic Plan 2005-2010 – Standards for a Sustainable World* unanimously approved by the ISO General Assembly in September 2004, is to raise awareness and capacity in developing countries of international standardization and related activities. The objective also states that ISO will promote active involvement of developing countries in its work. Members from developing countries shall have access to tools, processes and programmes which will assist them in building their capacity, participating effectively in ISO's technical work and implementing international standards.

4. The *ISO Five-Year Action Plan for Developing Countries 2005-2010 – Standards for Progress* represents the implementation of the elements of the ISO Strategic Plan relating to developing countries. This ISO Action Plan is based on a broad consultation of ISO members through

surveys¹ and regional seminars, some of which have been conducted in collaboration with the WTO, and follow-up work carried out by the ISO Developing Country Task Force (DCTF) for the ISO Council. The Plan is intended for ISO members and regional organizations, as well as international organizations likely to provide funding. The document also covers the identification of needs, administration, funding and monitoring of actions in favour of developing countries. Furthermore, ISO's commitment to its developing country members is now enshrined at the highest level in the *ISO Code of Ethics*.

5. The *ISO Action Plan for Developing Countries* sets the following five objectives for 2010:
 - Improve awareness of key stakeholders in developing countries of the role of standardization in economic growth, world trade and sustainable development;
 - build capacity of ISO members and stakeholders involved in developing the standardization infrastructure and participating in international standardization work;
 - increase national and regional cooperation to share experience, resources, training, information and communications technologies;
 - develop electronic communication and expertise in IT tools to participate in international standardization work, reach out to stakeholders and make efficient use of ISO e-services;
 - increase participation in governance and technical work of ISO to voice priorities, contribute and influence the technical content of ISO deliverables.

6. To meet these objectives, three groups of actions have been defined:
 - (a) Action group 1: Making the best of membership in ISO
 - Involving developing countries in the ISO governance structures, enhancing the role of the ISO Committee on Developing Countries Matters (DEVCO) and encouraging membership upgrades;
 - providing basic assistance to ISO members regarding access to generic information, and to e-services made available by the ISO Central Secretariat;
 - encouraging and enhancing participation in ISO's technical work.

 - (b) Action group 2: Supplying targeted assistance and training
 - Developing training services and targeted educational materials;
 - providing assistance in the usage and implementation of information and communication tools.

 - (c) Action group 3: Involving regions, international organizations and donor agencies
 - Promoting regional cooperation;
 - fostering partnerships with international organizations and donor agencies.

¹ ISO/DEVCO - TMB Survey on Standards, Regulations and Conformity Assessment in Developing Countries, 2002; WTO Survey of Needs of Developing Countries in the TBT field, 2002; IAF/ILAC Survey on Needs of Developing Countries in the Field of Accreditation.

7. WTO and ISO have solid ongoing relations which are based on shared objectives linked to transparency, consensus and global relevance as well as on the strategic considerations of each organization. The Triennial Review has underlined the need for promoting good regulatory practices, including the use of International Standards and conformity assessment procedures, which can only lead to a strengthening of the cooperation between the two organizations.

8. The areas of cooperation between WTO and ISO relate mainly to:

- Providing information on the role of standards and conformity assessment in promoting world trade;
- reviewing good regulatory practices and the use of internationally recognized standards and conformity assessment procedures;
- providing, through the ISO/IEC Information Centre, information on the relationship between WTO, ISO and IEC with regard to world trade and on standardizing bodies which have accepted the *WTO TBT Code of Good Practice for the Preparation, Adoption and Application of Standards*. The Information Centre has now a publicly accessible Web site at < www.standardsinfo.net > which, in addition, contains and provides access to reference publications on standards development and use, and serves as a portal for access to standards and standards information.

9. For any information on ISO's role in providing technical assistance to developing countries, please do not to hesitate to contact

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