



ISO UPDATE TO THE TBT COMMITTEE

INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR STANDARDIZATION (ISO)

This document contains information provided by ISO at the TBT Committee meeting of 8-10 November 2023 under Agenda Item 4 (Update by Observers).¹

1.1. ISO would like to thank the WTO TBT for the opportunity to provide an update on ISO activities.

1.2. The ISO Annual Meeting 2023 was held in Brisbane, Australia in September, which brought over 7000 participants gathered online and 500 more attended in person from over 170 countries. The five-day event served as a platform to unite efforts to meet global needs, strengthen collaboration, leverage technology and prioritize sustainability. The week highlighted the pivotal role that International Standards play in building trust, facilitating trade, and accelerating progress towards an inclusive, sustainable and digital future for all. There were dedicated sessions on trade and standards, including "Global trade: the importance of accountability claims" and "Hydrogen: The Fuel of the future?".

1.3. The 57th ISO Committee on Developing Country Matters (DEVCO) meeting was held on the first day of the Annual Meeting. Mr. Erik Wijkström, Head of WTO TBT section, delivered a keynote speech focusing on realizing opportunities to increase participation of developing countries in international standards-setting and the wider Quality Infrastructure system, to facilitate inclusive and sustainable trade and to improve international regulatory cooperation through international standards. He welcomed ISO's new publication (item 3 below) designed to help ISO developing country members engage more effectively with policymakers by outlining how standards can support public policy objectives.

1.4. At the ISO Annual Meeting, ISO launched a new publication titled [Standards and public policy: a toolkit for national standards bodies](#), developed under the ISO Standards and Public Policy Programme. The purpose of the toolkit is to help our members engage more effectively and establish strong partnerships with policymakers and regulators to put standards on the policy agenda. The document provides a framework on how International Standards (including conformity assessment standards) can support policymakers and regulators in preparing, adopting, and applying policy, and in particular, technical regulations, in line with the WTO TBT Agreement.

1.5. Within the framework of the ISO Standards and Policy Programme, ISO is working closely with the WTO TBT Division to provide capacity-building support to National Standards Bodies (NSBs) / WTO TBT national enquiry points. For example, ISO participated in the national WTO TBT workshop in Mombasa, Kenya in September 2023, organized by the Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS) in collaboration with the Ministry of Trade. The event convened senior Kenyan Government officials and regulators which was a great opportunity to help foster a fruitful partnership between policymakers and the NSB, underpinned by international standards.

¹ In original language only.

1.6. ISO continues to participate in the ongoing discussions to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution and in the WTO Dialogue on Plastic Pollution. A [policy paper](#) to inform the discussions on the role that international cooperation on standards can play in supporting global efforts to end plastic pollution was published in September in collaboration with the Forum on Trade, Environment and the SDGs (TESS).

1.7. ISO's committee on conformity assessment (CASCO) continues to work (within a dedicated task force and involving our stakeholders and partners) on investigating and exemplifying the applicability of the CASCO Toolbox to the environmental, social, and governance (ESG) space, in relation to the frameworks necessary for disclosure and reporting, especially in the view of supporting the trust in claims related to action to address the climate crisis.

1.8. ISO in collaboration with its members, has created a [Competency Framework for standards development professionals](#). This first-of-its-kind initiative aims to support, current and aspiring, standards professionals worldwide to develop national standards that are aligned with the ISO Good Standardization Practices (GSP) including Annex 3 of the WTO TBT Agreement. It offers a structured process designed to develop skills, outlines how to be effective in a given role, and underscores important processes that help build a skilled, engaged and adaptable workforce that drives success and growth.

1.9. ISO has launched a research project "**Standards and regulations**" that aims to provide guidance to policymakers how to reference international standards in national laws. Incorporating ISO standards into national regulations – either wholesale or by way of reference – can save policymakers time and money drafting technical guidelines from scratch and ensure consistency across industries in different countries. This project entails collecting data on references to international standards in regulations of selected countries, interviewing policymakers, and producing guiding documents on the topic.

1.10. Over the next year, ISO will pilot a research project to look at the **societal impacts of standards** in developing countries. The project will analyze the impacts of three suites of standards, which will give ISO evidence of a range of societal impacts of specific standards in select countries, in the form of quantitative and qualitative data. The research will be based on the 3P framework (people, planet, prosperity) and aims to advance ISO's strategic priority to demonstrate the benefits of standards.

1.11. The ISO Standards4Sustainability (S4S) Programme aims to support NSBs and their stakeholders to increase the uptake of selected ISO standards, through a Training-of-Trainer (ToT) approach, implementation in pilot organizations with a focus on SMEs and awareness raising. It also encourages participation in ISO standards-setting activities in support of the UN SDGs and 3P framework Planet-People-Prosperity. With the support of the Governments of Sweden and Germany, over 40 trainees from ISO members and their stakeholders completed related International Standards ToT courses. Also, through a series of joint ISO/UNIDO webinars, our members and their government representatives were informed and encouraged to participate in our standards setting activities in the hydrogen sector.

1.12. ISO and UNDP have [announced](#) a collaboration on initiatives geared towards enhancing international standards that advance sustainability actions by both the public and private sectors, including the prospective development of the first international standard for the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) based on UNDP's SDG Impact Standards and relevant ISO standards.

1.13. ISO will be present at COP 28 in Dubai showcasing the role of international standards to accelerate effective and credible climate action and in supporting climate policy implementation. Delegates and interested parties are invited to visit and connect with ISO at the Standards Pavilion. Updates on ISO's participation are available at <https://www.iso.org/events/cop28.html>.
