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Item 5.6 of the provisional agenda

**WORKING PARTY
ON REGULATORY COOPERATION AND STANDARDIZATION POLICIES
SUMMARY OF MAIN ACTIVITIES AND DEVELOPMENTS**

DOCUMENT FOR INFORMATION AND DECISION

Note by the secretariat

This note contains information on the latest activities of the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6) in 2005, and includes a summary of the main discussions at the Working Party's fourteenth session from 22 to 24 November 2004.

It is recalled that the Working Party and the Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development proposed to organize jointly an international forum on regulatory cooperation and related international standardization matters in May 2006 in conjunction with the annual session of the Committee.

The Committee is asked to approve the request of the Working Party to extend the mandate of its Team of Specialists on Standardization and Regulatory Techniques ("START" Team) (see paragraphs 29-37). This paper supplements the report of the Working Party (TRADE/WP.6/2004/15 and TRADE/WP.6/2004/15/Add.1), which the Committee will be asked to endorse.

Additional information on the Working Party is available on the following website address:
http://www.unece.org/trade/ctied/wp6/index_wp6.htm

Previous related documentation: TRADE/2004/11

I. MEETINGS IN NOVEMBER 2004

1. The Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6) held its “Regulatory cooperation and standardization week” from 22 to 25 November 2004 in Geneva. The week included the Working Party’s fourteenth session (22-24 November), the Round Table on Regulatory Cooperation in South-East Europe (22 November), the International Workshop on Best Practices for National Quality Award Schemes (23 November) and a Task Force Meeting of the UNECE “Telecom Initiative” Project (25 November). More than 120 delegates and experts attended the meetings.
2. Participants in the meetings included representatives of 36 UNECE member States (including 25 countries in transition), as well as of the European Community, and of 3 Asian countries.
3. Three United Nations organizations and specialized agencies participated: the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme.
4. Among the intergovernmental organizations present was the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Interstate Council on Standardization, Certification and Metrology.
5. Eight international and regional non-governmental organizations participated, including: the European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization (CENELEC), the African Regional Organization for Standardization (ARSO), the European Committee for Standardization (CEN), the International Electro-technical Commission (IEC), and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).
6. Observers present at the invitation of the secretariat included representatives of enterprises, associations and educational institutions from western, central and eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), North America and Asia.
7. At its session, the Working Party considered developments on a national and regional level in areas of standardization, regulatory frameworks, conformity assessment and metrology. For detailed information, please see the report of the session (document TRADE/WP.6/2004/15).

II. ROUND TABLE ON REGULATORY COOPERATION IN SOUTH -EAST EUROPE (22 NOVEMBER 2004)

8. This event was organized in the framework of the “South-East Europe Regulatory project” which is financed by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA).
9. Representatives of regulatory authorities from eight south-east European countries presented the current status of reforms in their legislative and standardization frameworks. The representatives reported “success stories” and obstacles in their regulatory developments (full texts of the presentations and of background papers submitted by the country experts are available on the WP.6 web page at http://www.unece.org/trade/ctied/wp6/documents/wp6_04/roundtable/rt_doclist.htm).
10. Regional experiences were also presented from the European Commission, the Stability Pact and CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) perspectives.

11. The Round Table summarized the activities and findings of the Project during 2003-2004, including the results of the first meeting of south-east European regulators, held in June 2004 in Slovenia.

12. As a result of these discussions, delegates agreed on a number of areas/issues where further regulatory dialogue would be required. Delegates also provided information on national regulatory priorities (the compiled table of Balkan and CIS priorities is reproduced in the document TRADE/WP.6/2004/15/Add.1). The similarity of priorities in some areas provided a basis for possible future work on a common regulatory framework.

III. INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON BEST PRACTICES FOR NATIONAL QUALITY AWARD SCHEMES (23 NOVEMBER 2004)

13. The purpose of this Workshop was to draw the attention of policy makers to the importance of quality assurance schemes as a tool for increasing the quality of goods and services at a local level and for improving the competitiveness of companies on their export markets. It was organized in cooperation with the UNECE ad hoc Team of Specialists on Quality Management Systems (QMS Team).

14. Regional organizations and national experts presented their experiences in promoting quality awareness through national/regional quality awards. Information on this event, including presentations, is available on the UNECE website under <http://www.unece.org/indust/sme/qualityws.html>

15. The Working Party reiterated the importance of governmental support to quality management through the organization of quality awards competitions, and the promotion of quality management standards and schemes as a means of raising the competitiveness of national industries and assisting consumers/users to have access to safe products and services of quality. It requested the secretariat to continue consultations with a view to finding extrabudgetary resources to ensure that activities of the ad hoc Team of Specialists on Quality Management Systems (QMS Team) could continue and that they could be incorporated in the work of the Working Party.

IV. ECE REGULATORY/STANDARDIZATION LIST

16. The Working Party started the regular revision of its ECE Standardization List, the latest (fifth) version of which had been adopted by the Working Party at its eleventh session and subsequently published in 2002 as ECE/STAND/20/Rev.5.

17. Discussions at the session showed that there is a logical link between standards and technical regulations in the development of national and regional work and that this should be further considered in the revision of the List.

18. The Working Party decided on changing the scope and format of the next revision of the List by also including regulatory areas and product sectors where Governments see the need for a transnational dialogue on regulatory convergence matters. Such information might stimulate further regulatory cooperation, thus contributing to the elimination of technical barriers to trade and facilitating market access. The Working Party invited UNECE member State delegations and the network of standards-developing organizations to forward contributions to the 6th revision of the List.

19. The concept of the ECE Standardization List was presented to the ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting) meeting in Tokyo in January 2005 and at the General Assembly of the ARSO (African Organization for Standardization) in Accra, Ghana, in February 2005. The List was positively received by delegates as a possible format for identifying standardization priorities on a regional level and thus contributing to the wider involvement of developing countries in international standardization.

V. REGULATORY PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

20. Delegates noted the significance of the Recommendation "L" - "International Model for technical harmonization based on good regulatory practice for the preparation, adoption and application of technical regulations via the use of international standards". The Recommendation was designed to facilitate trade and market access for countries both inside and outside the UNECE region.

21. The Working Party noted with appreciation the successful development of its regional projects with the CIS (Agreement on harmonization of technical regulations) and with the Balkans (UNECE/SIDA "South-East Europe Regulatory Project") and foresaw a positive impact on regional and international trade from these projects following their implementation. Discussions with regional organizations and delegations showed that there was a potential interest in using "International Model" mechanisms and approaches in Africa and Asia.

22. The UNECE Recommendation "L" was also presented at the ARSO General Assembly in February 2005. As a result, ARSO decided to recommend to its members to use the "International Model" as one good regulatory technique.

23. The Working Party also reviewed the status of its sectoral initiatives in the telecom and earth-moving machinery sectors and invited interested Governments to contribute to their development. The first draft of the Common Regulatory Objectives (CROs) for earth-moving machinery was prepared and endorsed by the Working Party with a view to starting consultations with interested regulatory authorities in this sector.

24. In the context of discussions with public authorities, it was noted that the first European Commission report on the Radio and Telecom Terminals Regulation (report on the R&TTE Directive, see http://www.unece.org/trade/ctied/wp6/sectoral/telecom/tele_h.htm) refers to the UNECE Telecom Initiative as being compatible with the New Approach.

VI. MARKET SURVEILLANCE

25. The Working Party was informed about activities of its "Advisory Group on Market Surveillance" (known as the "MARS" Group) in 2004. At the invitation of the Government of Slovakia, the next meeting of the "MARS" Group will take place in that country in April 2005.

26. The Working Party was presented with the ongoing activities of the Nordic Council in the northwest regions of Russia, which relate to market surveillance and consumer protection. A proposal (supported by the Working Party) had been made on cooperation on market surveillance matters between the Council and the Working Party, including the preparation of guidelines on good market surveillance practices

27. The Working Party decided to organize, in autumn 2005, a second International Forum on market surveillance in conjunction with its next session and in cooperation with interested regional and international organizations.

VII. COOPERATION WITH THE COMMITTEE FOR TRADE, INDUSTRY AND ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENTJoint event (May 2006)

28. The Working Party agreed to the Committee's proposal to hold a joint International Forum on regulatory cooperation and related international standardization matters in May 2006, in conjunction with the annual session of the Committee. The Working Party expressed its support for and appreciation of the Committee's work on initiating a dialogue on standards-related policy matters both between subsidiary bodies under the Committee and in the UNECE in general.

VIII. EXTENSION OF THE MANDATE FOR THE TEAM OF SPECIALISTS

29. The Working Party requests the Committee to extend the mandate of the WP.6 Team of Specialists on Standardization And Regulatory Techniques ("START" Team).

Activities since the Team's establishment

30. The Team was established in 1999 to look into means of a wider use of international standards. It prepared the first draft of a proposal which was considered and adopted by the Working Party in 2001 as the above-mentioned Recommendation "L".

31. After adoption of the "International Model", the Working Party requested the "START" Team to assist interested Governments with regional and sectoral initiatives based on the "Model".

32. In 2002-2003, the Team worked with the CIS on drawing up a regional agreement on technical harmonization. During 2004, the "START" Team continued to assist regional projects (in the CIS region and in south-east Europe) and sectoral projects (Telecom and earth-moving machinery), which are based on the mechanisms and principles of the "International Model". The Team held two meetings, in March and September 2004. At the September meeting it agreed, inter alia, on a draft of the Common Regulatory Objectives (CROs) for earth-moving machinery, which was submitted to the Working Party at its 2004 session and endorsed by the Working Party.

33. The Team reports to each annual session of the Working Party on its activities and on the work plan for the forthcoming year (more details on the START work can be found, for example, in the reports of the thirteenth and fourteenth sessions of the Working Party).

Team's plans for 2005-2006

34. The regulatory convergence activities to which the Team directly contributes fall under the "higher priority" segment of the work of the Working Party. Delegations are satisfied with the work of the Team and find it useful. The Working Party would like the Team to continue its work in 2005-2007, with the task of contributing to capacity building and training activities in transition economies; as well as managing and assisting in implementing the Working Party's sectoral initiatives.

35. In the area of "sectoral regulatory activities, the "START" Team is currently supervising the Telecom Task Force. A task force on earth-moving machinery is to be established in 2005.

36. These task forces are to monitor the sectoral initiatives of the Working Party and contribute to their practical implementation. The “START” Team will provide policy advice and practical help to these projects.

37. Hence, the Working Party requests the Committee to extend the mandate of the Team of Specialists on Standardization And Regulatory Techniques (“START” Team) for an additional two years to enable it to provide the necessary policy advice and support to Governments in support of the Working Party’s regulatory initiatives.

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