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**COMMITTEE FOR TRADE, INDUSTRY AND  
ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT**

Working Party on Technical Harmonization and  
Standardization Policies

Thirteenth session (10-12 November 2003)

**REPORT OF THE THIRTEENTH SESSION**

**Highlights**

At its thirteenth session, the UNECE Working Party on Technical Harmonization and Standardization Policies (Working Party 6):

- Held an International Seminar on Regional Experiences in Good Governance for Regulatory Practices (with special reference to Balkan countries);
- Revised and adopted new terms of reference for the Working Party and agreed to request that its name be changed to “Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies”;
- Considered and supported the proposal for the “Earth-Moving Machinery Initiative”, as a pilot project on regulatory convergence using the UNECE Recommendation “L” (“International Model for Technical Harmonization”) and invited interested Governments to participate in it;
- Considered and adopted the terms of reference of the “Advisory Group on Market Surveillance” (“MARS” Group).

The summary of discussions at the Seminar and its programme are contained in document TRADE/WP.6/2003/16/Add.1.

The revised terms of reference of the Working Party and of its ad hoc groups (“MARS” Group and “Telecom Task Force”) are contained in document TRADE/WP.6/2003/16/Add.2.

This report and other related documents (including background papers and presentations at the International Seminar) can be found on the Working Party’s website <http://www.unece.org/trade/stdpol>

## **Introduction**

1. The Working Party on Technical Harmonization and Standardization Policies held its "Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Week" from 10 to 13 November 2003 in Geneva. The week consisted of the Working Party's thirteenth session, from 10 to 12 November, the International Seminar on Regional Experiences in Good Governance for Regulatory Practices, on 10 and 11 November, and an Expert Meeting of the UNECE "Telecom Initiative" project, on 13 November.

## **Participation**

2. The following countries were represented: Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

3. The European Community was also represented.

4. The following United Nations organizations and specialized agencies participated: the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

5. The following intergovernmental organizations also attended: the CIS Interstate Council for Standardization Certification and Metrology, the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), the International Organization of Legal Metrology (OIML), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the World Trade Organization (WTO).

6. The following non-governmental organizations participated: the European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization (CENELEC), the European Committee for Standardization (CEN), the European Confederation of Organizations for Testing, Inspection, Certification and Prevention (CEOC), the European Organization for Testing and Certification (EOTC), the International Accreditation Forum (IAF), the International Electro-technical Commission (IEC) and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

7. A representative of Japan participated under Article 11 of the terms of reference of the Economic Commission for Europe.

8. Observers present at the invitation of the secretariat included representatives of private-sector companies, associations and educational institutions from western, central and eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and North America. Among associations and educational institutions present were the Belarusian State University (Belarus), the Communications Regulation Commission (CRC) (Bulgaria), the European Organization for Quality (EOQ), the Industry Cooperation on Standardization and Conformity Assessment (ICSCA), the International Federation of Standards Users (IFAN), the University of Geneva (Switzerland) and the Yugoslav Union for Standards and Quality (YUSQ) (Serbia and Montenegro).

**Item 1            Adoption of the Agenda**

9.        The provisional agenda, as contained in document TRADE/WP.6/2003/1, was adopted.

10.      The session was opened by the Director of the Trade Development and Timber Division, Ms. C. Cosgrove-Sacks. She highlighted the achievements of the Working Party during the past year, and reported on the results of the Workshop on “EU Enlargement: Regulatory Convergence in Non-acceding Countries”, held in Athens on 7 and 8 November. The Workshop had been sponsored by Greece in the context of its presidency of the EU during the first half of 2003. During debates at the Workshop, the Working Party’s activities and, in particular, its International Model, had been praised as a good approach to regulatory cooperation.

**Item 2            Election of Officers**

11.      Mr. C. Arvius (Sweden) was elected Chairman and Mr. D. Podhorsky (Slovakia) and Mr. V. Koreshkov (Belarus) were elected vice-chairpersons.

**Item 3            Matters Arising from the Fifty-eighth Session of the Economic Commission for Europe and from the Seventh Session of the Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development**

Documentation:        ECE/TRADE/306

12.      The secretariat reported on the discussions held and decisions adopted by the Economic Commission for Europe at its fifty-eighth session and on the outcome of the discussions held during the seventh session of the Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development (May 2003). The Committee had decided to organize parallel sessions with its subsidiary bodies. Therefore, at some time in the future, the Working Party might need to consider holding its annual session to coincide with that of the Committee.

13.      Another proposal being debated by the Committee was to introduce more consistency in the names and mandates of subgroups under its subsidiary bodies. It also requested that its subsidiary bodies take into account the United Nations global mandates, in particular, those related to sustainable development.

14.      The Committee had discussed the activities of the Working Party at its May 2003 session and had supported its regional liaison activities as a means of enhancing and facilitating the Committee’s work.

15.      The Committee had also endorsed the decision of the Bureau of the Working Party to revise its terms of reference in order to take into account issues that had arisen since the last revision of the terms of reference such as sustainability, cross-sectoral topics and implementation.

16.      The report of the Committee session was available to delegations (ECE/TRADE/306).

17.      With reference to the request from the Committee and its subsidiary bodies to reflect in its activities support for the goals of the UN Millennium Declaration, Mr. Arvius, WP.6 Chairman, had informed the Committee that, as a contribution to the UN Millennium Declaration’s goal of creating an “open, equitable, rule-based, predictable and no-discriminatory multilateral trading and financial system”, the Working Party had decided to organize in 2004 a seminar on good governance for regulatory practices.

18. The Working Party took note of the Committee's actions related to its activities.

**Item 4 UNECE International Seminar on Regional Experiences in Good Governance for Regulatory Practices (with special reference to Balkan countries)**

Documentation: TRADE/WP.6/2003/2, Adds 1 and 2; Background papers and presentations

19. The programme and the summary of discussions at the Seminar are reproduced in document TRADE/WP.6/2003/16/Add. 1. Presentations on national and regional regulatory approaches and experiences made at the Seminar and background documents are available on the WP.6 webpage.

20. The Seminar was opened by the Executive Secretary of UNECE, Ms. Brigita Schmögnerová, and the Secretary General of ISO, Mr. A. Bryden.

21. The Executive Secretary expressed her appreciation to the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) for the financial assistance given to support the participation of Balkan delegates in the Seminar.

22. As background documents for the International Seminar, the participants had the provisional programme of the Seminar (TRADE/WP.6/2003/2), as well as written submissions (TRADE/WP.6/2003/2/Add. 1 and 2) and presentations on national and regional regulatory approaches and experiences. These documents and presentations are also available on the WP.6 webpage.

23. At the first session participants were presented with regional experiences/approaches in different parts of Europe and of Asia and also in North America. Regulatory framework and cooperation were highlighted by delegates from European Union (EU), CIS Inter-State Council on Standardization, Certification and Metrology, and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). Background papers from the US National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and relevant UNECE and OECD activities were also presented.

24. The second session was devoted to regulatory developments in the Balkan region. At this session presentations on national experiences were made by a number of countries, namely Slovenia (as an EU candidate country), and on activities aimed at adapting national legal and institutional framework to EU requirements in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro.

25. As an outcome of its International Seminar, the Working Party agreed on the necessity of continuing a dialogue and exchange of information on regulatory approaches. The objective being to improve mutual understanding and confidence building between regulatory authorities; and to encourage and call upon regulators to, whenever possible, implement the least trade restrictive means of meeting legitimate regulatory objectives.

26. The Working Party also noted the usefulness of having an overview of regulatory approaches not only in the UNECE region (in particular in the EU, North America and the CIS) but in other regions as well.

27. In commending this initiative, the Working Party asked the secretariat to compile and publish the presentations and submissions made at the Seminar.

28. With regard to the special funding provided to the UNECE for the participation of Balkan countries in this seminar and follow-up activities in that region, the Working Party thanked the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and confirmed its desire to provide technical assistance to the Balkan States<sup>1</sup> to enhance their understanding and use of good regulatory practice in accordance with the regulatory techniques laid out in the "International Model". It was agreed that the Bureau of the Working Party, the secretariat and a network of appointed representatives from the Balkan States should further define the needs and priorities for this project and therein pay due attention to other technical assistance programmes in the region and the implementation of the technical barriers to trade chapters in the bilateral free trade agreements that had been concluded between Balkan States.

**Item 5            Review of Developments in Standardization Activities and in the Field of Regulatory Cooperation at the International, Regional and National Levels**

Documentation: TRADE/WP.6/2003/3

29. The Working Party considered the paper submitted by the CIS Interstate Council for Standardization, Certification and Metrology containing the draft agreement between the 12 member States of this grouping on the foundations for the harmonization of technical regulations.

30. The issue of any links between an agreement on the single economic space signed in 2003 by four CIS countries (Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia, Ukraine) and the CIS agreement on technical harmonization was raised and information was provided by the representative of the CIS Interstate Council on the work being done to avoid any conflicting decisions.

31. A number of questions regarding the text of the agreement and its possible implementation were raised during the debate at the Seminar.

32. A request was made by the CIS for assistance on issues concerning regulations in some sectors under the harmonization programme.

33. An update on other activities from the CIS Inter-State Council included the presentation of its programme for 2003-2005 for the harmonization of inter-State standards with international and European standards. The programme foresaw the preparation of more than 1,300 standards to be used in inter-State technical regulations. In 2002, CIS countries had adopted more than 980 inter-State standards. These were 68 per cent harmonized with international or European standards.

34. Regarding developments in European Union (EU) standardization policy, it was noted that further extension of the application of the "New Approach" concept was foreseen e.g. on current and future directives in the transportation area. In information and communication technology (ICT), several new EC-directives were also supported by standards.

35. Special emphasis was placed on the contribution of European standardization to sustainable development. Information was provided on a framework directive on eco-design requirements for energy-using products and on the preparation of an EU Communication on the integration of environmental aspects into standardization.

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<sup>1</sup> Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Albania, Croatia and the Republic of Moldova, as well as Bulgaria and Romania in an observer capacity.

36. With regard to the integration of the national standards organizations from the 10 new EU member States into the European standardization system, full membership in CEN, CENELEC and ETSI should be achieved by 1 May 2004.

37. Recent legal developments in Belarus included the adoption in October 2003 by the Lower Chamber of Parliament of a law on technical regulations and standardization. The law introduces the principles of standardization and of regulatory documents that should be prepared and implemented according to principles set out by WTO and used by international standardization organizations (e.g. ISO, IEC).

38. Another draft law (on conformity assessment in accordance with the requirements laid out in technical regulatory documents) had been prepared. It was based on EU practices as reflected in recent EU directives.

39. The Government of Belarus was currently preparing a programme on the elaboration of technical regulations and related State standards. The programme foresaw the preparation of two types of technical regulations. The first one concerned technical regulations covering general issues of product safety. Such regulations would subsequently form the basis of sectoral technical regulations (the second type) in areas such as machinery, electrical goods, pressure vessels, medical devices, diesel and petrol fuels, and toys.

40. The representative of Bulgaria reported on the latest amendments to their Laws on National Standardization, on Technical Requirements for Products, and on Measurements, which had been introduced in 2002. 13 EU "New Approach" directives had been implemented in recent years, including 6 directives in 2003.

41. The previous State Agency for Standardization and Metrology had been reorganized into two bodies, namely, the State Agency for Metrology and Technical Surveillance and the Bulgarian Institute for Standardization. The Agency was currently responsible for scientific metrology, legal metrology, metrological supervision and would also be responsible for market surveillance of products under the scope of the "New Approach" directives. Market surveillance of construction products would fall under the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works. And market surveillance of medical devices would be covered by a new law that would be drafted.

42. Requirements for other products are covered by the Law on Foodstuffs, the Law on Medicines and the Law on Consumer Protection and Trade Rules.

43. A representative of Kazakhstan supplied information on the main provisions of the regulatory legislation being prepared in that country and its links to the industrial policy programme up to the year 2030 which had been adopted by the Government.

44. A representative of Romania reported on the Romanian Standardization Association (ARSO), the national standardization body set up in 1998 – and highlighted its main activities, its standards-setting work (330 national standardization technical committees organized with a balanced representation of interested parties including producers, users, government bodies, etc.) as well as ARSO's participation in European and international standardization bodies. At the end of the first semester of 2003, 26,400 Romanian standards had been available, of which 10,800 were original Romanian standards; 10,900 were adopted European standards, and 4,700 were adopted international standards.

45. A representative of the Russian Federation reported on practical work on the implementation of the federal law on technical regulations, which had entered into force in 2003.

46. The representative of the IEC reported on the decrease in time-required for the elaboration of standards. The average time to develop an international standard had previously been 79 months: today it was 48 months. Many of the standards issued during the last year had even been completed in less than 36 months.

47. The Working Party noted with interest the information on the agreement on principles for the harmonization of technical regulations between the States that are members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). It welcomed the agreement as a practical means of facilitating and expanding trade and integration in the CIS region.

48. The Working Party expressed its willingness to assist CIS countries, if requested, in the implementation of this agreement.

49. It was pointed out that the CIS agreement could provide an example of regulatory cooperation for UNECE member States not only in the area of harmonized technical regulations but with regard to a general framework for the harmonization of legal and other procedures affecting trade or economic cooperation.

50. The Working Party requested the secretariat to inform other UNECE intergovernmental bodies about this agreement.

51. The Working Party also noted the information on developments in standardization and regulatory activities presented by the representatives of the European Community, the CIS, Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, Romania, the Russian Federation and IEC.

## **Item 6            Coordination**

### **(a)            ECE Standardization List**

Documentation: ECE/STAND/20/Rev.5

52. It was recalled that the latest version of the ECE Standardization List had been published in 2002 as ECE/STAND/20/Rev.5.

53. The Working Party was informed that, following a suggestion made at the twelfth session, the secretariat had sent the latest editions of the ECE Standardization List and the UNECE Recommendations on Standardization Policies to the UNECE regional commissions and to the CIS secretariat. The Working Party considered that the List might be a useful tool when drawing up regional standardization work programmes and thus contribute to the involvement of developing countries into regional and international standardization work. Hence the Working Party was interested in the position of other UN regional commissions regarding the List and of its usefulness to other regions as well.

54. To date, the UNECE had received a reply from the Chairman of the CIS Executive Committee expressing gratitude for the information which had been sent to the CIS States and expressing interest in further cooperation, in particular on regulatory issues supported by standards and the forthcoming CIS agreement on technical harmonization.

55. The Working Party took note of this information and requested the secretariat to continue contacts with interested UN bodies and standardization organizations on this matter.

56. In preparation for the next revision of the Standardization List, the Working Party requested the secretariat to write to the principal standardization organizations mentioned in the List, inviting them to report on the developments under the various sectors/sub-sectors set out in the List.

(b) Environment: governmental bodies' participation in standardization work etc.

Documentation: TRADE/WP.6/2001/5 and TRADE/WP.6/2002/4

57. At its previous sessions, the Working Party had considered information on "Environmental protection: environmental management" with a view to conducting an in-depth study on the participation of governmental bodies in related standardization work, as well as on the national adoption/implementation of the resulting standards.

58. Such information was provided at the eleventh session by the delegations of the Czech Republic and Sweden (document TRADE/WP.6/2001/5) and at the twelfth session by the delegations of Slovenia and Turkey (document TRADE/WP.6/2002/4).

59. Finding the information useful, the Working Party decided to continue an exchange of information on these issues and invited other delegations to submit such information to the secretariat.

60. The Working Party invited delegations to continue to provide information on "Environmental protection: environmental management" concerning the participation of the governmental bodies in related international standardization work, as well as on the national adoption/implementation of the resulting standards and asked the Group of Rapporteurs to follow-up on the information provided.

**Item 7** Harmonization

(a) Role of international standards in international harmonization

(i) *UNECE Recommendations on Standardization Policies*

Documentation: ECE/STAND/17/Rev.4

61. In 2002, a new edition of the UNECE Recommendations on Standardization Policies (ECE/STAND/17/Rev.4) had been published. At its twelfth session, the Working Party had invited delegations to submit comments or proposals regarding any of these Recommendations that might need revising or updating,

62. The Working Party agreed that a review of these Recommendations (ECE/STAND/17/Rev.4) should be conducted in the light of any comments or proposals received from delegations or other findings identified by the Group of Rapporteurs.

(ii) *Transposition of international standards*

63. It was recalled that at previous sessions, delegations had discussed the importance of the use of international standards by member countries and of having access to information regarding the transposition of standards at a national level. The Working Party therefore suggested that national organizations and/or government bodies that were members of international and regional standardizing organizations and which vote for the adoption of standards or recommendations might consider making a commitment to provide information on whether (or to what extent) these adopted standards, etc. were transposed and used in their countries. This, the Working Party believed, would show the level of commitment of national organizations to the transposition of these standards and the extent to which international standards are used as a tool for facilitating international trade.

64. The representative of IEC provided information on a survey of the implementation of IEC standards which had been carried out in 2002. Sixty-five per cent of the standards had been transposed as national standards by national member organizations either as identical or equivalent to the IEC standards. Two thirds of international trade in electrical or electronic goods were based on IEC standards. Although IEC had 62 full national members, its standards were used in more than 100 countries. As IEC certification schemes were based on IEC standards, the countries members of these Schemes, even when they are not IEC members, were all using IEC standards. IEC was currently developing a database which would contain references for all new standards when published. This database would be operational at the end of 2004. The database would be accessible by national standardization organizations. These would be invited to indicate whether or not they had adopted or used IEC standards and if they had introduced deviations/modifications at the national/regional level for the adoption.

65. The representative of Israel provided an overview of that country's standardization, regulatory, conformity assessment and metrology framework. The procedure of preparing standards and technical regulations was highlighted, including the roles and responsibilities of different government agencies. Information was also provided on the concept of changing the status of voluntary standards into "mandatory standards" to be used in technical regulations.

66. Owing to the fact that the foreign trade of Israel is primarily with the EU and the United States, the Israeli authorities in many cases are using both United States and European standards (or in their absence national standards of EU countries) as a reference in technical regulations. Examples were given of regulations for pressure vessels, welded tanks for oil storage, industrial safety helmets, baby-walking frames based on this multi-standard approach.

67. The Working Party noted with interest the information on the IEC study on the transposition and use of IEC standards at a national level.

68. The Working Party expressed its gratitude to the delegation of Israel for presenting the national standardization and regulatory system, including the use of relevant foreign standards in their national regulations.

69. The Working Party invited other delegations and standardization bodies to provide information on the transposition and use of international/regional standards in their countries and to ask the rapporteurs to consider such information and the need for further initiatives in this respect.

(b) Horizontal legislation

Documentation: TRADE/WP.6/2003/5

70. The Working Party took note of, and thanked the Estonian Centre for Standardization for, document TRADE/WP.6/2003/5 on national horizontal legislation concerning technical regulations, standardization and related activities in Estonia.

71. At previous sessions, the Working Party had considered information on national horizontal legislation concerning technical regulations, standardization and conformity assessment procedures in some other UNECE member States, specifically, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia and Sweden (document TRADE/WP.6/2001/6), Bulgaria (TRADE/WP.6/2002/9) and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (TRADE/WP.6/2002/3/Add.1).

72. The Working Party decided to continue the exchange of information on national horizontal legislation concerning technical regulations, standardization and conformity assessment procedures in UNECE member States. To this end, the rapporteurs, together with the secretariat, were requested to suggest an appropriate format to be used, to make the information gathered available on the website of the Working Party and to create procedures for the regular updating of this information. On this basis, the delegations which had already made submissions for their countries, would be invited to check the need for complementing these entries and other delegations would be invited to make their countries' submissions to the secretariat so that they could also be incorporated in the forthcoming section in the website.

(c) UNECE 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" - sectoral initiatives

Documentation: TRADE/WP.6/2003/6

73. It was recalled that the "International Model" had been included as a new UNECE recommendation ("L") in the publication of UNECE Recommendations on Standardization Policies (ECE/STAND/17/Rev.4) and had also been made available to delegations as a separate document (TRADE/WP.6/2002/7).

74. The secretariat provided information on the meetings of the "START" Team of experts held in April 2003 (Geneva) and September 2003 (Slovakia) during which sectoral initiatives based on the "International Model" had been discussed. It was noted that the "START" Team had assisted in organizing a "Telecom Initiative" meeting in May 2003 in Geneva (see document TRADE/WP.6/2003/6).

75. The Working Party also took note of the oral reports by the Working Party's Chairman and Vice-chairman concerning their presentations to the May 2003 session of the Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development on the regulatory convergence activities of the Working Party, which had been supported by the Committee as practical contributions to the process of facilitating international trade.

76. The Working Party expressed its gratitude to the "START" Team for its work in assisting industry and Governments with sectoral and regional initiatives on the basis of the "International Model".

(i) “Telecom Initiative”

Documentation: TRADE/WP.6/2003/6/Add.1

77. The secretariat informed the Working Party that the “Telecom Initiative” project had been presented to the UNECE Workshop on “Trade, Business and Investment in a Wider Europe” held in Geneva on 7 April 2003 and had been commended by participants as a practical contribution to the facilitation of trade in the UNECE region.

78. In May 2003, a meeting with public authorities had been organized in Geneva, at which nine countries and the European Commission (EC) were represented. At this meeting, participants had decided to carry forward the work on draft Common Regulatory Objectives (CROs) and to create a Telecom Task Force to supervise and implement this project. The terms of reference for the Task Force had been discussed and agreed at the “START” Team meeting in September 2003 (see document TRADE/WP.6/2003/6/Add.1).

79. The Working Party took note of the information provided by the acting Chairman of the “Telecom Initiative” (Mr. N. Encarnaç o) concerning the developments and forthcoming events under the initiative. It supported his suggestion to request the secretariat to create, as soon as possible, a special sub link on the Working Party website to information about the activities under the “Telecom Initiative”.

80. The Working Party:

- endorsed the establishment of a Telecom Task Force and agreed on the proposal for its terms of reference (TRADE/WP.6/2003/16/Add.2);
- supported the activities under the “Telecom Initiative” and requested delegations to inform their responsible national authorities about developments under this initiative and encourage them to join in the future work of the Task Force;
- noted that the Task Force would report regularly and would list those countries which were actively cooperating and intending to sign and apply each one of the CROs;
- requested the secretariat to invite all United Nations member States (according to Annex C, Article 2.1, of the Recommendation “L”) to join the “Telecom Initiative”.

(ii) *Earth-moving machinery*

81. The Working Party was informed that at the “START” Team meeting in March 2003, representatives of the earth-moving machinery sector expressed interest in following the pattern of the telecom industry initiative, namely to prepare a draft CROs for certain types of machinery and equipment and submit them for comment and consideration to interested Governments. These discussions continued during the “START” Team meeting in Slovakia in September 2003 where the Team agreed to submit this project for formal consideration by the Working Party.

82. A representative of the industry presented the purpose of this initiative and an outline for a CRO according to the “International Model” in the area of Earth-moving Machinery.

83. On the project for an “Earth-Moving Machinery Industry Initiative”, the Working Party agreed:

- to support the further development of this project under the “START” Team of experts;
- to thank industry representatives for the work they had done;
- to request delegations to inform their responsible national authorities on the proposals made;
- to request the secretariat to circulate a letter to all UNECE member States with an invitation to inform the secretariat by 31 March 2004 of their interest in participating in a regulatory convergence dialogue as suggested by the industry initiative.

84. Regarding information from the CIS on their future regulatory work, the Working Party asked, through the participating delegations from CIS member States, the CIS Interstate Council to consider the feasibility of including regulations covered by the UNECE initiatives for Telecom and Earth-moving Machinery in their priority list for the elaboration of model CIS Regulations.

## **Item 8 CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT**

- (a) Review of developments in conformity assessment at the international, regional and national levels

Documentation: TRADE/WP.6/2003/7

85. The Working Party took note of the document TRADE/WP.6/2003/7 containing information on the organization of accreditation in Lithuania and thanked the National Accreditation Bureau for this submission.

86. Representatives of Belarus, Bulgaria and Israel presented information on developments in conformity assessment in their countries.

87. The secretary of the ISO policy committee on conformity assessment (CASCO) provided a detailed introduction to CASCO activities, the structure of the guides/standards under preparation and future directions of the work.

- (b) Accreditation

Documentation: TRADE/WP.6/2003/8

88. The Rapporteur on Accreditation (Ms. Rosza Ring) presented a paper on the latest developments in this area and, in particular, ongoing work both in international organizations (e.g. the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation and the International Accreditation Forum) and regional organizations.

89. The Working Party expressed its gratitude for her presentation and for the very informative overview of accreditation that she had provided and invited her, together with interested colleagues, to keep this document updated.

(c) Environmental management standards and related certification

Documentation: TRADE/WP.6/2003/9

90. The Working Party took note of the information on the latest activities of ISO TC 207 (ISO Technical Committee on Environmental Management) as presented for information to delegations by Mr. A. Hussein.

(i) *Forest certification*

91. It was recalled that, at its twelfth session, the Working Party discussed issues related to the emergence of new environment-related technical barriers to trade and invited delegations to submit relevant information for further discussion.

92. The secretariat informed the Working Party on the results of the UNECE Seminar on Strategies to Stimulate and Promote the Sound Use of Wood and Other Forest-based Products as Environmentally-friendly and Renewable Materials. The Seminar had been held in Poiana Brasov, Romania, in March 2003. Among the issues discussed were: means to promote the environmentally friendly and sustainable image of wood; to ensure fair competition between wood and other construction materials; to address consumer prejudices regarding wood-based homes on certain markets, as well as matters of forest certification schemes and their influence on trade; the dangers of proliferation of forest certification schemes and possible related confusion for consumers.

93. The secretary of the UNECE Timber Committee informed the Working Party on further discussions at the meeting of the UNECE Team of Specialists on Forest Products Markets and Marketing held in conjunction with the session of the Timber Committee in October 2003. The Team had decided to explore the feasibility of initiating a project on the further harmonization of construction standards and regulations as a means of promoting the sound use of wood (the idea had been raised at the Seminar in Romania), as well as explore the interest of potential participants in such a project (Governments and the private sector).

94. The Working Party noted the information and invited delegations to provide information on possible obstacles to trade in construction materials (relating to legislation, standards, etc.), forest certification. The idea of a joint workshop devoted to these matters with the UNECE Timber Committee would be further explored as a cross-sectoral activity by the Working Party's Bureau.

(ii) *Organic agriculture*

95. It was recalled that, at its twelfth session, the Working Party had been informed of the results of a Conference on International Harmonization and Equivalence in Organic Agriculture held in Germany (Nuremberg) in February 2002. As a follow-up, in February 2003, an UNCTAD/FAO/IFOAM International Task Force on Harmonization had been set up to study the issue of harmonization and equivalence in organic agriculture. The main purpose of the Task Force was to promote international trade of environmentally friendly products, in particular from developing countries. Representatives of the Working Party had participated in establishing this Task Force.

96. The representative of UNCTAD provided information on the discussions and outcome of the second meeting of this Task Force, which had been held in Geneva in October 2003. Currently, most consumers did not understand the differences in the numerous standards and regulations existing in importing countries, which in fact often form obstacles to trade in this sector. Hence the Task Force tried to bring together regulators, standardizers and consumers to look at means of facilitating trade. It was noted that, currently, the eastern European countries were not participating in the activities of the Task Force.

97. The Working Party took note of the presentation from UNCTAD, inviting delegations to share this information with responsible ministries/agencies and other stakeholders in their countries.

(d) Policy issues regarding quality assurance

Documentation: TRADE/WP.6/2003/10

98. At its previous sessions the Working Party had noted the usefulness and importance of government quality programmes and of establishing national awards as a means of raising awareness and promoting quality issues among government officials, companies and consumers.

99. The UNECE Regional Adviser on Small and Medium-sized Enterprises presented a questionnaire on national quality models, awards and practices for SMEs (TRADE/WP.6/2003/10) which had been designed for the purpose of collecting information and preparing comparative analyses.

100. The representative of the CIS Inter-State Council on Standardization, Certification and Metrology noted that countries that are members of the Council had agreed to the proposal from Belarus to introduce a CIS Quality Award.

101. The Inter-State Council had also prepared proposals for establishing a CIS Quality Centre in Minsk, which foresaw, inter alia, the organization of long distance learning on quality matters.

102. A representative of a Russian company told the meeting that in Russia a number of quality awards including on regional and sectoral levels already existed and that sometimes the problem of being able to compare such awards arose. In this context, the necessity of collecting such information was noted.

103. The representative of Slovakia provided information on related developments in his country and on future meetings/conferences on quality related matters.

104. The Working Party invited delegations to provide the secretariat with information on their national quality policy awards.

(e) Ad hoc Team of Specialists on Quality Management Systems

Documentation: TRADE/WP.6/2003/12

105. The Working Party considered the status of its cooperation with the UNECE ad hoc Team of Specialist on Quality Management Systems (QMS Team), which had been established in February 2002 under the auspices of the UNECE Working Party on Industry and Enterprise Development (WP.8), on the understanding that this Team would also report to and work closely with Working Party 6.

106. The Vice Chair of the QMS Team presented a paper containing a proposal for an integrated management system. The idea behind this proposal was to establish a simple management system that incorporated requirements regarding quality, environmental, labour, social, corporate and other related responsibilities which, *inter alia*, would allow small companies to include these aspects in their work and at the same time to reduce their certification costs. She proposed that the two working parties organize a joint event in 2004 devoted to quality matters.

107. Information was provided on the experience of a Russian company from the aluminium sector (of about 500 employees), which implemented management systems in accordance with ISO 9000, then ISO 14000, and also standards on safety (OHSAS 18001) and social (SA 8000) issues. The company had later decided to combine them into one integrated management system, which in the end allowed it to improve its performance and raise sales.

108. Regarding the integrated management system proposal, the secretary of ISO CASCO clarified that ISO was working on social responsibility issues. This work was aimed not at creating a new certification standard but at providing guidelines on information to complement the suppliers' declaration of conformity. The 2003 General Assembly of ISO had requested the organization to look into the issue of an integrated management system and of the feasibility of ISO addressing this, taking into account existing ISO standards which included besides quality and environment management standards also standards on food security, information security, etc.

109. A number of issues were raised on the proposal outlined in document TRADE/WP.6/2003/12, its status and expected outcome (model or recommendations) as well as the link between national quality awards and international standards. It was agreed that further work would be required to give this proposal a practical dimension.

110. The Working Party took note of the presentation of the QMS Team and expressed its interest in further cooperation. The Working Party invited delegations to encourage interested experts to join the work on the integrated management system project.

111. The Working Party noted the importance of the matters raised by delegates and agreed to organize with the ad hoc Team of Specialists on Quality Management System (QMS Team) a joint conference/workshop devoted to quality matters and related concerns of countries in transition, possibly in conjunction with the fourteenth session of the Working Party in November 2004.

## **Item 9            Market Surveillance**

Documentation:            TRADE/WP.6/2003/13

112. The secretariat pointed out that, following the outcome of the International Forum on Market Surveillance held in conjunction with its twelfth session, the Working Party had recommended that a group of experts be established on market surveillance to consider the "list of issues of concern and suggestions" brought forward during the Forum and other relevant issues in order to assist Governments in developing effective systems for controlling the conformity, to applicable standards and regulations, of products in the marketplace (TRADE/WP.6/2002/17, paragraph 34 and annex 2).

113. The recommendation by the Working Party on establishing a new ad hoc group had been endorsed by the Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development at its May 2003 session.

114. At the invitation of the Government of Slovakia, the workshop on “Market Surveillance in the Context of a Wider Europe: current approaches and future directions” and the first meeting of the ad hoc group of experts had been held in Slovakia in September 2003. The new group was given the title “Advisory Group on Market Surveillance” (abbreviation “MARS” Group). Mr. D. Podhorsky was elected as Chairman of the Group.

115. Mr. Podhorsky informed the Working Party of the outcome of these events (document TRADE/WP.6/2003/13) and of the Group’s future work programme. Delegates to the meetings agreed on the future programme of work for the “MARS” Group, as well as on the necessity of cooperating in order to identify good practices and, when appropriate, elaborate relevant recommendations.

116. The Working Party

- supported the activities of the new “MARS” Group, and approved its terms of reference (TRADE/WP.6/2003/16/Add.2),
- thanked delegates who participated and contributed to the outcome of the meetings in Slovakia,
- asked delegations to inform their market surveillance agencies about proposals made by the “MARS” Group and its future work plans and, in particular, about its work under “facilitators’ groups” (see the pages 7 and 8 of document TRADE/WP.6/2003/13).

117. Delegations interested in the activities of the “MARS” group and, in particular, in its work under “facilitators groups” (see pages 7 and 8 of document TRADE/WP.6/2003/13) were invited to nominate their experts by the end of March 2004.

118. The Working Party noted that the next “MARS” Group meeting had been tentatively planned to be held in Slovakia in the first quarter of 2004.

## **Item 10      Metrology**

119. The secretariat drew attention to the fact that, at previous sessions, the Working Party had discussed proposals from the rapporteurs for metrology on preparing guidelines for methodologies for measuring procedures (document TRADE/WP.6/1999/15 and TRADE/WP.6/2000/16) and on modalities for such work (TRADE/WP.6/2001/16).

120. The Rapporteur for metrology reported to the Working Party on his contacts regarding this project in the Baltic States and Russia.

121. The Working Party requested the rapporteurs for metrology to continue to pursue contacts with interested regional and national organization interested in this project.

122. Regarding developments at regional and national levels, the representative of Israel reported on the MRA (mutual recognition agreement) concluded by her country in September 2003. The agreement (with other countries that are members of the Metre Convention) provides for mutual recognition of measurement standards and of calibration and measurement certificates issued by national metrology institutes.

**Item 11      Programme of Work**

Documentation: TRADE/WP.6/2003/14

123. The Working Party noted the draft programme of work (TRADE/WP.6/2003/14), which had been prepared by the secretariat.

124. It considered the prioritization of sub-elements of its programme of work and the proposal from the secretariat to link the adoption of its programme work with the UNECE budget cycle.

125. It agreed on the prioritization of its activities and suggested to the Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development that in the prioritization of programme elements under the Committee the emphasis should be on cross-sectoral activities and activities aimed at eliminating technical obstacles to trade.

126. The priorities for 2004-2005 were fixed accordingly:

- |           |   |
|-----------|---|
| “Higher”: | “Measures to promote regulatory convergence”          |
| “Lower”:  | “Aspects of metrology relevant to testing activities” |
| “Medium”: | All other programme elements                          |

127. The Working Party also agreed with the secretariat proposal to link the revision of its programme of work to the UNECE budget cycle and to decide on its work programme every two-years, on the understanding that the programme would be considered and, if necessary, revised annually during its sessions.

**Item 12      Other Business**

(a)      Revision of terms of reference of the Working Party

128. At the meeting of the Working Party’s Bureau in March 2003, the Bureau had agreed to suggest to the Working Party that it revise its Terms of Reference to better reflect the current scope of its activities. It was recalled that the present Terms of Reference had been adopted in 1996. The idea of such a revision had been supported by the Committee at its May 2003 session, at which it asked its subsidiary bodies to take into account in their work programmes the UN global mandates and, in particular, those related to sustainable development.

129. The Working Party considered the proposal for the revision of its name and Terms of Reference which had been prepared by the secretariat and WP.6 office bearers (TRADE/WP.6/2003/15) in order to reflect its current scope of activities.

130. The Working Party agreed on its new Terms of Reference and on changing its name to the “Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies” (TRADE/WP.6/2003/16/Add.2), subject to approval by the Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development.

(b) Terms of reference of ad hoc groups under WP.6

131. The Working Party was informed that, in accordance with recommendations from the Commission and the Committee Bureau on the establishing and functioning of ad hoc teams/groups of experts within UNECE, the Subsidiary Bodies should regularly consider the mandates and duration of their ad hoc groups.

132. In line with these recommendations, the Working Party agreed to consider in future the mandates and duration of its groups in the following sequence:

“Telecom Task Force” (TTF) - at the Working Party annual session in 2005

“START” Team - at the Working Party annual session in 2005

“MARS” Group - at the Working Party annual session in 2006

133. The understanding was that the Working Party would continue the existing practice of considering reports from its ad hoc groups at each annual session, which will allow it to monitor and, if necessary, revise their activities.

134. The representative of France made the proposal to prepare an organigram of the Working Party including its ad hoc activities. The Working Party agreed to this proposal.

(c) Coordinators and Rapporteurs

135. The Working Party reviewed its “institute” of coordinators and rapporteurs, their tasks and contributions.

136. The Working Party thanked the coordinators and rapporteurs for their contributions to its work.

137. The Working Party decided to appoint the following coordinators and rapporteurs:

**Rapporteurs**

COORDINATION	Ms. M. SAUNDERS (United States of America)
HARMONIZATION	Mr. C. ARVIUS (Sweden) Ms. L. ROMANOVSKA (Czech Republic)
METROLOGY	Mr. V. GEDROVICS (Latvia) Mr. E. DE LEER (Netherlands)
QUALITY	Mr. P. KALYTA (Ukraine) Mr. A. HUSSEINI (Canada)
ACCREDITATION	Ms. R. RING (Hungary)

### **Coordinators**

LIAISON WITH THE CIS INTER-STATE  
COUNCIL ON STANDARDIZATION,  
METROLOGY AND CERTIFICATION

Mr. V. KORESHKOV (Belarus)

MARKET SURVEILLANCE

Mr. D. PODHORSKY (Slovakia)

TELECOM INITIATIVE

Mr. N. ENCARNAÇÃO (Switzerland)

#### (d) Dates of future meeting

138. The secretariat informed the Working Party that the provisional dates for the next annual session would be 22-24 November 2004. The practical details related to a proposal for organizing a Forum on quality matters in cooperation with the UNECE ad hoc Team of Specialists on Quality Management Systems would be further explored by the Working Party office bearers.

139. The Working Party took note of this information.

### **Item 13 Adoption of the Report**

140. The Working Party agreed to the proposal from Working Party's Bureau to follow the practice used by other UNECE working parties; namely to approve during the session only a list of the main decisions on the understanding that the final descriptive part would be drafted by the secretariat in consultation with the office bearers, taking into account contributions from interested delegations.

141. The Working Party approved a list of the main decisions taken at the session, which would constitute the body of the final report, to be published as document TRADE/WP.6/2003/16.

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