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STANDARDIZATION AND REGULATORY PRACTICE

Standardization and regulatory priorities

Note by the secretariat

At its sixteenth session, the Working Party invited delegations and international organizations to submit information on their standardization and regulatory priorities. This paper contains information on standardization and regulatory activities in the regions covered by the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the Asia-Europe meetings (ASEM), and on debate held during the World Trade Organization (WTO) "2006 WTO Public Forum". This document is transmitted to the Working Party for information.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. This paper contains information on the results of the standards alignment work at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and on certain findings of the survey on alignment with international standards conducted by the Asia-Europe meetings (ASEM) Member Economies. The paper also includes information on the concerns of industry in relation to standardization and regulation (raised in the context of ASEM activities)
2. It also highlights results of the discussions held during “2006 WTO Public Forum” on the role of international standards in the multilateral trading system.

II. INFORMATION FROM THE ASIA PACIFIC COOPERATION (APEC) AND THE ASIA EUROPE MEETINGS (ASEM)

A. Summary of report on results of standards alignment work in APEC

3. In 2005, the APEC Member Economies launched voluntary alignment work on International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) standards, especially for those that were covered under the IECEE CB scheme¹. The delegation of Japan presented the results of these activities to the WTO Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade (G/TBT/W/275).
4. As of 1 January 2006, 14 of APEC’s 21 Member Economies) submitted alignment reports on 168 IEC standards. The results show that the following nine economies have achieved 100 % alignment for target areas: Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Chile, Hong Kong SAR, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, Taiwan Province of China. The alignment results of the remaining five economies were as follows (in descending order of degree of alignment): Republic of Korea (99%); Japan (86%), Philippines (75%), Thailand (54%), United States (54%). The alignment activities in APEC are continuing.

B. Some results and findings from the ASEM survey on alignment with international standards

1. Identification of obstacles

5. The survey was organized in 2006-2007 and its results were presented at the ASEM meeting of standards and conformity assessment experts held at Bali, Indonesia, in May 2007. Certain comments on the ASEM survey received from the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan are reflected in tables 1 and 2 below.

¹ Worldwide System for Conformity Testing and Certification of Electrotechnical Equipment and Components - Certification Body Scheme.

**Table 1. Identification of obstacles to national adoption/alignment
(in case that international standards already exist)**

No	Sectors/areas to be adopted/ aligned	ISO/IEC Specific standards ISO 1810:1979	Type of obstacles to national adoption/ alignment	Status of member's participation in ISO/IEC/TC/SC		
				Relevant TC/SC	Members	
					P*	O**
1	Metallic flanges, Part 1: Steel flanges	ISO 7005- 1:1992	ISO standard is technically outdated. We plan to propose amended JIS standard as ISO standard	TC5/SC 10	✓	
2	Metallic flanges, Part 2: Cast iron flanges	ISO 7005- 2:1998	Idem	Idem	✓	
3	Dimensions of gaskets for use with flanges to ISO 7005	ISO 7483:1991	Idem	Idem	✓	
4	Copper and copper alloys, determination of lead, extracting titration method	SO 3112:1975	Cyanogen, which is environmentally regulated, is used in the relevant ISO standard	TC26	✓	
5	Copper alloys: determination of nickel, (low contents); dimethylglyoxime spectrophotometric method; Copper alloys: determination of nickel content, titrimetric method	ISO 1810:1979 ISO 4743:1984	Chloroform, which is environmentally regulated, is used in the relevant ISO standard	Idem	✓	
6	Copper and copper alloys: determination of bismuth content; Diethyldithiocarbamate spectrometric method	ISO 5959:1984	Kalium cyanide, which is environmentally regulated, is used in the relevant standard	Idem	✓	
7	Polyvinyl chloride insulated cables of rated voltages up to and including 450/750, Part 3: Non-sheathed cables for fixed wiring	IEC 60227-3	Voltage of Japanese power supply system differs from IEC standard	IC 20	✓	

Note: ISO/IEC/TC/SC refers to Technical Committee /Subcommittee.

* Participating.

** Observer.

2. Identification of the needs for capacity-building for reviewing national standards (by potentially adopting/aligning with international standards)

6. In Japan, there are no needs for capacity-building for review of national standards. APEC conducts a review of Japanese Industrial Standards (JIS) every five years. Ninety-three per cent of these standards have been aligned with international standards. The other seven per cent remain unaligned for legitimate reasons such as safety requirements or fundamental technological problems.

3. Needs for international standards

7. Table 2 reflects the needs by industry, users, regulators and other stakeholders in Japan for international standards that do not currently exist

Table 2. Needs for international standards in Japan

No	Sectors/ areas	Needs for international standards for:	Do national standards exist?	
			Yes	No
1	Packaging	Transport packages for non-dangerous goods – Light gauge metal containers	JIS Z 1602	✓
2	Packaging	Environmental evaluation in manufacturing systems		✓
3	Industrial integration	Environmental evaluation in manufacturing systems		✓
4	Metallic materials	Corrosion of metals and alloys: Test method for isothermal oxidation test at elevated temperature for metallic materials (ISO/CD 21608)	JIS Z 2281	
5	Idem	Tensile testing method at high strain rates (ISO/CD 26203)		✓
6	Idem	Method of hole expanding test (ISO/WD 16630)		✓
7	Idem	Sheet and strip – method for springback evaluation in stretch bending (ISO/CD 24213)	JIS H 7701	
8	Metallurgy	Copper and zinc sulphide concentrates: Determination of silver content; Acid digestion and flame atomic absorption or inductively coupled plasma emission spectrometric method (ISO/WD 11456)	JIS M 8111	
9	Steel	Determination of trace amount of oxygen; Infrared method with oxide layer subtraction technique (ISO/WD 24897)		✓
10	GNSS	GNSS-RTK Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) field measurement systems in real-time kinematic (RTK) (ISO/DIS 17123-8)		✓

C. Industry concerns on standardization and regulatory matters

8. At the ASEM meeting in Bali, Indonesia, information was provided also on the Summit of the ASEM Heads of States in Helsinki in September 2006 and on the meeting of industry representatives from these countries (Asia-Europe Business Forum (AEBF)) which took place parallel to the Summit.

9. Among concerns expressed by the industry at the AEBF meeting, the following comments were made:

"...What is lacking, however, is a general, intergovernmental organisation with the task of developing international standards to be used as national technical regulations for those fields where such work is missing. Other important tasks for such an organisation could be the development of general guidelines for regulatory work, for instance, by formalising rules for good regulatory practice, and the co-ordination of activities of the other organisations developing international standards for regulatory purpose. Here, the specific experiences of the European countries in removing technical barriers within the EU by developing innovative solutions, such as the New Approach and the Global Approach, could serve as useful and encouraging models ..."

10. In the opinion of the secretariat, these comments show that the AEBF participants are not aware of the work done by various international organizations in the ASEM region or beyond. The Working Party might wish to foresee involving in its future work not only European industry but also industry from other regions. Such involvement might contribute to the Working Party's ongoing regulatory and standardization-related dialogue.

11. During the evaluation carried out at the sixteenth session of the Working Party, industry representatives from the Russian Federation stressed the importance for them to have a possibility of raising their concerns with regulators at UNECE Working Party's meetings.

12. The Working Party may wish to continue the practice of inviting private-sector and civil-society representatives to its annual sessions and to meetings of its ad hoc team of experts, also involving other regions.

III. INFORMATION FROM THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

13. WTO held its "2006 WTO Public Forum: "What WTO for the XXIst Century?" in Geneva on 25 and 26 September 2006. As a part of the Forum, the UNECE secretariat with the assistance from the Working Party organized a workshop on "International standards in the multilateral trading system (MTS): A stakeholders' discussion." (see http://www.wto.org/english/res_e/booksp_e/public_forum06_e.pdf). The conclusions of this workshop are reproduced below:

14. “The participants at the workshop agreed that:

(a) Wider use of standards (first of international) and of internationally agreed practices on an international level can contribute to the development of international trade and a faire distribution of its gains; and,

(b) Wider use of standards and of internationally agreed practices on a national level can contribute to better protection of consumers and users and to raising competitiveness of local industries.

15. The participants recommended that governmental officials base their national technical regulations aimed at the protection of health, safety and other legitimate needs on international standards or other internationally accepted practices whenever possible.

16. Participants note the lack of awareness and capacity in many developing countries and countries in transition to use good regulatory practices identified in the WTO context and in other international organizations (for example, as presented by UNECE) and their insufficient involvement in standardization matters. This could be remedied through further development of technical assistance activities by various organizations, tailored to the specific needs of certain groups of countries.

17. They requested the WTO, UNECE and other relevant international organizations to start collecting information with a purpose of preparing a compendium on national experiences in implementing WTO provisions on good standard and regulatory practices with a view to providing concrete options/examples for interested countries in meeting WTO obligations.

18. Participants also noted that forums where different stakeholders can express their views are useful and called for further consultations on these matters in the context of WTO and at other international forums.”

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