



Economic Commission for Europe

Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards

**Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation
and Standardization Policies (WP.6)****Thirty-second session**
Geneva, 7–9 November 2022**Report of Working Party on Regulation Cooperation and
Standardization Policies on its thirty-second session****I. Introduction**

1. The Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6) held its thirty-second session from the afternoon of 7 to 9 November 2022 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. A virtual link to the meeting was made available to allow some participants to listen in to the session.
2. Experts from the following United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) member States attended: Armenia, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Czechia, Germany, Ireland, North Macedonia, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Tajikistan, Türkiye and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Representatives of the European Commission (EC) were also present. Experts from the following non-ECE member States attended: Benin, Bolivia, Egypt, Gabon, Mauritius, Morocco, New Zealand, Nigeria, Panama, Seychelles, Thailand and Togo.
3. The following United Nations bodies and international organizations participated: Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships (CICPPP), United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) and United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). The following inter- and non-governmental organizations participated: African Organisation for Standardisation (ARSO), American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME), Bureau International des Poids et Mesures (BIPM), Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC), European Accreditation (EA), European Committee for Standardization (CEN), European Committee for Electrotechnical Standards (CENELEC), European External Action Services (EEAS), International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), International Organization of Legal Metrology (OIML), International Organization for Standardization (ISO), International Trade Centre (ITC), Réseau Normalisation et Francophonie (RNF), Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries (SMIIC), and World Trade Organization (WTO).
4. Observers were also present at the invitation of the secretariat including representatives of private sector companies, associations, academia and civil society organizations from various United Nations regions.
5. The Director of the ECE Economic Cooperation and Trade Division opened the meeting, thanking the Bureau, the experts and the secretariat for the work leading up to this

session. Among others, she expressed her appreciation for the work on the terms of reference and on prioritizing the Working Party's activities, with a view to ensuring its continued relevance. She also flagged the benefits of coming back to in-person meetings and thanked for the efforts to build the WP.6 community through the Forum meetings in June. The Director expressed her appreciation for the successful integration of circular economy into the Working Party's programme of work and the meetings and deliverables on the topic, in line with the UNECE 69th Commission session (April 2021). She also referred to the forthcoming, 70th Commission session (April 2023), and the theme on digital and green transformations for sustainable development and that she looked forward to the work of WP.6 on this topic. She also noted the other important work which WP.6 has been working on such as gender-responsive standards, including the decision on the new Team of Specialists on Gender-Responsive Standards. She called upon member States to support the secretariat in mobilizing extra-budgetary resources to scale up activities in line with the Working Party's cutting-edge and well-established work streams, the programme of work and the terms of reference.

6. The Chair of WP.6 welcomed the delegates to the 32nd annual session. She thanked all delegations and experts for the recent achievements and the continuation of work despite many constraints during the pandemic. The Chair informed about the internal work by the Bureau to streamline the activities within WP.6 in order to further increase engagement in regulatory cooperation, as well as to identify important areas where WP.6 may contribute and support its stakeholders. The Chair highlighted the valuable work and activities related to thematic areas and groups. She stressed the value of focusing on quality infrastructure and referred to the successful pre-session event on "Back to Basics" on 7 November and expressed her appreciation to the Bureau, experts and speakers. She further reflected on the importance of WP.6 providing a platform for face-to-face meetings and events for information exchange in order to generate true value in the various thematic areas.

II. Adoption of the agenda (Agenda Item 1)

7. The secretariat informed the annual session that the draft agenda ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2022/1 had been amended and presented the revised draft agenda ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2022/1/Rev.1.

8. **The Working Party adopted the revised agenda of its thirty-second session contained in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2022/1/Rev.1. (Decision 1)**

III. Election of officers (Agenda Item 2)

9. Vice Chair Chloupek's mandate ended at this session; the Chair and member States thanked him for his active participation within WP.6. The Terms of Reference of WP.6 calls for one chair and two vice chairs. The mandates of the current chair and two remaining vice chairs is until the thirty-third annual session. An election was therefore not required at this meeting and the item was deferred to the thirty-third session.

IV. Matters arising (Agenda Item 3)

10. The Acting Chief of the Market Access Section underlined the most significant recent developments within the parent body of WP.6, the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards (SCTCS) and within the ECE. The SCTCS session was held on 27 to 28 June 2022 and endorsed the 2022 Programme of Work for WP.6 contained in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2021/10. The SCTCS session also endorsed the *Revised Recommendation P on Risk Management in Regulatory Systems* contained in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2021/11 and the *Recommendation V on Addressing Product Non-Compliance, Risks in International Trade* contained in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2021/5.

11. The extension for a two-year period of the three existing subgroups of WP.6 were endorsed: the Advisory Group on Market Surveillance (MARS), the Ad Hoc Team of

Specialists on Standardization and Regulatory Techniques (START) and the Group of Experts on Risk Management in Regulatory Systems (GRM) as presented in the annexes of ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2021/10. The SCTCS also approved the creation of a Team of Specialists on Gender-Responsive Standards as presented in ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2021/2/Add.1; this decision was endorsed by the Executive Committee of ECE at its 124th meeting in decision ECE/EX/2022/L.13. This concludes the implementation of recommendation 2 that had been presented in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2019/4.

12. He also reported on the substantive priorities of the ECE and its decision to step up efforts to promote circular economy approaches and the sustainable use of natural resources, by mainstreaming circularity and the sustainable use of natural resources in the existing relevant ECE sectoral work programmes as appropriate. He referred that at the 119th meeting of the ECE Executive Committee it was agreed that the proposed theme of the high-level segment of the 2023 Commission session will be on “digital and green transformations for sustainable development in the ECE region”.

13. The Chair of WP.6 presented the report from the Bureau as contained in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2022/INF.1. She underlined that standard developing organizations need to not only consider the scientific justification for safety and environmental objectives to address trade barriers, but also consider commitments provided by the United Nation’s Agenda 2030 for sustainable development and a multitude of aspects related to digitalization. She stressed the importance of quality infrastructure in this context and the benefits which it could bring. She outlined the efforts undertaken this past year to streamline and reinforce the work of WP.6 in support of quality infrastructure. She noted that there were four Bureau meetings in the past period, eight meetings of the Gender-Responsive Standards Initiative (GRSI), five meetings of the GRM, three meetings of the START and one meeting of the MARS, as well as eight news pieces published on WP.6 topics by the ECE.

14. The Working Party took note of the report from the Bureau contained in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2022/INF.1 and the report from the secretariat. It requested the Bureau and the secretariat to continue to report on an annual basis on such activities. (Decision 2)

V. Advisory Group on Market Surveillance (Agenda Item 4)

15. The Secretary of WP.6 presented on behalf of the Chair of MARS on the twentieth annual meeting of MARS contained in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2022/3. Ms. Vera Despotović was renewed as Chair of MARS for a two-year period. As per the WP.6 Programme of Work (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2021/10, paragraph 11b and 11c), the annual meeting of MARS concentrated on sharing best practices in market surveillance with examples from WorkSafe New Zealand, the Swedish Board for Accreditation and Conformity Assessment (SWEDAC), the Finnish Transport and Communication Agency and the START Sectoral Initiative for Equipment in Explosive Environments. The World Customs Organization (WCO) shared experiences of cooperation between customs agencies and market surveillance agencies.

16. In the coming period, the MARS proposes to consider best practices in market surveillance of counterfeit goods with a view to eventually updating the 2007 *Recommendation M on Use of Market Surveillance Infrastructure as a Complementary Means to Protect Consumers and Users Against Counterfeit Goods*. The MARS also plans to review *Recommendation N on Good Market Surveillance Policies and Practices* with a view of updating it with links to digitalization and sustainability.

17. The Working Party adopted the report of the Advisory Group on Market Surveillance (MARS) contained in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2022/3. It requested MARS to continue to report on an annual basis on its activities. (Decision 3)

18. The MARS also completed the revised *Glossary of Market Surveillance Terms* as presented in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2022/4. This multilingual glossary was updated to introduce recent terms and modify terms which have evolved. In the coming period, experts plan to develop a guide to clarify certain terms in the *Glossary*. It is also hoped that this

Glossary can be presented in other languages and eventually established as an on-line tool. A Spanish version is currently being finalized.

19. **The Working Party endorsed the revised *Glossary of Market Surveillance Terms* contained in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2022/4 and encouraged member States to provide extra-budgetary funding in order to make this available through an electronic database. (Decision 4)**

VI. Group of Experts on Risk Management in Regulatory Systems (Agenda Item 5)

20. The Co-coordinator of the GRM presented on behalf of the Chair of GRM on the meetings of GRM contained in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2022/5. He reported that Mr. Stephan Naundorf renewed his mandate as chair of GRM for a two-year period. He also reported on the finalization of the guide developed jointly with ITC on *Managing Risk for Safe and Efficient Trade: Guide for Border Regulators* (see ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2021/INF.1).

21. In the coming period, GRM plans to update the common regulatory objectives on cybersecurity in cooperation with IEC and progress work with the Single Window Domain of UN/CEFACT on an interface of the application of integrated risk management to Single Window. GRM also plans to conduct a survey on the application of crisis management principles described in *Recommendation P on Risk Management in Regulatory Systems* during the COVID-19 crisis.

22. **The Working Party adopted the report of the Group of Experts on Risk Management in Regulatory Systems (GRM) contained in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2022/5. It requested GRM to continue to report on an annual basis on its activities. (Decision 5)**

23. One of the key deliverables over this period has been the revision of *Recommendation T on Standards and Regulations for Sustainable Development* contained in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2022/6. The revision, inter alia, calls for building regulatory frameworks that support the implementation of circular economy principles while preserving current levels of safety. This revision is in direct support of circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources, following the decisions taken by the sixty-ninth session of ECE in April 2021 and in line with the topic of the WP.6 thirty-first annual session panel.

24. **Member States approved the revised *Recommendation T on Standards and Regulations for Sustainable Development* contained in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2022/6, in response to the theme of the 69th Commission Session. They mandated the secretariat to report on its implementation. They encouraged the donor community to make available resources for capacity-building projects to assist member States in its implementation. (Decision 6)**

VII. Ad Hoc Team of Specialists on Standardization and Regulatory Techniques (Agenda Item 6)

25. The Secretary of WP.6 presented on behalf of the Chair of START on the activities of START contained in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2022/7. Mr. Serguei Kouzmine was elected as Chair of START for a two-year period. START supports *Recommendation L on International Model for Transnational Regulatory Cooperation Based on Good Regulatory Practice* through initiatives on key topics for regulatory cooperation. The Sectoral Initiative on Equipment for Explosive Environments and the Sectoral Initiative on Pipeline Safety have been substantially hindered by the COVID-19 restrictions.

26. In the coming period, the Sectoral Initiative on Equipment for Explosive Environments plans to check the continued pertinence of the Common Regulatory Framework contained in document ECE/TRADE/391, especially in light of continued climate change and energy transition efforts. The Sectoral Initiative on Pipeline Security plans to develop a recommendation to ensure the safety of transboundary pipelines for the

transportation of hydrogen. They also propose to hold a meeting in the early Spring 2023 to bring together the stakeholders on this topic.

27. The Initiative on Education on Standardization (START-Ed) proposes the establishment of a Focal Point Network of academic experts (individual professors, researchers, institutions, standards development bodies and member States) interested in including standardization in their training curricula and willing to share experiences and content. This responds to the second recommendation presented in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2019/4. START-Ed also developed a new module for the “*Introducing standards-related issues in educational curricula*”, including a proposed model programme on standardization in document ECE/TRADE/C/WP.6/2012/6 on standards-related environmental issues. The Focal Point Network and the new model module are both presented in the annexes of document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2022/7.

28. It was requested from the floor to disseminate further this information and possibilities of working with other universities on this topic. One comment noted that China is well advanced in this area and could eventually be invited to present their work.

29. **The Working Party adopted the report on the sectorial initiatives contained in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2022/7. It endorsed the START-Ed Focal Point Network terms of reference (in annex I) as well as the new module on standards-related environmental issues (in annex II). It requested the Ad Hoc Team of Specialists on Standardization and Regulatory Techniques (START) and the Initiative on Education on Standardization (START-Ed) to continue to report on an annual basis on these activities. (Decision 7)**

30. The Common Regulatory Framework for Equipment Used in Environments with an Explosive Atmosphere was developed and finalized in 2019. It is an updated version of the original 2011 document (ECE/TRADE/391). This second edition provides significant changes, including the participation in proficiency testing, independent conformity assessment bodies to support market surveillance, certification services and update to the most recent IEC standards.

31. **The Working Party took note of the updated *Common Regulatory Framework for Equipment Used in Environments with an Explosive Atmosphere* (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2022/INF.4). (Decision 8)**

VIII. Gender-Responsive Standards Initiative (Agenda Item 7)

32. The Leader of the GRSI project team 2 on methodology for assessing and developing gender-responsive standards presented on behalf of the Convenor of GRSI on the report contained in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2022/8. A survey on gender action plans (GAP), training and research was completed at the beginning of the period revealing that less than half of those surveyed have completed GAPs and the majority do not have a process in place to assess gender impacts of its current/future standards despite the near systematic implementation of gender focal points. The results demonstrate that there is a need for capacity building in order to achieve gender-responsiveness. She also reported that the *Declaration on Gender-Responsive Standards and Standards Development* now has seventy-nine signatories.

33. She briefly presented on the importance of the term gender-responsive for this work contained in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2022/INF.5. The work within WP.6 is intended to go well beyond simply raising awareness, as the term gender-sensitive would imply. Gender-responsive implies taking action to address gender inequalities which is clearly demonstrated through the *Recommendation U on Gender-Responsive Standards*, the *Declaration*, the GAP survey and the capacity building support. The Bureau of WP.6 and the leadership of the GRSI feel important to reconfirm that “gender-responsive” is the appropriate term to describe its work.

34. In the coming period, the initiative will transform to a Team of Specialists at its next meeting in December 2022 and elect its chair and vice chairs at that time. It is currently

establishing a repository on best practices in GAP¹ with an aim to develop further guidance on the topic and contribute to capacity building.

35. The delegation of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland reminded the importance of integrating the work of GRSI into the normative work of UNECE and encouraged other subgroups to include gender-responsive reporting in their work.

36. **The Working Party adopted the Report on activities of the Gender-Responsive Standards Initiative contained in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2022/8. It encouraged member States to engage in dialogue with standards bodies in their jurisdiction to become signatories of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Declaration for Gender-Responsive Standards and Standards Development. It further encouraged member States to consider financing for follow-up work particularly capacity-building for gender action plans. It also requested the secretariat to continue its awareness-raising efforts and to report on activities at the next session. (Decision 9)**

37. **The Working Party took note of the endorsements from the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards and of the ECE Executive Committee on the launch of the Team of Specialists on Gender-Responsive Standards. It encouraged member States to nominate experts to participate in this Team of Specialists. (Decision 10)**

38. She also reported on the *Guidelines on Developing Gender-Responsive Standards* contained in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2022/9. She mentioned that this is a precise, practical publication that addresses the fundamental need for gender-responsive standards, the recruitment and retention of women on technical committees, the delivery of balanced and inclusive meetings and the processes to ensure standards are gender-responsive.

39. **The Working Party took note of the *Guidelines on Developing Gender-Responsive Standards* contained in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2022/9. (Decision 11)**

IX. Report on capacity-building (Agenda Item 8a)

40. The ECE secretariat has been carrying out a project entitled “Enhancing Usage and Uptake of Standards for Sustainable Development, Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls” since July 2019, thanks to a contribution from the German Cooperation Fund through the Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt (PTB). This work was finalized on 30 August 2022. The progress report is presented in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2022/10. The Secretary of WP.6 presented the final deliverables which include:

- An updated ECE Standards Mapping Platform² which was enhanced with over 21,000 standards mapped to all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from all major international standards development organizations, sixty-four case studies demonstrating how standards have contributed to achieve SDGs, and a dozen expert commentaries from key standards development organizations that explain the importance of this work
- Three publications which were developed during this period (i) *Guidelines on Developing Gender-Responsive Standards* (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2022/9); (ii) *Training Material on Gender-Responsive Standards* (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2022/INF.2) and (iii) *Training Material on Standards in Support of the Sustainable Development Goals* (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2022/INF.3)
- Several awareness raising videos³ which were created by signatories of the *Declaration for Gender-Responsive Standards and Standards Development* outlining their rationale for becoming signatories and the importance of taking dedicated action on gender

¹ See : <https://unece.org/gender-action-plan-repository>

² See: <https://standards4sdgs.unece.org/>

³ See: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL4iZR0KyjSQ9qBPejBhcfcke_HcF9M6r3

- An e-learning platform called LearnQI⁴ which has been launched with four self-directed courses – on risk management, conformity assessment, market surveillance and gender-responsive standards – available now in English and soon in French, Russian, Spanish, Arabic and Chinese
- Capacity-building workshops on “Standards for SDGs and Gender Responsive Standards”⁵ which were delivered: 26 April 2022 (English with Russian interpretation), 27 April 2022 (English), 3 May 2022 (English) and 4 May 2022 (French)
- A final high-level event which was convened under the project on 1 June 2022 under the title “Gender-responsive standards: bringing standards for sustainable development and gender-equality to standards development bodies”⁶
- An animated video which was published to encourage gender balance in the participation of technical committees⁷

41. A follow up project to concentrate on capacity-building activities and further enhancing the LearnQI platform has been developed and is currently in search of donor funding.

42. **The Working Party took note of the project report contained in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2022/10 and thanked the Government of Germany and Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt (PTB) for their generous contribution. (Decision 12)**

X. Working Party Terms of Reference (Agenda Item 8b)

43. The report on the evaluation of *UNECE’s support to the advancement of Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies* (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2019/4) recommended to review and update the terms of reference of WP.6 in line with the *Guidelines for the establishment and functioning of working parties within UNECE* (ECE/EX/1). The Bureau was provided a mandate to undertake this review and update at the thirty-first session, decision 15. The Chair underlined that a good deal of time was taken to develop a solid mission statement and ensure the buy-in of the sub-groups within WP.6.

44. **The Working Party adopted the revised terms of reference of the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies contained in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2022/11 and requested this be presented to the next session of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards for endorsement as appropriate. (Decision 13)**

XI. Programme of work for 2023 (Agenda Item 8c)

45. The Working Party develops an annual programme of work which covers the activities for the coming period. The proposed programme of work for 2023 in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2022/12 reflects the planned work of each of the subgroups and provides a few words on the pertinence of each of these areas of work to the overall objective of WP.6. The Chair underlined that this programme of work integrates elements of the sustainable development goals, circular economy, digitalization and disaster risk reduction, which all support the transversal themes within the United Nations that working parties should take into consideration.

46. **The Working Party adopted the programme of work of the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies for 2023 contained in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2022/12. (Decision 14)**

⁴ See: <https://learnqi.unece.org/>

⁵ See: <https://unece.org/info/Trade/WP.6-Meetings/events/366923>

⁶ See: <https://unece.org/info/Trade/WP.6-Meetings/events/366556>

⁷ See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=45IK9shq83k>

XII. Activities of other United Nations Economic Commission for Europe bodies and other international organizations of interest to WP.6 (Agenda Item 8d)

47. The representative of ISO reported that in 2022 ISO created a Sustainability Unit to continue with the development and promotion of International Standards as effective tools to help governments, industry, and consumers respond to today's most urgent global challenges. One of its successes so far is the publication of the net zero guiding principles which will be launched on November 11, 2022. She also reported that ISO opened its Annual Meeting to other partners and the general public with an aim to guide collaboration and finding common solutions.

48. The representative of the IEC outlined the activities it has undertaken on gender-responsive standards. The IEC is committed to help raise awareness of the value of gender diversity with its national committees and stakeholders. It seeks to meet the objectives of the SDGs throughout its work, including SDG 5. She presented the ISO/IEC Joint Strategic Advisory Group on Gender-Responsive Standards.

49. A question was raised on the role which women play within IEC and technical committees. It is not just a question of salary comparison or number of women present; it is also meant to know what role the female representatives hold (i.e. whether administrative support, or management). Within IEC, there is definitely a move towards more female managers in key positions. Within IEC, the membership is driven by the experts who are nominated by Countries, and this often remains male dominated. IEC sees the transition and has done campaigns to raise awareness and ensures that women's voices are heard when they do participate.

50. The representative of ITC shared insight on its work in the areas of risk management and gender responsive trade facilitation. ITC and UNECE developed and launched in August 2022 a guide on integrated risk management that provide an innovative toolkit for policymakers, border agencies and business to think and act in coordination at the border. ITC has already been applying principles and strategies described in the guide in its risk management interventions in Jordan, Pakistan, Philippines and Sri Lanka, and to support these countries in improving their current risk management systems. She also presented ITC's interventions for creating a conducive border environment for women, especially in Central Asia region, where more than 550 border officials and 300 women entrepreneurs were trained on gender responsive trade facilitation practices. ITC also commended the work of UNECE on gender-responsive standards, which is another important area for women economic empowerment.

51. A question was raised on the content of the training provided to help women entrepreneurs. ITC explained that there are two types of trainings: the first one for customs and border agencies, where women entrepreneurs were also invited to discuss their challenges, and a second one fully dedicated to women entrepreneurs. The latter provides a good deal of information on "how to" trade so that women understand what are the requirements to export their products and understand their rights. There have been cases that their goods are blocked at the border for legitimate reasons which they need to understand, but they also need to know when there are not legitimate reasons so that they are able to defend their rights.

52. The representative of the European Commission Directorate General on Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and Small-, and Medium-Sized Enterprises (DG GROW) presented its strategy for standardization. This initiative aims to address the challenges facing the European standardisation system and to improve it. It is a response to the need to be more assertive and strategic at international level and seeks to better respond to the standardisation needs arising from the green and digital transformation of the EU's industrial ecosystem and to enshrine democratic values in technology applications. She presented the five key sets of actions in the strategy:

- Anticipate, prioritize and address standardization needs in strategic areas
- Improve the governance and integrity of the European standardization system

- Enhance European leadership in global standards
- Support innovation
- Enable the next generation of standardization experts

53. A question was raised on the curricula for the education on standardization, on whether the European Commissions had plans to develop this type of material and whether it might consider using the material developed by WP.6 within its education on standardization initiative. She replied that it had asked the European Telecommunications Standard Institute (ETSI) to develop some material for education on standardization, but that they would be willing to consider the WP.6 material; it will be brought up to the relevant colleagues.

54. The representative of UN Women underlined that we are not on track to achieve SDG5 and noted that at the current rate of progress, it will take up to 286 years to close the gap (on legal protection and removing discriminatory laws). Lack of quality data hinders the analysis of gender impacts of the crises, including COVID-19. She noted that gender-responsive standards, sufficient public investments through gender responsive planning and budgeting and stronger inclusive institutions will accelerate efforts to address the gender inequality and discrimination by leaving no one behind.

55. The Secretary to the CICPPP explained how standards and regulations can impact innovation for sustainable development. For example, standards and regulations can create demand which can stimulate innovation; they can also potentially raise the cost of undesirable practices which can also stimulate innovation to circumvent these costs. They can also create potential constraints though, like technological lock-in or regulatory capture. Finding the right balance of the complementarity of standards/regulations and traditional/core innovation policies can provide an accelerating factor towards sustainable development.

56. The ECE Focal Point for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Secretary to the Industrial Accidents Convention provided an update from the 7th meeting of the Global Platform for DRR and its outcome, the Bali Roadmap for action as well as the Global Assessment Report (GAR) 2022. She underlined some of the key contributions of the ECE including WP.6 to the GAR. Some of the key takeaways from GAR 2022 for the Working Party's further consideration include

- The climate emergency and the systemic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic point to a new reality
- Understanding and reducing risk in a world of uncertainty is fundamental to achieving genuinely sustainable development
- The best defence against future shocks is to transform systems now, to build resilience by addressing climate change and to reduce the vulnerability, exposure and inequality that drive disasters

57. **The Working Party took note of the information provided by other organizations. It requested the secretariat to continue to explore options for cooperation with other organizations within the remit of the scope of Working Party 6. (Decision 15)**

XIII. Panel discussion: digital and green transformations and their relation to regulatory cooperation and standardization policies (Agenda Item 9)

58. The Acting Chief of the ECE Market Access Section underlined some of the connections that digital and green transformations can have with the work of WP.6. He outlined a few positive implications that digitalization and green transitions can have on quality infrastructure such as streamlining procedures through automation, the use of virtual meeting tools and digital metrology tools. Artificial intelligence and internet of things were also highlighted as having potential positive impacts, for example, on risk assessment. He also emphasized the importance of regulatory cooperation and standardisation to increase

needed efficiencies to cope with climate change. At the same time, he pointed that some challenges remain for regulators coping with these transitions, such as the climate change impact of technically storing information. He also referred to challenges for technical bodies handling innovative hi-tech products which combine multiple characteristics and are harder to classify or have become barely visible to inspectors and conformity assessment bodies.

59. The WP.6 Chair presented a forthcoming report of the National Board of Trade of Sweden, highlighting challenges that digital innovation poses for technical regulation, especially artificial intelligence (AI). Her presentation aimed to contribute insight into some of the challenges related to digital innovation which can potentially affect many parts of quality infrastructure and which regulatory communities will need to address in the coming years. Her presentation underlined:

- The regulatory landscape has changed and digital innovations increase the complexity
- Technical regulations risk to quickly become outdated for innovative product such as those using AI
- Horizontal digital regulations do not speak the same language as sector-specific regulations which adds to the regulatory complexity and creates uncertainty for business
- Compliance models and strategies for enforcement of compliance (market surveillance) need to be re-evaluated for digital products

60. The Director of OIML discussed how technology and digitalization are transforming metrology and how metrology is influencing and advancing digital transformation. He also explained how the international quality infrastructure is evolving in response to changing industry and consumer trends and expectations. Additionally, an overview of the metrology ecosystem and its digital evolution was provided including embedded and interoperable networks. Lastly, he described the link between digitalization, digital transformation and environmental sustainability. In doing so, he referenced how metrology advances the three P priorities of people, planet, and prosperity of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

61. The Director of CEN/CENELEC stressed that standardization is a key element of European quality infrastructure. It is addressing many challenges, including digital transformation. CEN and CENELEC have launched a number of strategic initiatives to address the challenges and opportunities of digital transformation including a project that will provide our customers with smart standards.

62. The Co-coordinator of the WP.6 GRM reminded the base principles of managing risks that are known and unknown and how artificial intelligence can contribute. He further underlined how cybersecurity, digital twins and internet of things can contribute to quality infrastructure. He did underline some challenges of products which integrate AI as this can allow products to change, integrate bias or use stored data about consumers. Within the European Market, this may necessitate a change in the 40-year-old product safety regime as the notions of product, producer, harm and market within this regime may no longer be static in products with advanced technologies.

63. The Product Manager of Cotecna underlined that for countries that introduce import control for product conformity assessment, increasing regulatory coherence and streamlining the actions of the different stakeholders in the trade journey is crucial to reduce technical barriers to trade and foster compliance. Digital technology adoption associated with the right processes and procedures has the potential to bring consistency and harmonization in the way standards organizations run their business and to lower their footprint on trade without jeopardizing public safety and environmental protection. However, he concluded that a strong strategy endorsed by a comprehensive and practical framework is the key to making the right investments for the digital transformation.

64. The Secretary of WP.6 presented the results of the 8 June GRSI webinar, “Intersection of standards with gender, digitalization and the environment”. He outlined some of the positive points of digitalization such as more inclusive meetings through digital conferencing

and technology as an enabler of progress and expanding opportunities. He also reminded some of the potential negative impacts of digitalization such as AI unintentionally being hardwired with gender bias, the omission of disaggregated data in data banks or gender bias in search history algorithms.

65. The Chair of UN/CEFACT explained the work on dematerialization and the importance of considering all data exchange as part of a global supply chain and not just within the context of its sole business process. A cross-industry and multimodal perspective is necessary in order to ensure that data can be seamlessly reused throughout the lifecycle of the supply chain transaction. She also presented the work of UN/CEFACT on digitalizing traceability as well as technologies that support logistics traceability such as internet of things and AI.

66. The delegation of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland asked if there were areas where UN/CEFACT and WP.6 could work together in the future. The Secretary of WP.6 suggested that all documentary needs (certificates of conformity, certificates of quality and other) could be based on the UN/CEFACT semantics and through UN/CEFACT projects. He suggested cooperation might also be possible to propose an update to UN/EDIFACT code list on salutations or code list on genders in order to reflect the work of the GRSI and in so doing it would be inherited to all messages using those code lists automatically. Finally, the GRM explained that it is working with the UN/CEFACT Single Window Domain to work on risk management in Single Window systems.

67. The Economic Affairs Officer of the WTO reminded that micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) are important innovators and small entrepreneurs are likely to contribute to technology needed to decarbonize. She reminded that MSMEs are also a major part of the global economy and important suppliers, meaning sustainable development and international trade cannot be achieved without them. Finally, MSMEs are willing to change and recognize the importance to decarbonize, but they need access to information and communication technologies and clear environmental regulatory policies in order to succeed.

68. The delegation of the European Commission reminded the importance of MSMEs and that it appreciated the presentation of the WTO.

69. The Co-coordinator of the WP.6 GRM presented the influence that the legal environment around technologies can have on the development of the digital, green trade landscape. She expressed that there is a fragile relation between regulatory frameworks and risk management with digital tools for supporting compliance and processes assurance in green trade. This is because new assets demand new strategic approaches to deliver the promise of value in trade across value chains and technology roadmaps. She suggested to rethink the focus in our systems to evaluate if they are working as we expect. In this perspective, it might be interesting to further develop the legal environment around technology and digital sovereignty through crossovers with standards and regulations for sustainable development as well as risk management in regulatory systems. She concluded that transformation is led by technology.

70. The Chair of UN/CEFACT advised that there have been many technological changes over the past decades and that the human aspect is the only thing that remains constant in all of these. She recommended to look at these transformations from the human perspective instead of purely the technological perspective.

71. A WP.6 expert from Deytec Inc. further detailed potential advanced technologies that can have an impact on quality infrastructure and contribute to achieving the 2030 Agenda, including AI, blockchain, robotics, 3D printing, and unmanned aircrafts. He underlined a number of the challenges with these such as governance, the coordination of standards, privacy, and including experts from developing economies. He stressed the substantial benefits of digital technologies for developing economies.

72. The delegation of Tajikistan emphasized the importance of improving quality infrastructure with technology. He outlined some of the ongoing initiatives within Tajikistan, such as the State Export Programme for 2021 to 2025, which aims to support domestic procedures, production capacity, using e-government and e-commerce. He presented the trade portal which supports entrepreneurs especially for certification procedures. He

emphasized the Single Window system was successfully introduced in Tajikistan. These advances help to achieve the requirements of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement.

73. The delegation of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland underlined that WP6 provides a valuable space to bring international organizations, governments and quality infrastructure actors together, and that it helps governments understand the role that quality infrastructure can play in supporting green and digital transitions, exchanging experiences on how to do this well. She stressed that StartEd is a great way to get the word out to businesses; she referred that one speaker yesterday commented that entrepreneurs bypass traditional employment models so there is a need to think creatively about how they hear about standards. She also underlined the importance of gender-responsive standards for green and digital transitions (e.g. by referring to gender bias in algorithms and AI, differing impacts of climate change on women, differing informational barriers for women traders). She concluded to suggest that WP.6 should make the most of available links within the ECE such as with the innovation team or with UN/CEFACT. She proposed to focus on areas where WP.6 can add the most value and build on existing strengths.

74. The delegation of the European Commission suggested that WP.6 could prepare some recommendations on digital and green transition. She underlined that digital and green should be considered together, as they are very linked, and the use of digital solutions will most often help to enable green transitions.

75. The WP.6 Vice Chair underlined that circular economy may pose difficulties to trade and especially to conformity assessment. Goods that are repurposed or upcycled may change destination, so the initial certification to put the original goods on the market may no longer be applicable. She emphasized the need to ensure that the certification still makes sense. WP.6 could provide useful guidance on this point as well as on post-market conformity.

76. The Working Party took note of the proposed theme of the ECE's seventieth session (digital and green transformation for sustainable development in the ECE region) and the links that this theme can have with the core activities of the Working Party. It requested the Bureau to explore these links and propose options for supporting digital, green transformations within available resources and in cooperation with relevant international and regional organizations and development partners, as appropriate. (Decision 16)

XIV. Other business (Agenda Item 10)

77. The secretariat announced that it has been able to reserve meeting room facilities for next year's annual session. This would be planned from 23 to 24 November 2023, a two-day meeting. The secretariat will try to reserve the afternoon of the 22 November for a parallel event.

78. The Working Party decided to hold its thirty-third session from 23 to 24 November 2023. It may be preceded by a half-day meeting without interpretation on a topic to be determined. (Decision 17)

XV. Adoption of the report (Agenda Item 11)

79. **The Working Party adopted the decisions and the report of its thirty-second session contained in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2022/2. It requested the secretariat to edit it as necessary and finalize it for publication. (Decision 18)**
