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**Economic Commission for Europe**

Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards

**Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation  
and Standardization Policies (WP.6)****Thirty-fourth session**

Geneva, 26(pm)–28 August 2024

**Report of Working Party on Regulation Cooperation and  
Standardization Policies on its thirty-fourth session**

1. The Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6) held its thirty-fourth session from 26(pm) to 28 August 2024 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 remotely.
2. Experts from the following Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) member States attended in person: Albania, Belarus, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Georgia, Germany, Israel, Italy, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (United Kingdom) and United States of America. A representative of the European Union (EU) was also present. Experts from the following non-ECE member States attended in person: Bolivia and Nigeria.
3. Representatives of the following inter- and non-governmental organizations participated in person: ASTM International, Green Earth Action Foundation, International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), International Organization for Standardization (ISO), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), International Trade Centre (ITC), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), United Nations Office of the Secretary General's Envoy to Technology (OSET), United Nations Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Women@theTable and the 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. A total of 75 experts further registered to listen in to the session through the United Nations website connection.
5. The Chief of the Market Access Section opened the meeting, thanking the Bureau, the experts and the secretariat for the work leading up to this session and the delegates for joining this meeting. He reminded the importance of quality infrastructure (QI) and the topics that WP.6 and its predecessors have been addressing for over fifty years. He highlighted the challenges of cross-border harmonization, mutual recognition of conformity results and emphasized the importance for quality infrastructure for trade of emerging agendas like digitalization and sustainability. The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into products brings a number of challenges within QI which were addressed later in the meeting. He underlined the prominent position of WP.6 to provide guidance on these issues and serve as a platform for exchange of good practices.



6. The Vice-Chair of WP.6 (Georgia) welcomed the delegates to the thirty-fourth annual session and outlined the topics planned to be discussed during this meeting. He underlined the collaboration both among WP.6 subgroups and with other organizations and that the session brought together around forty speakers from all major WP.6 partners. New topics on artificial intelligence (AI) and the work on revising existing recommendations reflect that WP.6 continues to be at the forefront of key topics and ensures that its guidance remains pertinent. He expressed hopes that WP.6 will continue to be a major platform for discussion on regulatory cooperation, QI and related technical assistance. He also thanked the secretariat, the WP.6 leadership and all experts for their valuable contributions.

7. The Chair of WP.6 (Sweden) welcomed the delegates by a recorded message. She underlined the accomplishments of WP.6 over this past year. She underlined that the trade reality of regulatory cooperation and international trade continues to become more complex, despite the multitude of efforts that are taken in various forums internationally to address trade concerns. The emerging topics like sustainability and digitalization as well as diverging approaches to these nationally potentially create regulatory fragmentation and unnecessary trade barriers. WP.6 remains at the forefront of these issues and continues to provide relevant guidance to stakeholders; the conference on addressing digital and green divide is testament to this. The Chair expressed her appreciation for the work carried out by the individuals within the ECE secretariat, the WP.6 leadership and all experts engaging and contributing to WP.6 activities.

8. The Director of the United Nations Women office in Geneva (UN-Women) commended WP.6 on its work on gender-responsive standards and the future work on mainstreaming gender throughout the QI. She reminded that 2025 will be a crucial moment as the 30-year anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action as well as the five-year mark to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); both of these have strong aspects of gender mainstreaming. She spoke of the work on the Beijing 30+ and the regional reports being prepared, providing a summary of advancements on women's equality and the empowerment of women and girls. UN-Women encourage member States to renew their commitments to women's empowerment. There remain some major challenges. Within the ECE region, there is only one of the five targets of SDG 5 on gender equality which is on target. There are large gaps in data availability on sex disaggregated data. There are some legal actions being taken, but too slowly to bring meaningful changes. The pandemic caused significant disruptions. The route towards gender equality is far from achieved.

9. The Secretary of the WTO Technical Barriers to Trade Committee (TBT) reminded the observer status of the ECE and recognized the regular updates provided to the TBT Committee; she said she was happy to have the opportunity to reciprocate and provide a brief update. She noted that a well-functioning quality infrastructure is crucial for international trade while safeguarding public safety. She announced that WTO members adopted at the TBT Committee meeting held on 13–15 March 2024 guidelines on conformity assessment procedures to support their more effective implementation (G/TBT/54).<sup>1</sup> The non-prescriptive practical guidelines aim to support regulators in the choice and design of appropriate and proportionate conformity assessment procedures. She also presented the ePing platform which provides timely access to notifications of new proposed regulations around the world. Last year, there were more than 4000 notifications covering a wide range of sectors and focusing increasingly on environmental objectives. She encouraged interested stakeholders to subscribe to receive email alerts of notifications that could be of interest. Finally, she spoke of the one-time Statements of Implementation to the WTO from Members on the overarching legal framework which Members put in place to implement the TBT agreement. With this statement, Members are also invited to provide information on their National Quality Infrastructure Laws and institutions. The TBT Committee has recently adopted guidelines to facilitate the preparation of updates to these statements, many of which date from the 90s and early 2000s. Members are encouraged to update these statements as

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[https://docs.wto.org/dol2fe/Pages/FE\\_Search/FE\\_S\\_S006.aspx?DataSource=Cat&query=@Symbol=%22G/TBT/54%22%20OR%20@Symbol=%22G/TBT/54/\\*%22&Language=English&Context=ScriptedSearches&languageUIChanged=true](https://docs.wto.org/dol2fe/Pages/FE_Search/FE_S_S006.aspx?DataSource=Cat&query=@Symbol=%22G/TBT/54%22%20OR%20@Symbol=%22G/TBT/54/*%22&Language=English&Context=ScriptedSearches&languageUIChanged=true)

necessary, and stakeholders are encouraged to consult these statements and signal information which might be out of date.

10. The Head of the Standardization Department of the Federal Agency for Technical Regulations and Metrology (Rosstandart) also reminded the importance of QI. She underlined that systemic quality infrastructure in the Russian Federation contributes to the realization of state policy for co-development of industry, improvement of competitiveness, efficient use and conservation of natural and human resources, among others. QI is extremely important to ensure a high quality of life, strengthen international trade and cooperation. Standardization is key, determining the basis for ensuring the quality of manufactured products. The Russian Federation supports the ECE high-level theme on digital and green transformations in the context of sustainable development. She stressed the importance of WP.6 to bring these transformations into a regulatory framework.

11. The Head of the Legal and Commercial Affairs Department of the Swedish Board for Accreditation and Conformity Assessment (Swedac) took the floor to further underline the importance of QI. She reminded how a well-developed QI helps build trust between businesses as well as with consumers, which, among other things, contributes to economic growth. She underlined the benefits for States, for businesses and for consumers. For States, QI is necessary to ensure that daily life does not harm citizens and protects the environment; it also establishes a fair competition on the market and ensures that prices paid are accurate. For businesses, QI is essential to ensure that measurements are accurate, and components meet regulatory requirements; however, a certain level of knowledge of regulations is necessary obliging many companies, especially smaller ones, to call upon professional help to navigate the requirements. For consumers, QI provides assurance of trust in their everyday life; labelling and certification marks can help consumers to trust products.

## I. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)

12. The secretariat informed the annual session of one minor correction in the title of document symbol ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2024/9 under agenda item 5 of the provisional agenda.

13. **Member States adopted the *Provisional agenda of its thirty-fourth session* (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2024/1). (Decision 1)**

## II. Matters arising (agenda item 2)

14. The Chief of the Market Access Section reported on the ninth session of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards (SCTCS) which was held from 26(pm) to 28 June 2024, and during which the WP.6 report (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2023/2), the WP.6 programme of work for 2024 (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2023/14) and the *Revision of Recommendation K on Metrological Assurance of Conformity Assessment and Testing* (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2023/5) were reviewed and endorsed. The renewal of the WP.6 subgroups in the annex of the programme of work were also endorsed. The SCTCS commended WP.6 for its efforts to streamline and clarify its internal procedures (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2023/12 and ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2023/13). The SCTCS also took note of the publication *The Basics of Quality Infrastructure for Trade* (ECE/TRADE/478) and expressed its appreciation for the efforts to clarify the base principles of WP.6 work; it encouraged further “basics” publications. He provided an overview of progress made since the recent evaluation performed by the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) of the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division (ECTD). He informed about the development of the summaries of the technical assistance requests presented to the SCTCS as well as the ECE online tool to track all technical cooperation requests, which is being rolled out. Finally, he referred to the ECE seventieth Commission theme on “digital and green transformations for sustainable development in the ECE region” (see E/ECE/1504) and commended the efforts of WP.6 to further explore this topic as demonstrated in the WP.6 third forum report (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2024/3). He mentioned that at its 134th meeting on 1 July 2024, the ECE Executive Committee (EXCOM) designated “Climate action and resilient infrastructure for a sustainable future” as crosscutting theme for the high-level segment of the seventy-first

Commission session, to be held on 9 – 10 April 2025, and invited relevant subsidiary bodies of the ECE and the secretariat to consider how they may contribute, as appropriate, within their respective mandates, ongoing work and existing resources. He also announced that the next SCTCS meeting will be on 23 and 24 June 2025.

15. The Vice-Chair of WP.6 (Canada) presented the report from the Bureau (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2024/INF.1). She reminded the internal procedures which have been put in place and explained how these have been rolled out; this has been a positive advancement albeit with a few small points to fine-tune which will be addressed in the coming months. She provided a general overview of the activities since the thirty-third annual session, underlining the efforts to revise existing recommendations and guidance to ensure that these remain pertinent. She commended all subgroups for their progress during the past period, notably the START group which has been particularly active with AI and hydrogen pipelines projects. She provided an overview of the gender balance reported by all of the subgroups, noting that WP.6 is approaching gender balance, and the secretariat and leadership will continue to work towards balance in all activities. She outlined the liaison work with other organizations (see the annex of the report from the Bureau). She also presented the recent publication on *The Basics of Quality Infrastructure for Trade* (ECE/TRADE/478) which provides a high-level overview of the concepts and terms found within QI, noting the usefulness of this publication for non-experts. She then announced the imminent release of a follow-up publication on *The Basics of Risk Management for Trade* which is another example of good practice for outreach and dissemination of the core themes covered under WP.6. She thanked all members, experts, leadership and the secretariat for their contributions into the success of WP.6 and its deliverables.

16. **Member States took note of the Report from the Bureau of Working Party 6 (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2024/INF.1) and the report from the secretariat. They also took note of the publication on *The Basics of Quality Infrastructure for Trade* (ECE/TRADE/478) and thanked WP.6 and its secretariat for its efforts to clarify the topics on which it works. They requested the WP.6 Bureau and the secretariat to continue to report on an annual basis on matters arising. (Decision 2)**

17. **Member States took note of the Report of third annual forum: *Quality infrastructure for trade and the digital and green transformation* (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2024/3) and thanked WP.6 and its secretariat for clarifying how quality infrastructure and the topics of WP.6 relate to the Commission theme of digital and green transformations for sustainable development in the ECE region. They requested the secretariat to raise these contributions to the attention of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards and other parent bodies as appropriate. They encouraged WP.6 to continue to explore the impact of digital and green transformations on quality infrastructure and develop guidance on the topic. (Decision 3)**

18. **Member States welcomed the report on progress made on implementing the recommendations of the evaluation of subprogramme 4 and subprogramme 6 (implemented by the ECE Economic Cooperation and Trade Division (ECTD)) undertaken by the Office of Internal Oversight (OIOS) (ECE Executive Committee informal document no. 2023/21), notably on ensuring integration of gender, environment, disability inclusion, and human rights considerations in its various workstreams. They also invited the WP.6 Bureau to work with the secretariat on the implementation of the recommendations and to report back in 2025; and called on all member States and development partners to work with the secretariat in support of the implementation of the ECE strategies on mainstreaming these issues. (Decision 4)**

### **III. Group of Experts on Risk Management in Regulatory Systems (agenda item 3)**

19. The Chair of the Group of Experts on Risk Management in Regulatory Systems (GRM) reported on the fourteenth meeting of GRM which took place during the third WP.6 Forum on 2 and 3 April 2024 as contained in the subgroup's report

(ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2024/4). Ms. Alexia Davison (United Kingdom) was appointed Chair; Mr. Valentin Nikonov (Israel) and Mr. Donald Macrae (United Kingdom) were appointed Vice-Chair. As per the WP.6 programme of work (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2023/14, paragraph 14a), the annual meeting of GRM hosted a webinar which demonstrated how the suite of risk management recommendations have been implemented<sup>2</sup> with examples from Armenia, Greece, Kosovo,<sup>3</sup> Latvia and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The fourteenth meeting also featured a conference on how risk management techniques can contribute to green, digital transformations.<sup>4</sup> The Chair stressed the risk-based approach for regulating AI systems in the EU *Artificial Intelligence Act*. She underlined the ongoing work within GRM on integrated risk management in support of *Recommendation V on Addressing Product Non-Compliance Risk in International Trade*, which was the focus of the remaining presentation time of the GRM to the thirty-fourth session.

20. The Vice-Chair of GRM (Israel) and Project Lead for the integrated risk management (IRM) in single window (SW) systems reported on the progress on the project, including the survey on this topic (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2024/5) and the initial findings from survey responses presented to the session (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2024/INF.2). This project builds on several WP.6 deliverables, including *Recommendation S on Applying Predictive Risk Management Tools for Targeted Market Surveillance*, *Recommendation V on Addressing Product Non-Compliance Risks in International Trade*, and the ITC-ECE guide on *Managing Risks for Safe, Efficient Trade*. It further develops the concept of IRM in border control by leveraging the complementarity between the concepts of IRM and SW. The initial findings from the survey provide a solid foundation for the development of the project's guidance document. They indicate that all stakeholders acknowledge the critical role of a SW in IRM, and agree that IRM can be optimized when combined with a SW. Customs authorities are often playing the leading role in building an IRM system, which implies the creation of a national strategy that ensures effective cooperation among all stakeholders. However, individual risk management capacity of border control agencies remains a challenge for IRM: in some cases, agencies are not utilizing existing technologies due to lack of skills, knowledge and experience. The final guidance document is expected to be completed in the coming period for presentation at the thirty-fifth session in 2025.

21. The Vice-Chair of GRM (United Kingdom) explained the base concept of IRM as ways of interfacing risk systems with other systems and illustrated this with some examples. Within one organization, rather than considering risks out of their context, it manages these as a framework, which is a form of IRM. Where all the regulatory enforcement authorities in a country each have such a framework, the government could take a holistic view across the range of regulatory systems, seeing how they could interconnect and reinforce each other. He presented some of the efforts that he has engaged in capacity building of risk management systems around the world. This has also worked across national boundaries as in the case of the GCC, where a regional approach has been developed for a market surveillance system with pilots that test regional supply chains as well as products. One of the keys to IRM working successfully is to share risk criteria across organizations, which is applied by environment authorities under the Integrated Risk Assessment Method from the EU Network for Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law (IMPEL). The Vice-Chair underlined that risk is principally about defining the values which need to be addressed by risk systems. The biggest challenge to IRM has come from variations in risk appetite where parties could agree on the risk assessment but disagree on whether the identified risks were acceptable or not. This has been illustrated by the Dutch having different tolerability criteria to the United Kingdom.

22. The Trade Facilitation Advisor of ITC presented the current focus areas and programmes being conducted on improving risk management systems in cross-border trade at both the national and regional levels. She reminded that ITC's work on this topic involves modernizing risk management systems in line with requirements of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) and modern information and communication technologies

<sup>2</sup> See: <https://unece.org/info/events/event/387564>

<sup>3</sup> References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

<sup>4</sup> See: <https://unece.org/info/events/event/387911> and ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2024/3

(ICT); enhancing IRM with a view to integrate and streamline agencies requirements at the border; and building capacity through trainings and sharing experiences. She outlined that ITC's approach to modernizing and integrating risk management systems rests on principles, strategy and a roadmap laid out in a joint ITC-ECE 2022 guide on *Managing risk for safe, efficient trade*.<sup>5</sup> Based on this guide, a dedicated online curriculum and training course is being developed to help policymakers, border agencies and business alike to think and act in coordination at the border.

23. Questions were raised about the identification of values presented by the Vice-Chair of GRM (United Kingdom) and the convergence of these. There was also a comment that risk management is often considered from a regulatory agency perspective and a question was raised on whether it should be looked at from a broader perspective. The GRM team noted that it is trying to work towards convergence, but there are political drivers which can lead to divergence. The values which are usually considered are those of the overall society, so these should cover the points of view from businesses and consumers as well. The GRM Chair also underlined that values are not permanently fixed, that they will evolve with time; it is therefore necessary to put in place mechanisms to continually review and refresh them. Finally, the Trade Facilitation Advisor of the ITC noted that defining values at a national level is easier than finding consensus at an international level; but best practices and efforts to include the points of view of all stakeholders can assist in working toward convergence.

24. **The member States adopted the *Report of activities under the Group of Experts on Risk Management in Regulatory Systems 2023–2024* (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2024/4). They requested the secretariat and the Group of Experts to continue to report on an annual basis on these activities. Member States also emphasized the critical importance of extra-budgetary funding to support capacity building in this area. They called on donors and development partners to consider providing additional funding for undertaking follow-up work on this topic. (Decision 5)**

25. **Member States took note of the *Survey on integrated risk management in single window systems: Best practices and challenges* (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2024/5) and encouraged member States to consider responding to this questionnaire. They further encouraged the GRM to consolidate responses and develop a guide grouping best practices in this area. (Decision 6)**

#### **IV. Team of Specialists on Gender-Responsive Standards (agenda item 4)**

26. The Chair of the Team of Specialists on Gender-Responsive Standards (ToS-GRS) reported on the second annual meeting of the ToS-GRS which took place during the third WP.6 Forum on 3 and 4 April 2024 as contained in the group's report (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2024/6). Ms. Michelle Parkouda (Canada) was appointed Chair; Ms. Lucy Salt (New Zealand) and Ms. Stephanie Eynon (United Kingdom) were appointed Vice-Chair. As per the WP.6 programme of work (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2023/14, paragraph 16e), the annual meeting, as well as some of the working meetings, featured information-sharing best practices and returns on experience<sup>6</sup> with examples from Albania, Australia, Benin, Cameroon, Canada, Georgia, Italy and Spain. The working meetings featured invited guests on gender bias in finance and on anthropometrics in European harmonized standards (from the European Commission Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW)). The first annual meeting also featured a conference on gender considerations for green and digital transformations.<sup>7</sup> The ToS-GRS also hosted a conference which underlined the importance to ensure that gender remains at the forefront of the debate in transversal topics such as standards and circular economy.<sup>8</sup> She finally underlined the importance of

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<sup>5</sup> See: <https://intracen.org/resources/publications/Managing-Risk>

<sup>6</sup> See: <https://unece.org/info/events/event/387566>

<sup>7</sup> See: <https://unece.org/info/events/event/387904>

<sup>8</sup> See: <https://unece.org/info/events/event/375760>

capacity building on developing standards-related gender action plan (GAP) which was the focus of the remaining presentation time of the ToS-GRS to the thirty-fourth session.

27. The Secretary of WP.6 presented a brief report on responses to the questionnaire from seventeen standards bodies on implementing standards-related GAPs compared to the annex of *Recommendation U on Gender-Responsive Standards*<sup>9</sup> and compared to the ECE 2015 *Guide to Drafting a National Trade Facilitation (NTF) Roadmap*.<sup>10</sup> Statistically, the actual implementations only cover a fraction of the activities suggested in the annex of *Recommendation U*; these mostly pertain to gender inclusivity in the standards committees, sex-disaggregated data and working collaboratively with other organizations. Very few of the activities reported in actual implementations pertain to developing gender-responsive standards or internal processes to the standards body (the two other key areas of activity suggested in the annex of *Recommendation U*). Comparing the approach to the *NTF Roadmap*, he noted that it could be worthwhile to have a vision statement which summarizes the objectives and expected benefits which could help to motivate those concerned. He further suggested that GAPs might take the approach of existing ECE tools (e.g. the *NTF Roadmap*) to formulate activities in a quantifiable form (using figures) with timelines. Overall, he stressed that all actions which work towards gender equality are positive and that the respondents of the questionnaire should be congratulated for their work in this regard.

28. The Capacity Building Project Manager of ISO presented the ISO GAP which is in its third iteration and is a key strategic guidance for ISO and its gender work. She reflected on the catalyst that started the focus on gender in its standardization work, linked directly to the *ECE Declaration on Gender-Responsive Standards and Standards Development*.<sup>11</sup> This concept has evolved into a key strategic priority for the organization. She explained the key areas of work to integrate gender into standardization and what's been done to develop gender responsive standards and the support provided to ISO members to ensure gender remains a focus at the national level.

29. The Director of Cooperation and International Relations of the Spanish Association for Standardization (UNE) stressed that UNE is firmly committed to gender equality. In alignment with its *Strategy 2025*, UNE signed the *ECE Declaration on GRS*. In 2022, UNE developed its own GAP with specific actions to be developed until 2026 on training, recruitment, work balance and promotion among other activities. Gender issues can have an impact in many situations and UNE believes that standards can serve as a lever for a paradigm shift, by taking into account all realities and promoting diversity and inclusion. UNE has its share of responsibility to promote standards that integrate a gender perspective, thus contributing to the fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on gender equality.

30. The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) noted that it coordinates the standardization activities in the United States but does not develop standards. Instead, standards development in the United States is carried out by independent organizations. These members have been increasingly vocal in their support of gender-responsive standards, some of which have signed the *ECE Declaration on GRS* and are active in the international community to promote gender mainstreaming as reminded by the representative from ASTM-International. She noted that the ANSI organizational structure and by-laws prevent it from signing the declaration. She asked if ToS-GRS has considered how to capture or promote additional efforts beyond the national level. The ToS-GRS Chair underlined that the Standards Council of Canada has a similar structure and that they have been inventive on how to approach gender-responsive standards and the *ECE Declaration on GRS*.

31. Several comments were raised about the age balance compared to gender balance during the presentation from ISO. A graph was shared that noted that as the age of participants in standards development increases, the participation of women decreases. ISO confirmed that it captures data on a number of variables, not just gender and is also working on statistics on the quality of participation (e.g. participation time, speaking time). Another question was

<sup>9</sup> See: [https://unece.org/DAM/trade/wp6/Recommendations/Rec\\_U\\_en.pdf](https://unece.org/DAM/trade/wp6/Recommendations/Rec_U_en.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> See: ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2024/7, <https://unece.org/info/Trade/CEFACT/pub/2387>

<sup>11</sup> See: <https://unece.org/trade/wp6/Gender-Resp-Stdards-declaration>

raised about the retention rate of experts. The UNE underlined the difficulty of attracting quality experts (regardless of gender) and the efforts that are made to retain these experts after they begin to participate. She explained that women are further invited to become ambassadors of standardization which in turn encourages other women to join the development work.

32. **Member States adopted the *Report of activities of the Team of Specialists on Gender-Responsive Standards 2023–2024* (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2024/6). They encouraged all member States to engage in dialogue with standards development bodies in their jurisdiction to become signatories of the *ECE Declaration for Gender-Responsive Standards and Standards Development* and to also consider submitting examples of any standards-related gender action plans using the GRS template questionnaire for this. They also requested that the secretariat prioritize regrouping and relabelling all materials available on the website from previous events into a single resource centre. They further requested the Team of Specialists and its secretariat to continue its awareness-raising efforts and to report on an annual basis on these activities. (Decision 7)**

## V. Advisory Group on Market Surveillance (agenda item 5)

33. The Chair of the Advisory Group on Market Surveillance (MARS) reported on the twenty-second annual meeting which took place during the third WP.6 Forum on 4 and 5 April 2024 as contained in the group's report (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2024/8). Mr. Jan Deconinck (Belgium) was appointed Chair, Mr. Ivan Hendriks (Belgium) and Ms. Lucy Salt (New Zealand) were appointed Vice-Chair. As per the WP.6 programme of work (ECE/CTCS/WP.6 2023/14, paragraph 12c), the annual meeting featured exchanges of experience on market surveillance<sup>12</sup> with examples from New Zealand and Türkiye. The annual meeting also featured a conference on market surveillance and green and digital transformations.<sup>13</sup> The Chair briefly presented the release as a publication (ECE/TRADE/482) of *Recommendation K on Metrological Assurance of Conformity Assessment and Testing, Third Edition* which was approved at the thirty-third session of WP.6. He also briefly presented the finalized *Revision of Recommendation M: the Use of Market Surveillance Infrastructure as a Complementary Means to Protect Consumers against Counterfeit Goods* (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2024/9) which was the focus of the remaining presentation time of MARS to the thirty-fourth session.

34. A Legal Affairs Officer of the WTO presented the WTO rulebook which plays a significant role in the fight against illicit trade. This is reflected in three key agreements of the WTO: the TFA, the TBT and the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS). Each of these agreements contribute in their own way to combat against illicit trade, through improving transparency, predictability and streamlining procedures (in the TFA); through conformity assessment procedures which provide government the means to verify products against quality, health and safety standards and regulations (in the TBT); and through minimum standards for intellectual property protection and enforcement (in the TRIPS). She underlined the relevance of the ECE revised *Recommendation M*.

35. The Representative of the Ministry of Internal and Foreign Trade of the Republic of Serbia explained the cooperation between national agencies in combatting against counterfeit products. She explained that market surveillance inspectors under the Ministry of Internal and Foreign Trade are the competent intellectual property rights enforcement authority and outlined the activities which they perform in this role. She further explained the cooperation objectives of the Serbian market surveillance authorities.

36. A question was raised about the sale and distribution of products through digital channels. The representative from Serbia explained that the Ministry of Interior is in charge of investigations of electronic communication and high-tech crime. E-investigation

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<sup>12</sup> See: <https://unece.org/info/events/event/387570>

<sup>13</sup> See: <https://unece.org/info/events/event/387966>



administrative procedures have been introduced linking to counterfeiting problems in e-commerce.

37. **Member States adopted the *Report of activities under the Advisory Group on Market Surveillance 2023–2024* (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2024/8). They encouraged member States to utilize the network of market surveillance agencies within MARS to exchange on best practices and identify emerging trends to contribute to reducing technical barriers to trade. They requested the secretariat and the Advisory Group to continue to report on an annual basis on these activities. (Decision 8)**

38. **Member States adopted the *Revision of Recommendation M: Use of Market Surveillance Infrastructure as a Complementary Means to Protect Users against Counterfeit Goods* (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2024/9). (Decision 9)**

## VI. Ad Hoc Team of Specialists on Standardization and Regulatory Techniques (agenda item 6)

39. The Vice-Chair of WP.6 (Israel) presented, on behalf of the Chair of START, on the twenty-fourth annual meeting of START which took place during the third WP.6 Forum on 5 April 2024 as contained in the team's report (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2024/10).<sup>14</sup> Mr. Ronald Tse (Canada) was appointed as Chair. The twenty-fourth annual meeting also featured a conference organized jointly with the Sustainable Energy Division (SED) Hydrogen Task Force (HTF) on harmonizing regulatory requirements on pipeline security for hydrogen (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2024/INF.3),<sup>15</sup> in support of the ongoing project on this topic. During this period, START finalized a revision of its base recommendation, *Revision of Recommendation L on an International Model for Product/Service Conformity Based on Transnational Regulatory Cooperation* (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2024/13). He noted that this revision clarified the inclusion of services (which was only hinted at in the previous version) and streamlined the title so that it is clear what "international model" covers (product/service conformity – which was missing in the previous title). He further underlined the ongoing work within the education on standardization initiative. He briefly introduced the work on the regulatory compliance of products and/or services with embedded artificial intelligence or other digital technologies, which was the focus of the remaining presentation time of START to the thirty-fourth session.

40. The Project Leader of the WP.6 project on AI presented the *Overarching common regulatory arrangement for the regulatory compliance of products and/or service with embedded artificial intelligence or other digital technologies* (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2024/11) and the *Declaration for technical regulation of products with embedded artificial intelligence* (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2024/12). The conformity of products with embedded AI presents some challenges to market surveillance agencies as the products themselves can evolve after being released onto the market and as the actual content of the programming can be unknown and difficult to assess. These documents provide the base principles which have been identified when considering the conformity of such products and the *Declaration* provides an opportunity for relevant national agencies to demonstrate their intention to align to these base principles.

41. The OSET AI Policy Lead provided an update on the work within the United Nations AI Advisory Board which was established by the Secretary General and is comprised of 39 members of 33 nationalities. This group has prepared a report which will be presented the following month and which observes a net increase in international AI governance efforts since the release of Chat-GPT. Only seven countries are taking part in all AI governance initiatives in multiple international organizations, compared to 118 countries that are party to none of these initiatives; there is a gap in international governance which needs to be more inclusive globally. The final report has 17 recommendations based on three common areas: common understanding, common ground and common benefits. The Advisory Board

<sup>14</sup> See: <https://unece.org/info/events/event/387571>

<sup>15</sup> See: <https://unece.org/info/events/event/387890>

proposes the establishment of a capacity building network and a global data framework to address rights violations, dataset monopolization and economic concentration.

42. A Junior Professional Officer of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) presented the initiatives under ITU related to AI. The AI for Good initiative consists of an all-year online program and the annual in-person AI for Good Global Summit. The United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) and its High-Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) created an Inter-Agency Working Group on AI (IAWG-AI) which focuses on delivering concrete outcomes on AI aimed at enhancing United Nations system-wide policy coherence and pragmatic coordination. The IAWG-AI is co-led by ITU and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). ITU also coordinates the *United Nations Activities on AI* annual report with over forty United Nations agencies; the 2023 report highlights over 400 AI projects run by the United Nations systems, covering all 17 SDGs. ITU AI landscape survey gathers information from Member States about their AI-related policy and regulatory initiatives and how these efforts align with their ongoing digital transformation endeavours. ITU also hosts a series of focus groups related to AI which include AI for digital agriculture, AI for disaster management, AI for autonomous assisted driving, as well as global initiatives on AI for health, AI for road safety, and AI and data commons.

43. A Technical Committee Manager of the Kenya Bureau of Standards presented the *Code of Practice DKS 3007:2024* which was developed as a guiding framework for all stakeholders within the AI life cycle. This standard has three main objectives: (1) to propose approaches to establish trust in AI systems; (2) to identify pitfalls that are typically associated with threats and risks to AI systems and provide possible mitigation techniques; and (3) to act as a framework to assess and achieve quality and consistency in the development of AI applications. This standard was developed to respond to the needs of the AI community in Kenya as there are currently no binding regulations. It is intended as a tool to ensure that AI applications being introduced and used in the country are developed responsibly and meet the expectations of stakeholders. This standard will likely be used as a basis for a future national AI strategy and policy. The Kenya Bureau of Standards plans to work on suitable solutions for implementation, including conformity assessment, certification and regulation.

44. **Member States adopted the *Report on activities under the Ad Hoc Team of Specialists on Standardization and Regulatory Techniques 2023–2024* (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2024/10). They requested the secretariat and the Ad Hoc Team of Specialists to research on how best to promote the existing common regulatory arrangements (CRA) and to continue to report on an annual basis on the activities under the START including on the education for standardization initiative. (Decision 10)**

45. **Member States took note of the *Overarching common regulatory arrangement for the regulatory compliance of products and/or services with embedded artificial intelligence or other digital technologies* (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2024/11) and the *Declaration for technical regulation of products with embedded artificial intelligence* (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2024/12). Member States encourage their relevant agencies and experts to study these two documents and fine tune them over the next six months with a view to adopting and launching the Declaration in summer 2025. (Decision 11)**

46. **Member States adopted the *Revision of Recommendation L on an International Model for Product/Service Conformity Based on Transnational Regulatory Cooperation* (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2024/13). (Decision 12)**

## VII. Report on capacity-building (agenda item 7a)

47. The Secretary of WP.6 presented the past projects on enhancing the usage and uptake of standards for achieving the SDGs and the work on gender-responsive standards. The secretariat has proposed a follow up project to do capacity building work directly in three target countries (Albania, Benin and Georgia) on enabling inclusivity by gender mainstreaming the QI for trade. He explained that this project will assist standards bodies in these countries with their respective GAP and work with other QI bodies (such as metrology,

market surveillance, conformity assessment, accreditation, testing) to create similar GAPS. He announced that this two-year project will culminate with a large event planned in Istanbul around September 2026 to disseminate the results and encourage other bodies to take similar actions.

48. A Project Coordinator for the German metrology institute Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt (PTB) presented the extent of bilateral and regional projects worldwide on topics related to QI, receiving around twenty million euros from the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). BMZ has also commissioned PTB with the task to develop the topic of QI in general, raising awareness, developing new instruments and documenting and disseminating best practices. He explained that this is often done together with international organizations pursuing similar goals; with this in mind, he reminded the financial support provided by PTB to ECE on the projects presented by the WP.6 Secretary in the previous paragraph and the financial support provided to the ECE for this new project.

49. The Director of the Georgian National Agency for Standards and Metrology (GEOSTM) presented that over the past decades Georgia has taken important steps towards the implementation of policy measures to ensure gender equality and the empowerment of women. In 2017, Georgia declared all 17 SDGs as national priorities and in 2020, GEOSTM signed the *ECE Declaration on GRS*. GEOSTM is a legal entity of public law with 65 employees (thirty-four women and thirty-one men). Since the signing of the *ECE Declaration on GRS*, selected employees of GEOSTM have participated in capacity building activities developed by ISO, UN Women and partner national standards bodies. Not yet having a GAP, GEOSTM is looking forward to assistance to enhance its efforts on gender mainstreaming.

50. The Head of Legal Affairs and Communication Department of the Albanian General Directorate of Standardization (DPS) reminded the context of standardization in Albania, that DPS is the only recognized national standards body. In the spirit of the WTO TBT and European Commission (EC) Regulation 1025/2012, all stakeholders from the public and private sectors are engaged in standards development through DPS. DPS is a small structure of fifteen employees and has a managing board of eleven members (seven of which are women) and a technical board of thirteen members (four of which are women). Efforts are actively being made to ensure the points of view and needs of women are heard, especially in the technical work. Being a small entity, DPS is looking forward to assistance to enhance its efforts on gender mainstreaming.

51. The Chair of the ToS-GRS commended the proposed new project. She recognized that countries may be on varying levels of gender related development and this project will be a good opportunity to learn from each other and allow others to benefit from their experience. The Director of Cooperation and International Relations of UNE congratulated Georgia and Albania for the progress that they have made so far; the readiness for such a project is not necessarily easy to achieve.

52. The Chair and Vice-Chair (United Kingdom) of GRM noted the need for capacity building on risk management systems. It was noted that the GRM has been looking internally at its knowledge capacity by doing a gap analysis of members' areas of expertise. More largely, everyone deals with risk on a daily basis, but risk systems are another challenge to be understood. Risk starts with an understanding of what is important, or values; risk management is really value management. This understanding and the methods to achieve this are not consistently applied and even among agencies within a single country this is not often harmonized.

## **VIII. Programme of work for 2025 (agenda item 7b)**

53. The Working Party develops an annual programme of work which covers the activities for the coming period. The proposed programme of work for 2025 (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2024/14) 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 Vice-Chair of WP.6 (Georgia) reminded that the programme of work reflects the main objectives and mandate of WP.6. Horizontal topics are still prominent, such as SDGs, circular

economy and digitalization, which all support the transversal themes within the United Nations that working parties should take into consideration. He also reminded that all areas continually review existing guidance to ensure that it is still relevant.

54. **Member States adopted the *Programme of work of the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies for 2025* (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2024/14). (Decision 13)**

## **IX. Activities of other Economic Commission for Europe bodies and other international organizations of interest to Working Party 6 (agenda item 7c)**

55. An Industrial Development Officer of UNIDO presented the International Network on Quality Infrastructure (iNetQI) which is an initiative that brings together specialized international organizations to promote and implement effective and harmonized QI activities globally. She outlined that there are currently fifteen members working together to coordinate, promote and highlight the value of QI and provide guidance for its effective implementation and integration worldwide. She then presented some of the key areas of work of UNIDO which support this effort.

56. The Secretary of WP.6 presented on behalf of the Secretary of the ECE Group of Experts on Gas. He updated the session on the ECE SED activities related to hydrogen. Hydrogen first emerged as a subject of intergovernmental discussion in 2017, following requests from many member States that recognized its potential as a bridge to achieving net-zero emissions, particularly in hard-to-abate industries. To support these efforts, ECE established the HTF in June 2023. The HTF facilitates policy dialogue on hydrogen within the ECE region and beyond, focusing on three key areas: classification, value chain development, and synergies with renewable energy. He presented the March 2024 HTF publication *Towards a Hydrogen Economy in the ECE Region* which explores hydrogen classification based on technology-neutral, quantified greenhouse gas emissions intensity levels of hydrogen production methods. The HTF is also currently exploring the business case for blending hydrogen with natural gas, assessing hydrogen purity requirements for its production and use, and the role of gas infrastructure. In this context, harmonizing regulatory requirements for pipeline security concerning hydrogen and its mixtures is also essential. He reported that HTF and WP.6 collaborate closely on this.

57. The Director of European Affairs of ASTM International provided a general presentation of their organization which engages globally with several institutions and international organizations, and which provides technical solutions in more than 90 industry sectors. ASTM has an extensive program on education about standardization, with scholarship programs, project grants, awards, and opportunities for research and publication. ASTM has also implemented the principles of the ToS-GRS, with two proposed ASTM standards on diversity, equity and inclusion strategy, development and assessment. ASTM participates in many international fora including the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, WTO regional workshops, meetings of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and plans to participate in the United Nations COP29 conference in Baku.

58. An Associate Economic Affairs Officer of UNCTAD Trade Analysis Branch presented the linkages between non-tariff measures (NTM) and QI. He reminded that NTMs are policy measures other than tariffs that impact international trade by altering prices or quantities of goods. They include traditional trade policies such as quotas and price controls, as well as technical measures related to safety, health and environmental protection. Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures and technical barriers to trade are particularly costly, especially in the agriculture sector. Despite their costs, eliminating these measures is not feasible due to their critical public benefits. NTMs establish the requirements and guidelines that QI like laboratories and conformity assessment bodies must comply with for mandatory requirements. Effective regulatory frameworks can mitigate the costs associated with these. Bottlenecks in QI are particularly prevalent in developing and least-developed countries, exacerbating trade obstacles. Conformity assessment procedures account for a significant

portion of trade complaints. He presented UNCTAD's Non-Tariff Measures Programme which provides transparency and support for policymakers through data collection, classification, and dissemination and which offers comprehensive global data and tools to assist policymakers, traders, and researchers in navigating NTMs. The focus is on reducing trade costs while maintaining the essential regulatory benefits that NTMs provide, with a particular emphasis on improving conditions in developing regions.

59. A professor from Tilburg University presented the EU-funded Edu4Standards.eu project. He reminded that standards are essential for efficiently developing the digital, data-driven and green economy. They are also key drivers for the smooth functioning of the EU single market and significantly impact EU competitiveness in global markets. He noted that EU stakeholders do not fully exploit the opportunities of standardization and that key expertise is missing; education on standardization is fragmented at all EU education levels. He explained that the Edu4Standards.eu project addresses this by identifying standardization skills needed, analysing the fragmented teaching landscape and developing tools suitable for various study contexts. He presented the membership of the project and noted the large interest in this work from over 5,000 standards experts and over 100 higher education institutes. The project plans to deliver five pilots with robust in-person and distant standards teaching modules, various dissemination events and a roadmap for EU standardization on education.

60. A comment was raised concerning the WTO TBT agreement, negotiations for which were concluded in 1994 and since then there has been a rise in protectionism; it was then questioned if the TBT agreement is still adequate for today's concerns. It was noted that there is a net increase in the frequency of legislation and standardization updates which had previously been counted in years and are today counted in months. A clear distinction was also made between non-tariff measures (NTMs) responding to justified regulatory objectives and non-tariff barriers (NTBs) which may not be justified; the latter should be the target of efforts to be removed. A comment was also raised about the definition of international standards and what could or should be done to harmonize this.

61. **Member States took note of the information provided by other organizations. They requested the secretariat to continue to explore options for cooperation with other organizations within the remit of the scope of Working Party 6. (Decision 14)**

## **X. Panel discussion: Quality infrastructure helping to prevent a green and digital divide – identifying challenges for capacity development for sustainable trade in developing economies (agenda item 8)**

62. The Director of ECE ECTD welcomed delegates to the panel discussion and reminded the pivotal role of QI in international trade which is the backbone of green and digital transformations. She expressed her appreciation to WP.6 for reflecting the 2023 seventieth Commission session overarching theme "digital and green transformation for sustainable development in the ECE region." She spoke to the opportunities and challenges that the digital and green transformations can bring, both from a social perspective (e.g. digital and green transformations of industries both, creating and reducing job opportunities, including for women and the marginalized) and the environmental perspective (e.g. digitalization contributing, as well as helping to alleviate the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution). She expressed her confidence that the Conference would develop concrete ideas and proposals on how WP.6, that has been at the forefront of harmonization of standards to facilitate international cooperation and trade can bring to efforts of bridging the digital and green divides. She stressed the need for capacity building in these areas to support developing and transitioning economies to strengthen their QI and foster an environment that encourages innovation and entrepreneurship, and reminded of the importance of mobilizing XB resources for implementing such activities that would also further increase the concrete impact of the WP's normative tools. Collaboration through WP.6 as testament of the present panel discussion demonstrates how we can bring together

experts and stakeholders from across the globe to discuss how we can collectively bridge the green and digital divides.

63. The Vice-Chair of WP.6 (United States) explained how this topic of capacity building on QI to lessen the green and digital divide was chosen within the Bureau of WP.6. While much work has been done globally to bridge the green and digital divides, the link with QI and the pivotal role that it can play on this topic has not been explored. He then presented the concept of the two panels. The first panel was conceived to focus directly on capacity-building projects in QI and seeks to provide the point of view of the organizing agency and the beneficiary agency. The second panel was intended to delve into support mechanisms that can help to reduce the digital divide through some key areas of QI.

64. An Industrial Development Officer of UNIDO reported that UNIDO is actively working to digitalize QI to support sustainable development. Digital transformation is affecting all spheres of life; quality and standards are no exception. The ongoing paradigm shift, driven by data, the convergence of technologies and their interconnectedness, will significantly impact QI and related services. UNIDO's work includes initiatives like developing methodologies to assess the digital maturity of national standards bodies, keeping in mind that technology can be leveraged to achieve sustainable development objectives for the benefit of people, planet and prosperity.

65. The Director of DPS of Albania provided a brief overview of the UNIDO project on digital transformation within Albania which aims to help stakeholders to further integrate with the European and international markets. The main purpose of integration within this project, even beyond the benefits for the DPS, is to promote economic growth, social improvement and ensure that all voices are heard. Albanian citizens have been able to find the standards that fit their needs, to comply with international and European trade requirements and to enhance their access to markets. She further stressed the timeliness of this support as the organization has deadlines to meet on ICT and the standards management system of DPS to fully comply with obligations with the European Committee for Standardization and for Electrotechnical Standardization (CEN/CENELEC) bringing them closer to the Albania's integration to the EU Single Market.

66. The Chief Legal Officer of Swedac gave a short presentation of an EU twinning-project to enhance Namibia's participation to international trade agreements and to boost its trade and economic growth. The project involved eight organizations from Sweden and Germany. She focused on the contribution from National Board of Trade of Sweden which aims to strengthen the institutional capacity of Namibia to deal with technical barriers to trade. She also focused on the contribution from Swedac on enhancing quality and standards.

67. The representative of the National Standards Institution (NSI) of Namibia provided some input on the EU-funded twinning project "Support to the Economic Partnership Agreement Implementation Plan in Namibia", which supports medium to long-term reform processes. One of the results is the capacity of NSI to enhance staffs' skills and to coordinate with international organizations such as WTO TBT committee. The national quality policy was enhanced to ensure the safety and health of the Namibian population and support broader industrial diversification. The twinning project has assisted to ensure that the national quality infrastructure including product testing, certifications, inspections are to an international standard which provides citizens confidence in the quality of the products on the market. This also provides efficiency of productivity and reduces the cost of trade.

68. A question was raised concerning longer-term visions to evaluate the results of such projects. The representative from UNIDO underlined that they had supported the development of the national quality policy in Namibia in 2014. The success of this work demonstrates that the results of that project has been a good basis for future work like the project with Swedac. UNIDO does make best efforts to have regular evaluations and check the impacts. The representative of DPS also underlined that it carries out an internal annual monitoring of their work as well as a regional peer evaluation every three years. DPS is seeking possibilities for future funding in order to ensure financial stability of its digital transformations. The representative of Sweden noted that the continued participation of Namibia within the WTO TBT several months after the end of the project also demonstrates the continued usefulness.

69. The Senior Director of International Development of ANSI provided an overview of ANSI's technical assistance activities that support countries' national QI. The Standards Alliance is a public-private partnership between ANSI and the United States Agency for International Development that includes amongst its priorities, several activities that support the prevention of a green and digital divide. For example, working with the Dakar American University of Science and Technology (DAUST) in Senegal, the Standards Alliance delivered training for solar photovoltaic (PV) technicians in alignment with international standards, increasing representation of women in the sector, supporting a sustainable curriculum for building the sector in Senegal, and bolstering electricity access for the sixty per cent of rural Senegalese that were living without power. The project is active until 2026 and expects to address a number of priorities including digital infrastructure and strengthening open and inclusive participation in international standards activities.

70. A question was raised on funding model of the ANSI project, if other capacity building work is planned and if the train-the-trainer model is the only one being considered. The representative of ANSI noted that it is often using a public-private partnership finance model which, in contrast to a one-off donor funded project, aligns the goals of the partner with the capacity work and which often ensures that the partner is ready to invest in the long term. The method of roll out of such projects is chosen based on the type of capacity building; the train-the-trainer model has been the most effective method for most projects as it ensures that the capacity remains with the organization rather than change with the staff.

71. The International Delivery Lead of the United Kingdom Department for Business and Trade (OPSS) presented the United Kingdom's work on regulatory reform across the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), with a particular focus on activities in Indonesia. She reminded that online purchases in this region continue to grow and that lower income households are often constrained by cost and are at higher risk of buying unsafe products. She presented the four-year programme which will start next month and aim to bring regulatory reform especially on product conformity in all ten members of ASEAN and Timor-Leste.

72. The Assistant Deputy of Economic Competitiveness of the Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs of Indonesia explained that an online single submission system was put in place in 2018 in which the issuing license service is converted from its original, manual format to a digital one. This speeds up the issuing process from several days to a few hours. This system was accompanied by a reform of the licensing policy, harmonizing how business standards were applied. The reform also concentrated on the need for multiple licences and questioned their added value. Until the implementation of this system, micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises often traded informally; the system has helped to encourage them to formalize their trade. This in turn has helped these businesses to have greater access to finance and to public-sector support towards growth, online trading and export opportunities. Women entrepreneurs run a disproportionately high proportion of micro and informal businesses; they have particularly benefitted from this reform.

73. The Senior Regulatory Reform Attaché of the United Kingdom Mission to ASEAN explained that the United Kingdom was approached to advise on the principles of licence issuance and risk management used within the United Kingdom. Through discussions, seminars and workshops, they explained the different types of hazards and how to consider and judge likelihood. Every business is registered for a particular kind of operation and depending on the type of business, the main hazards and likelihoods could be different. This was classified into a four-level risk ranking from low to high. The system assists businesses to understand the types of risks they may face and provide them information about the standards with which they need to comply.

74. A comment was raised to thank the OPSS representative for demonstrating how risk is managed and implemented in this project. The example on e-market place is an area which many countries are addressing at this time; a question was raised if the United Kingdom is sharing their own policy approach to this with the beneficiaries in ASEAN so that they may duplicate it. The representative from OPSS noted that the UK is still designing its policy on online marketplace and that the stakeholders involved may differ from those in the ASEAN region so it will likely need to be different.

75. An International Training Officer of ITC presented work of ITC to support the achievement of green competitiveness through support to national QI institutions and to small- and medium-sized enterprises (SME). She reminded that the SDGs and the European Green Deal have propelled environmental consideration to the forefront of trade competitiveness. Digitalization underpins technological advances in the current era of the fourth industrial revolution. She provided examples of recent projects in Malaysia which aim to enhance accreditation schemes for greenhouse gas validation and verification, to improve awareness on EU regulatory requirements and to enable setting up traceability in fisheries. She also provided examples of recent projects in the Philippines which aim to support the digitalization of accreditation processes, to strengthen inspection and notification and to build capacities of competent authorities to issue certificates electronically.

76. The representatives of the Department of Standards of Malaysia provided an overview of their participation within the ASEAN Regional Integration Support by the EU (ARISE+) Malaysia project which aimed to enhance capacity to develop and implement a quality infrastructure system for standards, accreditation and certification, using a methodology compliant with ASEAN and EU commitments and practices. Webinars and workshops were organized with regulators to review the relevant standards, notably those supporting the SDGs and climate change, to support implementation going class by class on accreditation, validation and verification standards.

77. A question was raised on how success is measured. The representative of ITC explained that they record attendance, the level of knowledge before and after as well as the pertinence of the content. They also measure the number of registered users of the system, the number of regions using the system and how many additional regions to which the system is rolled out.

78. The Head of the National Metrology Department of Belgium reminded the important role of metrology, the science of measurement. He explained that it ensures accuracy, consistency and reliability in measurements and as such plays a crucial role across various industries. It further advances scientific research and innovation, enables global collaboration and ensures fair trade and consumer protection. He underlined that as part of the national QI (metrology, standardization, accreditation, conformity assessment and market surveillance), it enhances the quality, safety and environmental soundness of goods, services and processes. He noted that metrology can help reduce the digital divide as part of a multi-faceted approach by ensuring trustworthiness and reliability, supporting local innovation, ensuring compliance with standards, promoting interoperability and enabling global integration.

79. A question was raised about regional alignment versus international alignment. He responded that though international alignment is the goal, regional alignment is often a good starting point and that once regional alignment is achieved, it will be easier to work towards international alignment.

80. The Digital Learning Team Lead of ISO presented how standardization can contribute to prevent a green/digital divide with the new maturity model being developed by ISO to help its members assess their digital capabilities and evaluate their digital strengths and weaknesses. The ISO Digital Maturity Assessment Model is based on three key elements: business model components, digital business levers and digital capabilities. The project aims to develop digital maturity assessment for strategy development tools as well as digital maturity quick scan assessment tools. The project will not only take into account standards development aspects, but also other areas related to QI. The project will also identify use cases needed to achieve competence in elements which do not score very high. This model and the related documentation will be made available to ISO members in November 2024.

81. A question was raised about the main benefits of the digital maturity assessment model. The representative of ISO explained that one of the outcomes aims to enhance the digital capabilities of ISO members and ensure that the technologies used help to actually achieve their planned goals.

82. The Assistant Professor of Matej Bel University in Slovakia reminded the key role education plays in QI and reducing the green and digital divide by ensuring that people have the necessary skills to use digital technologies effectively. She underlined that companies can serve as a catalyst for the whole society to achieve an efficient setting of standards. For this



reason, it is important to focus on the available digital skills of companies as well as to understand the relationship between a company's technological level and the digital skills at its disposal. Micro-data from the project "Advanced Technologies for Industry 2020" provides information from EU Member States which identifies characteristics of companies that are satisfied with the types of information technologies (IT) and the data analysis skills available within their companies. Initial results suggest that companies with more intensive usage of emerging technologies such as AI tend to be more satisfied with their employees' IT and data analytics skills. Furthermore, companies that invest in frequent upskilling of their employees are more satisfied with their employees' IT skills, but not with their data analytics skills. These findings are relevant for the development of organizational models in technology adoption and, in addition, they can provide interesting input for the design of new models of human capital development, both at the company and at the national levels.

83. A question was raised on the demographics in the study presented by the professor from Matej Bel University, as the responses may vary depending on age or gender. She responded that this was not done in the current project as it would be difficult to implement; but it might be considered within future work.

## **XI. Other business (agenda item 9)**

84. The secretariat announced that it has been able to reserve meeting room facilities for next year's annual session. This would be planned from 8 to 10 September 2025, a three-day meeting.

85. **The Working Party decided to hold its thirty-fifth session from 8 to 10 September 2025. (Decision 15)**

## **XII. Adoption of the report (agenda item 10)**

86. **Member States adopted the decisions and *Report of Working Party on Regulation Cooperation and Standardization Policies on its thirty-fourth session (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2024/2)*. They requested the secretariat to edit it as necessary and finalize it for publication. (Decision 16)**

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