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Group "Non-Tariff Measures"
Sub-Group "Technical Barriers to Trade"

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS TO ASSIST DEVELOPING COUNTRIES IN THE STANDARDS AREA

Note by the Secretariat

This note has been prepared by the secretariat as background material for the discussion of the provisions relating to technical assistance in the Draft Code for Preventing Technical Barriers to Trade.

Many organizations are active in the standards area. This note sets out information readily available to the secretariat and it is possible that it is less than complete.

I.   **International Organization for Standardization (ISO)**

1.   The ISO is open to national standards bodies from all countries of the world. Countries not yet having a fully developed national standards activity (mainly developing countries) may join as corresponding members and participate as observers in ISO activities.

2.   The ISO has established a Development Committee to provide a forum for discussion of the problems of developing countries in the field of standardization and to make recommendations. Its terms of reference are:

   (a) To identify the needs and requirements of the developing countries in the fields of standardization and related areas (i.e. quality control, metrology and certification, etc.) and to assist the developing countries as necessary in defining these needs and requirements;

   (b) Having established these needs and requirements, to recommend measures to assist the developing countries in meeting them;

   (c) To provide a forum for the discussion of all aspects of standardization and related activities in developing countries, and for the exchange of experience among the developed and developing countries, as well as among developing countries. This should be done in close liaison with the specialized agencies of the United Nations, IEC and ISO Council Committees;

   (d) To advise Council on the above matters.

3. The Central Secretariat co-ordinates activities in this area and a Director has recently been appointed to take charge of this work. The ISO General Assembly has laid down the following guidelines for the Central Secretariat's work:

(a) More frequent contacts with the Directors of developing country members;

(b) Intensifying the dialogue with the regional standards bodies with a view to feed-back on the needs and wishes of ISO developing country members;

(c) Provision of "logistic support" for ISO developing country members with a view to strengthening their national position, e.g. by provision of basic studies and illustrative material on standardization and its benefits for economic development, trade expansion and transfer of technology in developing countries, and in contributing to training, education and public awareness;

(d) Strengthening of relations with the members of the United Nations family, especially those involved in technical assistance programmes;

(e) ISO technical input to programmes of benefit to developing countries undertaken by United Nations bodies on standardization and related subjects;

(f) Co-ordination as required of activities of those ISO member bodies which provide assistance of one kind or another to developing countries with a view to making best use of resources and programmes already available within the ISO system.

4. ISO locates technical experience and expertise but actual financial and programming support comes from existing aid agencies (principally the United Nations and its specialized agencies).

5. In 1977 ISO Council decided on the appointment of Regional Liaison Officers with a view to co-ordinating the views of developing countries in the various developing regions of the world, bringing these views to the attention of the appropriate ISO organs. The Regional Liaison Officers will meet from time to time to exchange experiences and give guidance to the Central Secretariat development unit.

6. ISO has held three conferences on developing country problems in 1967 (Moscow), 1973 (Mexico) and 1976(Algiers) - the last two of these with UNIDO support.

7.   The ISO Information Network was set up in 1976. Through this network, the modalities for co-operation of which are currently being determined, information will be available on a network basis on standards and standard-type documents in all participating countries.

8.   At the present time the Director of the Development Programme, in collaboration with DEVCO, is undertaking studies and enquiries with a view to identifying the needs of the developing country members of ISO and the possibilities for ISO to meet these needs, in collaboration with other organizations. Contacts are being developed for this purpose with the main sources of financial aid for development.

II.   International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC)

1.   Membership in the IEC is open to any country that has set up a National Committee, and IEC standards are made available to all countries in the world. These international standards are prepared taking into account as far as possible the needs of all countries in the electrical and electronic fields. The result of this effort is a set of over 1,000 objective world-wide standards which can be followed and implemented by all countries anywhere in the world, regardless of their stage of development.

2.   In order to assist developing countries in progressively building up their standardization infrastructure and training their personnel, the IEC offers to any interested body in non-member countries a "Registered Subscribers' Scheme" (description attached). Participants in the Scheme receive not only all new IEC standards but also the draft standards submitted to IEC National Committees for voting and administrative publications such as the Report on Activities.

3.   Furthermore any interested parties in non-member countries have access to the technical information service offered by the IEC Central Office. This can be particularly useful for solving problems of practical application of IEC standards.

4.   The IEC is co-operating with ISO in its development programme. It also maintains liaison with UNIDO and other United Nations agencies and is briefing trainees visiting the IEC Central Office under the sponsorship of these agencies.

Registered Subscribers' Scheme

A.   The International Electrotechnical Commission's Registered Subscribers' Scheme is intended to provide complete information on all the activities of the IEC. Registered subscribers receive the following documentation:

Publication

1.   One copy of all IEC publications issued during the twelve-months' period covered by the subscription.

2.   One copy of the IEC Catalogue of Publications issued during the sub-scription period, as well as any supplements.

Drafts

3.   One copy of all Six Months' Rule documents (i.e. draft IEC Standards and Reports) circulated to IEC National Committees during the subscription period.

Administrative documents

4.   One copy of the IEC Handbook for the year of subscription.

5.   One copy of the IEC Report on Activities issued during the subscription period.   This Report includes a list of all IEC Publications with indication of the relevant Technical Committee responsible for their preparation.

General information on the IEC

6.   One subscription to the IEC Bulletin for a twelve-months' period (air mail dispatch to overseas countries).

7.   One copy of the brochures or other information material published by the IEC during the subscription period.

    Items 1, 3, and 4 are issued with the English and French versions in the same cover.

    Items 2 and 5 are produced in two booklets: one English and one French.

    Items 6 is available in English, French and Spanish (the Spanish version is available about one month later than the English and the French).

B.   General description of the above documents

IEC Catalogue of Publications

    The Catalogue of IEC Publications lists all Standards, Reports, Supplements and Amendments issued by the IEC.   The publications are listed in numerical order and are followed by a short summary of their contents. The Catalogue includes an alphabetical index of the subject matter of all publications listed.

Six Months' Rule documents

    Although subject to changes, the Six Months' Rule documents (draft IEC Publications) enable recipients to keep abreast of developments in IEC Technical Committees as soon as the subject matter dealt with has reached a sufficiently advanced form for IEC National Committees to be asked to approve the draft concerned for publication as an IEC Standard or Report.

IEC Handbook

The IEC Handbook gives a complete list of IEC National Committees, Technical Committees and Sub-Committees, together with the names and addresses of all Chairmen and Secretariats.

IEC Report on Activities

The Report on Activities gives accurate information on work in progress or which has been completed by the IEC and its Technical Committees and Sub-Committees during the previous year.

This publication enables subscribers to keep in touch with the whole field of IEC activities and all aspects of the work of any particular IEC Technical Committee or Sub-Committee.

IEC Bulletin

The IEC Bulletin provides an information service giving current news on IEC activities, the new publications issued or being printed and the latest draft standards under consideration.

C. General conditions for the Registered Subscribers' Scheme

The service can be started on any one of the quarter-days, i.e. 1 January, 1 April, 1 July or 1 October.

The terms are payment in advance for the twelve-months' period chosen. All dispatches are by surface mail (roughly at monthly intervals), in 2 kg. parcels not subject to customs duties. Air mail postage (except for the IEC Bulletin) is charged extra.

Note: The IEC Registered Subscribers' Scheme is open to any interested party. Participation in the scheme does not constitute membership of any kind in the IEC.

III. United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

1. UNIDO provides technical assistance in the following areas, inter alia:

(a) Country surveys of standardization activities;

(b) Legislation for the establishment of a national standardization organization;

(c) Establishment, operation, and strengthening of national standardizing bodies;

(d) Formulation of national standards, including servicing of technical committees;

(e) Establishment and operation of testing laboratories;

(f) Company standardization practices, quality control, implementation of standards, certification and quality marks;

(g) Training courses for participants from developing countries and individual fellowships.

2. UNIDO sponsors at present nineteen technical assistance projects for individual developing countries and three regional projects for Latin America, Middle East and Africa in the area of standardization, quality control and quality certification.

3. UNIDO co-operates with relevant international organizations with a view to facilitating participation of developing countries in the work of these organizations.

4. Some years ago UNIDO published a booklet on standardization which, in addition to outlining the development of standards activities throughout the world and the relevance of standardization to economic development, the booklet provides a list of UNIDO projects in the standardization field and of subject areas where UNIDO is in a position to provide technical assistance. Up-to-date information can be obtained from the UNIDO Industrial Operations Division.

IV. World Health Organization (WHO)

1. WHO is active in preparing standards, specifications for quality controls etc. for pharmaceutical products, pesticides, biologicals (vaccines etc.). It also is responsible for the International Health Regulations. The Organization assists developing countries in all these areas and in particular it sponsors:

(a) Technical co-operation projects (e.g. on vaccine quality, medicine control);

(b) Country surveys of standardization activities;

(c) Formulation of national standards;

(d) Training (seminars, workshops and individual fellowships);

(e) Establishment and operation of testing laboratories.

2. WHO is also active in providing information services in this field. In particular a computerized information system is under development which will indicate the most correct sources of requested information.

V. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

1. The current draft Code of Conduct on Transfer of Technology is also relevant to the provision of technical specifications as well as any technical advisory personnel.

2. The UNCTAD Secretariat, at the request of the Committee on Technology Transfer, is conducting a preliminary study on the impact of standardization and quality control on the transfer and development of technology in the developing countries.