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**REGULATORY COOPERATION AND STANDARDIZATION POLICIES:
RECENT DEVELOPMENTS**

Note by the secretariat

Summary

This document summarizes the activities of the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6) over the last 12 months and is submitted to the Committee on Trade at its request. Additional information can be found on the following webpage: <http://www.unece.org/trade/wp6/welcome.htm>

I. MEETINGS OF THE WORKING PARTY IN JUNE 2006

A. Sixteenth session

1. The Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6) held its “Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Week” from 19 to 22 June 2006 in Geneva. Nearly 150 delegates and experts attended. The week included the sixteenth session of the Working Party (19 to 21 June), the UNECE International Forum on Common Regulatory Language for Global Trade (20 and 21 June), and, as a side event, a workshop on the experience of ISO-9000 quality management schemes in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (22 June).

2. The session and the Forum were attended by representatives of Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and Uzbekistan.

3. The meetings were also attended by representatives of the European Community. Representatives of Brazil, China, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, New Zealand, Sri Lanka and the Syrian Arab Republic participated under article 11 of the Commission’s terms of reference.

4. Delegates represented 10 intergovernmental organizations (including the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Commonwealth of Independent States Interstate Council on Standardization, Certification and Metrology), and 5 non-governmental international and regional organizations (including the International Organization for Standardization (ISO)).

5. Observers present at the invitation of the secretariat included representatives of private-sector companies, associations and chambers of commerce, and civil-society organizations from the UNECE and other regions. The report of the session reflects the discussions held and decisions made during the session, as contained in document [ECE/TRADE/C/WP.6/2006/13](#). More detailed information on two “higher priority” areas of the Working Party (regulatory cooperation and market surveillance) is provided under items II and III below.

B. UNECE International Forum on Common Regulatory Language for Global Trade

6. During the Forum, three major groups of issues were raised and discussed:

(a) Good practices and standard-setting practices (with presentations from WTO, ISO and OECD);

(b) International and regional approaches to regulatory cooperation (with experiences highlighted from the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) region, the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR), the CIS, the European Union (EU), and North America (Canada));

(c) UNECE instruments to promote regulatory cooperation and convergence (the activities under the Working Party and also UNECE programmes of work in transport, environment and energy areas were presented).

7. The Forum participants welcomed this UNECE event as a timely initiative and stressed the importance of drawing up and promoting good regulatory practices. A summary of the Forum discussion is contained in document ECE/TRADE/C/WP.6/2006/13/Add.1.

8. The follow-up to issues raised at the Forum was discussed at the Bureau meeting of the Working Party held in November 2006, and is reflected in the provisional agenda for the forthcoming session of the Working Party, where the debate will continue.

I. REGULATORY PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

9. UNECE bases its work on regulatory convergence issues on the UNECE Recommendation "L": "International Model for technical harmonization based on good regulatory practice for the preparation, adoption and application of technical regulations via the use of international standards". The Recommendation was designed to facilitate trade and market access for countries both inside and outside the UNECE region.

10. On a regional level at UNECE, the principles of this recommendation were used while elaborating the agreement (signed in 2005) between six countries of the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) to prepare uniform technical regulations. These regulations should be adopted in the near future as intergovernmental agreements by member States. The agreement is currently under ratification by the member States (more information is available in document ECE/TRADE/C/WP.6/2007/3).

11. A similar agreement between 12 CIS States (also using Recommendation "L" as a guideline) foresees the preparation of model technical regulations to be adopted on a national level at a later date, in accordance with national legislation. The Agreement is still to be approved by the CIS Governments, primarily because of legal concerns expressed by the Russian experts. Problems with its implementation, including possible assistance to Russian experts, were discussed at the 2006 session of the Working Party and at the Forum. The issue was further considered at the "START" Team meeting in March 2007, and Russian regulators agreed to organize a panel discussion on these matters at the seventeenth session of the Working Party in November 2007.

12. In May 2007, the secretariat received a request from the Russian Union of Industrialists and Employers to assist with the organization of a conference on EU regulatory tools and experiences to take place in autumn 2007.

13. In the area of sectoral regulatory dialogue projects, in 2006-2007, work continued on the Telecom and Earth-Moving Machinery Initiatives. A proposal, submitted by Russia, for a regulatory dialogue on the safety of pipelines continues to be debated at different regional forums in order to gather support from other countries.

14. In 2006, a proposal for a new project concerning equipment for explosive environment was presented by Germany. Following further discussions, a break-out session for regulators

from Asia, CIS, Europe, Latin America and North America will be organized to discuss possibilities of regulatory convergence in this sector at the November 2007 session of the Working Party.

15. The Working Party continues to identify regulatory areas and product sectors where Governments, including from other regions, see the need for a transnational dialogue on regulatory convergence matters. Such information might stimulate further regulatory cooperation, as well as contribute to the elimination of technical barriers to trade and facilitate market access. The Working Party was invited to present its related experiences at the meeting of the ISO/DEVCO (Committee on Developing Country Matters) to be held in conjunction with the ISO General Assembly in Geneva in September 2007.

II. MARKET SURVEILLANCE

16. The Advisory Group on Market Surveillance (known as the “MARS” Group) of the Working Party met in Slovakia in September 2006. More than 40 delegates from 12 countries attended, including two from non-UNECE countries as well as representatives from the European Community (EC) and the CIS. The Group prepared the final draft of a new recommendation on the fight against counterfeit and pirated goods during market control inspections. This draft recommendation (Recommendation “M”) will be submitted for final consideration and adoption by the Working Party at its seventeenth session.

17. As part of the market surveillance segment of work, an International Seminar on product safety and counterfeiting will be organized in conjunction with the forthcoming Working Party session. The Seminar will present regional and national experiences with governmental policies for the protection of consumers/users and other legitimate objectives, and provide information on how these policies are transformed into various governmental controls, in particular relating to counterfeit products.

18. The Seminar is organized in cooperation with a number of intergovernmental international and regional bodies and organizations, as well as the private sector (including the CIS Inter-Parliamentary Assembly, World Intellectual Property Organization, International Chamber of Commerce, and OECD).

III. RELATIONS WITH THE COMMITTEE ON TRADE

A. Cooperation

19. In June 2006, the Working Party organized a UNECE International Forum as a joint event with the Committee and in conjunction with its first annual session.

20. Experts from the Working Party also contributed to the WTO Public Forum 2006 “What WTO for the XXIst century?” held in Geneva in September. One of the workshops during the Forum was organized by the UNECE secretariat and devoted to “International standards in the multilateral trading system: a stakeholder discussion”.

21. In the conclusions of this workshop, participants requested, inter alia, “the WTO, UNECE and other relevant international organizations to start collecting information with a purpose of preparing a compendium on national experiences in implementing WTO provisions

on good standard and regulatory practices with a view to providing concrete options/examples for interested countries in meeting WTO obligations”.

22. The Working Party will consider the results of these discussions at its current session.

23. The Working Party also agreed to contribute to a Symposium to be held on the occasion of the second session of the Committee. This symposium is a follow-up to the WTO Public Forum mentioned above.

B. Reporting

1. Programme of work

24. In accordance with the recommendations in the UNECE reform plan, the Working Party, at its sixteenth session, organized a debate, an evaluation and a strategic re-thinking of its role and future work. On the basis of this discussion, its programme of work was reorganized, streamlined and prioritized. The results of this restructuring exercise were summarized in the paper on the Working Party's vision, strategic directions for 2007-2010, and work plan for 2007-2008. The final paper, with the changes adopted at the sixteenth session and revised at the Bureau meeting of the Working Party in March 2007, is available as document ECE/TRADE/C/WP.6/2007/11.

2. Evaluation of work

25. In accordance with the Commission and Committee's recommendations, the Working Party decided, at its sixteenth session, to initiate a systematic evaluation by delegates of its activities and projects. The Committee on Trade will be informed of the results.

26. The overall meeting evaluation average was 3.94 for the session of the Working Party and 4.03 for the Forum, on a scale of 1 to 5. The participants demonstrated a strong interest in the issues debated, 80% of them saying the information is useful in their work. Topical meetings on energy, telecommunications, agriculture as well as forums and round tables were recommended as possible follow-up meetings to the Forum. More information on evaluation work completed in 2006 is available in the document ECE/TRADE/C/WP.6/2007/12. An evaluation of the Working Party meetings in November 2007 will also be conducted.

3. Mandates for the ad hoc groups of the Working Party

27. At its seventeenth session, the Working Party will start a review of the work of its ad hoc group of experts dealing with regulatory convergence projects on the regional and sectoral levels, the Team of Specialists on Standardization And Regulatory Techniques; "START". The results of this review will be presented at the third session of the Committee on Trade in 2008.
