



**Economic and Social
Council**

Distr.
GENERAL

TRADE/WP.6/2000/18
31 August 2000

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

COMMITTEE FOR TRADE, INDUSTRY AND
ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

Working Party on Technical Harmonization and
Standardization Policies

Tenth session, 6-8 November 2000

Item 11 of the provisional agenda

DRAFT PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR 2000-2004

Note by the secretariat

1. The present note provides information which the Working Party on Technical Harmonization and Standardization Policies may wish to take into account when deciding on its programme of work for 2000-2004, annexed to this note is the draft programme of work for this period.
2. The programme takes into account:
 - (a) The decisions taken by the Working Party at its ninth session;
 - (b) The decisions taken by the Commission at its fifty-fifth session, held in May 2000 and the decisions of the Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development at its fourth session held in June 2000;
 - (c) Activities undertaken since the ninth session of the Working Party.
3. When deciding on its programme of work, the Working Party should consider the relevant decisions taken by the Commission at its fifty-fifth session in May 2000. The secretariat will report orally on these decisions to the tenth session of the Working Party in so far as they concern the future role of the Working Party.
4. A calendar of meetings of the Working Party will be drafted during the course of the tenth session.

5. The Working Party may wish to set up an ad hoc working group during the tenth session to consider these matters. In doing so, the Working Party, noting the provisions of Commission E (48) and I (48), may wish to take into account information on secretariat resources. The secretariat will report orally on the resources that are available to serve the Working Party. At present, one professional is assigned to service the Working Party and five half-day meeting sessions are allotted to the Working Party.

6. In general, the secretariat, in servicing the work of the Working Party over the past few years, considers that the limited resources available for that purpose have been used efficiently but that, as noted repeatedly by the Working Party at its previous sessions, the lack of travel funds available to the secretariat has hindered the secretariat's ability to follow up on coordination and harmonization activities.

Annex

DRAFT PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR 2000-2004

The objective of the programme of work is to promote trade as well as industrial and enterprise development by encouraging the international harmonization of standards and technical regulations, by removing or gradually reducing technical barriers to trade, and by promoting scientific and technological cooperation through developing policies for standardization and related activities. The programme has been prepared taking into consideration the related activities of UN/ECE subsidiary bodies and of other organizations.

It is recalled that at its ninth session, at the request of the secretariat, the Working Party agreed on the prioritization of its activities according to categories suggested by the secretariat, i.e. "higher", "medium", "lower", in the following way (for the biennium 1999-2001):

Priority Programme activity

<u>Priority</u>	<u>Programme activity</u>
“Higher”	B.2 B.3 C.1
“Medium”	C.2 A.1
“Lower”	B.1

PROGRAMME - TECHNICAL HARMONIZATION AND STANDARDIZATION

A. PROGRAMME ACTIVITY: COORDINATION

- A.1 Regular guidance for international standardization through identification of sectors that are of interest to member Governments (priority: medium)

Description: Regular updating at approximately four-year intervals of a list of sectors that are of interest to UN/ECE member Governments and of the criteria on the basis of which the list is compiled, with a view to providing regular guidance on programmes of work for international standardization.

Work accomplished: A draft version of the List, including amendments proposed by member Governments, was discussed at the ninth session. Based on the comments from the Governments, a new draft of the ECE Standardization List will be submitted for consideration and adoption by the Working Party at its tenth session.

Work to be undertaken: The revised and adopted version of the ECE Standardization List will be published after the tenth session.

Duration: 2001-2002.

B. PROGRAMME ACTIVITY: HARMONIZATION

B.1 Review of developments, prospects and problems at the international, regional and national levels (Priority: lower)

Description: Regular reviews of international, regional and national issues related to technical harmonization, standardization and conformity assessment policies pursued by ECE Governments, as well as by international and regional standardizing organizations and by national standards bodies, with the aim of making appropriate proposals.

Work accomplished: Thanks to the UN/ECE's observer status at the World Trade Organization's (WTO's) Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade, national standards bodies, especially from the countries in accession to WTO, are kept informed about relevant developments in WTO. Regular contacts with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Interstate Council on Standardization, Metrology and Certification, including participation of the secretariat in its sessions, facilitate the dissemination of information on the Working Party's activities in the CIS. As a result, the Working Party was informed by the CIS Interstate Council of its member States' interest in the Working Party's activities and in technical assistance on standardization and related matters.

The Working Party's sessions provide an opportunity for a continuous exchange of information between ECE member states on the development of their legislation and practices in the areas of technical regulations, standardization and conformity assessment.

The Working Party in cooperation with Turkish agencies, is continuing preparation of a workshop on harmonization of technical legislation.

A workshop on the role of standards and technical regulations in international trade will be held in conjunction with the tenth session.

Work to be undertaken: To continue consideration of requests received by the Working Party from a number of CIS countries on technical assistance on standardization-related issues and suggested procedures on how these requests should be addressed.

Duration: Continuing (2001-2002).

B.2 Measures to facilitate the harmonization of principles and practices of standardization and relevant activities and training (Priority: higher)

Description: Study of ways to achieve more harmonized international standardization principles and practices in the light of new economic and market developments. The relevant provisions of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) meetings will be taken into account and ECE Recommendations on Standardization Policies will be kept under review and updated as necessary.

Work accomplished: In 1998 the Working Party assisted the secretariat in preparing a study on evaluating the role and impact of norms, standards and regulations in international trade for the Round Table held in conjunction with the second session of the Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development in June 1998. The proceedings of this round table were published in 2000 as *Standards and Regulations in International Trade* (ECE/TRADE/248).

First drafts of an international agreement on technical harmonization and of its protocols were considered by the Working Party at its ninth session. Discussions will continue during the tenth session.

The secretariat has begun to prepare, in cooperation with the Working Party on Perishable Produce and Quality Development (WP.7), a draft protocol on a meat quality mark as one of the potential areas to be covered by the agreement on technical harmonization

Work to be undertaken: To continue to develop ECE Recommendations on Standardization Policies. To pursue the work concerning different modalities of fostering cooperation in the UN/ECE region on technical harmonization issues (including further elaboration of the texts for an international agreement on technical harmonization and of its protocols).

To continue to collect and analyse information on national structures for technical harmonization, standardization and related activities with a view to making a compendium of the information gathered.

To encourage the development, coherence and harmonization of international reference documents and standards related to conformity assessment and accreditation practices.

Duration: Continuing (2001-2002).

B.3 Measures to facilitate the implementation of standards and technical regulations, including approval of definitions of terms used internationally in the fields of standardization and related activities (priority: higher)

Description: Study of proven ways to facilitate the technical and legal implementation of standards and technical regulations and approval and promotion of internationally accepted definitions of terms used with regard to technical regulations, standardization, conformity assessment and metrology aspects.

Work accomplished: The Working Party at its seventh session endorsed ISO/IEC Guide 2 (7th revision) and revised and adopted a new Recommendation "J" on Definitions based on this revised Guide.

During the ninth session of the Working Party, a workshop on implementation and use of international standards was organized in collaboration with international, regional and national standardizing organizations, regulatory authorities and business operators.

At its ninth session the Working Party decided to examine the relationship between international standardization and regulations and, in particular, how technical regulations can make more effective use of international standardization. This work was started by an ad hoc team of specialists on Standardization And Regulatory Techniques (Team "START"), as decided by the Working Party at its ninth session and approved by the Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development at its session in June 1999.

The Team prepared a project of an "International Model for technical harmonization", which will be presented to the Working Party at its tenth session. The concept of this project was presented, for information, to different forums, namely at World Trade Organization (WTO), Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Asia-Europe Meetings (ASEM) and at the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS):

Work to be undertaken: To continue to follow up issues raised at the May 1999 and November 2000 workshops by standardizing bodies, authorities and private companies. To cooperate with interested international and regional organizations on mechanisms which might be used to monitor the extent to which the members of intergovernmental and international standardizing organizations transpose common technical regulations and international standards at the national level, the extent to which such standards are used in national technical regulations, as well as the impact of the standards on international trade, with a view to making appropriate proposals for strengthening the role of international standards and for potential areas for international technical harmonization. To prepare proposals on strengthening the process of international technical harmonization, international standardizing organizations will be contacted to explore the possibility of further joint action, including the organization of workshops and seminars on this theme.

Duration: Results of the analysis and related proposals will be presented to the Working Party at its eleventh session in October 2001.

C. PROGRAMME ACTIVITY: CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT

C.1 Promotion of international arrangements on acceptance of conformity assessment results and measures to achieve mutual confidence in the technical competence and reliability of conformity assessment systems (Priority: higher)

Description: Review and promotion of harmonized international conformity assessment principles and practices and of international arrangements for the acceptance of conformity assessment results. Regular review of relevant work in other international and regional organizations.

Work accomplished: A questionnaire on the implementation of the ISO 14000 series of standards in the chemical industry has been prepared and distributed among ECE member States. In cooperation with the Ad hoc Group of Experts on the Chemical Industry, and at the invitation of the Government of Hungary, a workshop on the use in the UN/ECE region of ISO 14000 of environmental management system standards in the chemical industry was held in March 2000 (Budapest, Hungary).

As decided by the Working Party at its ninth session, representatives of the Working Party took part in the WTO symposium on conformity assessment procedures (June 1999). A background paper addressing the questions and concerns of UN/ECE member States was prepared by the Rapporteur on Conformity Assessment for the participants in the symposium.

Work to be undertaken: Review of how conformity assessment agreements are being implemented and possible suggestions for improvement. Elaboration of commonly agreed criteria and procedures for establishing and operating mutual recognition agreements. Studies on national conformity assessment systems and national accreditation systems with special emphasis on problems experienced by countries in transition.

The establishment and adoption of UN/ECE recommendations relating to conformity assessment as the need arises in the light of work accomplished by International Standardization Organization (ISO), International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC), International Accreditation Forum (IAF) and other international organizations or forums.

Review of standardization-related quality policy issues, including eco-labelling and the use of management standards (ISO 9000, 14000, etc.), with particular reference to the needs of business operators in transition economies.

Duration: Continuing (2001-2002).

C.2 Aspects of metrology relevant to testing activities [Priority: medium]

Description: Consideration will be given to possible ways of establishing agreed criteria for metrology procedures and harmonized recalibration requirements.

Work accomplished: A recommendation was adopted by the Working Party at its third session and by the Commission at its forty-ninth session as decision H (49). Training programmes on metrology were organized in France in 1995 and in Slovakia in 1996.

Based on comments from Governments and interested metrology organizations a first draft of guidelines on methodology for measuring procedures was presented to the ninth session. Further discussions will be held at the tenth session.

Work to be undertaken: To continue preparation of the guidelines on methodology for measuring procedures in consultations with interested governmental bodies and international and regional organizations.

Duration: Continuing (2001-2002).

* * * * *