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COMMITTEE ON TRADE

Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and
Standardization Policies

Eighteenth session
Geneva, 3-4 November 2008
Item 6 (b) of the provisional agenda

REGULATORY COOPERATION

Progress report on the Sectoral Initiative on Telecom

Note by the Secretariat*

Summary

The Bureau of the Working Party at its last meeting, on 19 March 2008, asked the conveners of the sectoral initiatives to compile concise information on the status of the initiatives that they are developing following the guidelines of the International Model. The information is organized on the basis of a template prepared by the secretariat.

The progress report is submitted to the Working Party for noting.

* This document was submitted late for processing since clearance in finalizing it took longer than anticipated.

I. PROJECT OBJECTIVE AND KEY DELIVERABLES

1. The objective of the Telecommunications Initiative is the creation of greater market access for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) products. This is achieved through the development of common regulatory objectives (CROs) for ICT products that will constitute agreements among interested countries on regulatory convergence in support of legitimate requirements (see: TRADE/WP.6/2003/16/Add.2, available at http://www.unece.org/trade/ctied/wp6/documents/wp6_03/wp6-03-16a2e.pdf).
2. For this purpose, CROs have been developed for the following equipment: personal computers (PCs); PC peripherals, legacy Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) terminals; Bluetooth, Wireless Local Area Network (WLAN); Global Standard for Mobile Telecommunication (GSM); and International Mobile Telecommunications (IMT-2000).

II. CURRENT STATUS OF PROJECT

3. The common regulatory objectives are available at: http://www.unece.org/trade/wp6/sectoral/telecom/tele_bkgrd.htm. As there has, however, been very limited interest in applying the UNECE International Model to the ICT sector, no activity in this regard has been undertaken.
4. The possible use of the International Model in the context of the World Trade Organization (WTO) non-tariff barriers (NTB) discussions for the ICT sector should be explored. The CROs can provide practical examples of good regulatory practice for WTO Members.
5. As part of the Doha non-agricultural market access (NAMA) negotiations, the European Community (EC) and the United States of America (USA) have both submitted proposals aiming at simplifying the market access of products within the “electronics” and “electronic goods” sectors respectively. These proposals are included as annexes to the Chairperson’s text on Draft Modalities for NAMA (TN/MA/W/103/Rev.1), issued on 20 May 2008, as:
 - (a) European Community (EC): proposal VI on “Understanding on the Interpretation of the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade as Applied to Trade in Electronics” (pages 33-40);
 - (b) United States of America (USA): proposal XI on “Agreement on Non-Tariff Barriers Pertaining to the Electrical Safety and Electromagnetic Compatibility (EMC) of Electronic Goods” (pages 54-60).
6. These proposals only cover Safety and Electromagnetic Compatibility (EMC) of equipment, thus they do not give full market access for a number of products included in the CROs.

III. PROGRESS IN 2008 AND DELIVERABLES FOR THE ANNUAL SESSION

7. The outcome of the ongoing Doha negotiations, including the discussion on Non-tariff barriers (NTB), is unclear at this time. If the outcome is positive, the Working Party may want to discuss how the International Model and the CROs developed under the Telecommunications Initiative can be used to support an NTB Agreement. Based on the content of the current NTB proposals, it is expected that the CROs will need some revisions to fully support an NTB Agreement, possibly as examples of practical implementation.

IV. PROJECT MEETINGS AND/OR CONFERENCE CALLS HELD IN 2008

8. No meetings of the Telecommunications Task Force were held in 2008.

V. RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CONTINUATION OF THE WORK

9. Provided there is a positive result regarding one or both of the NTB proposals in WTO, Mr. Per Döfnäs will be responsible for:

- (a) Assessment of differences between the current CROs and the WTO result;
- (b) Proposal for amendments of the CROs.

VI. WHAT ROLE WOULD YOU EXPECT THE SECRETARIAT TO PLAY (LIST SPECIFIC TASKS)?

10. Taking note of the increasing interest among WTO Members for discussions on NTBs, the Telecommunications Task Force expects the secretariat to explore how the result of the activities of the Working Party, in particular the CROs as well as the International Model and the "MARS" group, can support such discussions. Increased cooperation between UNECE and WTO in this respect would be desirable.

11. The Task force would also recommend that the secretariat:

- (a) Update the relevant web pages and improves their presentation;
- (b) Publish a set of recommended Common Regulatory Objectives resulting from the work of the Task Force;
- (c) Assist the Task Force in initiating a discussion about the CROs with the main producers and Governments of East Asian countries (Republic of Korea, China, Japan).

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