



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
18 December 2020

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe

Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards

Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6)

Informal Virtual Consultations

Geneva, 2 (pm) – 3 November 2020

Chair's Note on the Informal Virtual Consultations of the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies

I. Introduction

1. The Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies held Informal Virtual Consultations from the afternoon of 2 to 3 November 2020.
2. The following ECE member States were represented: Albania, Austria, Belarus, Canada, the Czech Republic, France, Georgia, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, the Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.
3. The following non-ECE member States were also present: the Bahamas, Brazil, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, and the Observer State of Palestine to the United Nations.
4. The meeting was attended by representatives of the European Commission.
5. The following United Nations bodies participated: International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and UN Women.
6. The following inter- and non-governmental organizations participated: CEN-CENELEC, Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC), International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), International Organization of Legal Metrology, International Organization for Standardization (ISO), EUROCHAMBERS and BCCI and IDEA SOCIETY-AUSTRIA, amfori, ASTM International, European Chamber of Economics, Switzerland (ECES), European Environmental Citizens' Organization for Standardization (ECOS), Global Trade Professionals Alliance, Ingénieurs du Monde, International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) & the International Accreditation Forum, International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), Responsible Jewellery Council, Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs (RSPP) and World Trade Organization (WTO).



7. Observers present at the invitation of the secretariat included representatives of private-sector companies, associations, universities and civil-society organizations.
8. The Chair of the Working Party opened the meeting.

II. Adoption of the agenda (Agenda Item 1)

<i>Title of document</i>	<i>Document symbol</i>	<i>For information/decision</i>
Annotated provisional agenda.	ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2020/INF.1	Information

9. The meeting adopted its agenda without modification. (Conclusion 1)

III. Election of officers (Agenda Item 2)

10. Mr. Miroslav Chloupek, First Deputy President of the Czech Office for Standards, Metrology and Testing, the Czech Republic, was elected as Vice Chair of the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policy for the period 2020 – 2022. (Conclusion 2)
11. The conclusions will be formally approved in an ECE Silence Procedure after the Informal Virtual Consultations of WP.6.

IV. Matters arising (Agenda Item 3)

12. The Chief of the Market Access Section informed the Working Party about the Informal Virtual Consultations of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards which took place on 29 June 2020. He also informed that the annual session of WP.6 is marking the fiftieth anniversary of ECE's work on regulatory cooperation and standardization policies and thirtieth annual session of WP.6. Based on a decision of the Executive Committee of ECE (ECE/EX/2020/L.12), the official title of this session was 'Informal Virtual Consultations'. Furthermore, the decisions made in during the Consultations would be 'conclusions' instead of 'decisions'. He informed the Working Party about the meeting of the sixty-ninth session of the Economic Commission for Europe that would take place in April 2021 where "Promoting circular economy and sustainable use of natural resources in the UNECE region" would be the topic of the high-level substantive discussion.
13. The Director of the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division of ECE highlighted the importance of standards in support of scaling up sustainable trade in global value chains, and for supporting a transition to the circular. She called upon delegations to conclude their deliberations with concrete outcomes that would build on the successful past of Working Party and that made the Working Party fit for purpose for the next 30 years. Along these lines she expressed her confidence that the Working Party would make a contribution to sixty-ninth session of the Economic Commission for Europe, where the circular economy and a resilient and sustainable post-COVID-19 recovery would be key topics for deliberations.
14. The Informal Virtual Consultations took note of the secretariat's report on matters arising. (Conclusion 3)

V. Jubilee Anniversary Conference on Building Back Better: Shared Solutions as a Critical Tool for Sustainable Development in the Era of COVID-19 (Agenda Item 4)

<i>Title of document</i>	<i>Document symbol</i>	<i>For information/decision</i>
Conference Agenda: Building Back Better: Shared Solutions as a Critical Tool for Sustainable Development in the Era of COVID-19.	N/A	Information

15. The Chair invited Ms Elena Santiago Cid, Director General, European Committee for Standardization (CEN) and the European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization (CENELEC), to moderate the discussions. The Under-Secretary General and Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) opened the Conference, General Secretary and CEO, International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) and Secretary-General, International Organization for Standardization (ISO) delivered opening remarks.

16. The Executive Secretary expressed her hope that the conference would give further impetus for the continued intergovernmental cooperation in standardization and regulatory cooperation in many areas: Gender-Responsive Standards, risk management, education in standardization or the circular economy.

17. To support the recovery and strengthen the resilience of urban areas to the damage inflicted by COVID-19, the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), International Organization for Standardization (ISO), and the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) established a Joint Task Force to coordinate standardization for smart cities. Under the theme of ‘capturing global learnings from the management of COVID-19’, the Task Force will engage stakeholders to identify the request for certain standards and better coordinate their development.

18. The Executive Director, International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) Europe discussed how Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS) can harness a sustainable and resilient recovery through sustainable value chains and circularity. She highlighted three factors for greater impact of VSS: identification of relevant criteria for the concern, robustness of monitoring or assessments or audit schemes, and an adequate support environment (access to finance, public sector support etc.). She further exemplified that ECE’s work on traceability of supply chains could contribute to the transparency and accountability needed in for ensuring the efficacy of VSS. Finally, she emphasized that the positive impacts of VSS can be scaled if they are integrated in public policies and processes, such as those on public procurement.

19. The Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia, UN WOMEN proposed to build an inclusive recovery model taking into consideration gender equality in the context of COVID-19. She highlighted the need for evidence-based decision making and emphasized the need for identifying short, medium- and long-term solutions to the heightened challenges women are facing during the COVID-19 pandemic at home or at work. For the Decade of Action to achieve increased participation of women in the global economy, there had been growing understanding about the impact of women's unpaid work on women's participation in the formal labour force. Standards organizations must work together in order to prioritize financing for sustainable development in the era of COVID-19 and beyond. It was important to align with the Women's Working Group on Financing for Development to strengthen the feminist reform of global economy, connecting with the Beijing +25 process. The quality of these services could also benefit from standards. Standards could make a difference if right

standards were prioritized and properly financed in terms of ensuring implementation and investment.

20. The Director, Government Relations, Deutsches Institut für Normung (DIN) explained how the German National Standards Bodies adapted to the global health crisis and how standards helped in the prevention and mitigation of the COVID-19 pandemic. She provided examples of initiatives from DIN including provision of free standards for medical and personal protective equipment, access to related information as well as development of new standards for crisis management.

21. The Managing Director, Directorate of Digitalization, Technology and Agri-Business, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) flagged the critical importance of Quality Infrastructure (QI) for people, planet, and prosperity. In the context of the global pandemic he underlined the impact of COVID-19 to the attainability of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). He stressed the role of quality and standards to prepare and contain, respond, and adapt for prevention, detection, protection, and disinfection. He further highlighted the role of digitalization and innovation in standards, metrology, conformity assessment and accreditation for the recovery and transformation to build back better and for ensuring inclusive and sustainable industrial development.

22. The Deputy Director General, Georgian Accreditation Center presented Georgia's actions on QI to maintain the economic activity in the country including laboratory tests and inspections, and certification processes. He proposed for the Working Party to examine the prevention of the negative effects of the pandemic on international trade, local production and industrialization processes. This would be achieved through the better planning and utilization of the QI, by measuring and comparing the effect of COVID-19 on the economies with well and less developed QI, and by increasing awareness of the results of the proposed actions.

23. The Head of Trade and Gender, World Trade Organization (WTO) emphasized the role of standards and regulation in mitigating gender-specific impacts of COVID-19. She provided examples of women facing challenges in trade facilitation, unpaid work and care economy and how the COVID-19 exacerbated these pre-existing conditions. She stressed the need for new standards safeguarding working conditions for women.

VI. Gender-Responsive Standards Initiative (GRSI) (Agenda Item 5)

<i>Title of document</i>	<i>Document symbol</i>	<i>For information/decision</i>
Report on Gender-Responsive Standards Initiative activities 2019-2020.	ECE/TRADE/CTCS/WP.6/2020/4	Decision

24. The Chair of the Gender Responsive Standards Initiative (GRSI) presented the work undertaken for the Declaration on Gender Responsive Standards and Standards Development. There were 76 signatories to the Declaration. In 2020, three new expert working groups had been established. They were working with the signatories to develop training and best practices on Gender Responsive Standards (GRS), GRS methodology and research and network development respectively.

25. The GRSI Repository was an open platform which hosts presentations, meeting notes and gender action plans from the signatories.

26. In 2021, the GRSI was planning to begin the gender focal point network among the signatories of the Declaration, deliver capacity-building training on gender action plans and tools, and develop a platform to host training and related resources on initiatives of the signatories.

27. The delegation of the UK informed that the UK Office of Product Safety and Standards had commissioned research outlining the links between women's economic empowerment and standards and regulatory reform, which was online on the Work and Opportunities for Women website.

28. The meeting noted with thanks and adopted the report of the GRSI and requested the Initiative to report at the 2021 session. (Conclusion 4)

VII. Risk Management in Regulatory Systems (Agenda Item 6)

<i>Title of document</i>	<i>Document symbol</i>	<i>For information/decision</i>
Report of Activities under the Group of Experts on Managing Risks in Regulatory Systems.	ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2020/5	Decision
Revised Recommendation P on Risk Management in Regulatory Systems.	ECE/TRADE/C/WP.6/2011/4	Decision
Revised concept on Recommendation V on Addressing Product Non-Compliance Risk in International Trade.	ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2020/6/Rev.1	Decision

29. The Co-Coordinator of the Group on Risk Management (GRM) in Regulatory Systems presented a joint report of GRM and Advisory Group on Market Surveillance (MARS) to the meeting. The recommendations, for example, Recommendation P on Risk Management in Regulatory Systems, adopted by this group were highly relevant in the context of COVID-19.

30. The GRM had elected a new Chair for GRM, Mr. Stephen Naundorf, German Federal Chancellery, Better Regulation Unit and Chair of the OECD's Regulatory Policy Committee.

31. The Co-Coordinator provided an update on its activities including the concept of a new Recommendation V on addressing product non-compliance risk in international trade, the revision of Recommendation P on risk management in regulatory systems, and a guide on risk management for trade facilitation in cooperation with International Trade Centre (ITC). The Chair also proposed to undertake a survey to identify best practice in crisis management in regulatory systems during the COVID-19 crisis.

32. The Informal Virtual Consultations noted with thanks the joint report of the GRM and the MARS groups and congratulated the teams and the secretariat for the achievements. The meeting requested the secretariat to report on further developments in GRM and MARS at the 2021 session. (Conclusion 5)

33. The meeting recommended the Revised Recommendation P on risk management in regulatory systems (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.6/2011/4/ Rev.1) for approval in Silence Procedure after the meeting. The meeting noted the revised concept on a new Recommendation V on addressing product non-compliance risk in international trade (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2020/6) and requested GRM to complete the Recommendation for adoption at the 2021 session. (Conclusion 6)

¹Objective of Recommendation P is to promote responsible management of risks, increased preparedness for and management of crises, including more effective coordination among all parties that can be involved in crisis situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

VIII. Recent Developments in Standardization (Agenda Item 7)

34. The EEC provided an update on the work of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) on conformity assessment procedures in the EAEU during the COVID-19 outbreak and technical regulation in general.

35. The meeting took note of the report and thanked the EEC for cooperation and coordination with UNECE. The meeting invited the organization to report again at the 2021 session. (Conclusion 7)

IX. Recent Developments in International Regulatory Cooperation (Agenda Item 8)

<i>Title of document</i>	<i>Document symbol</i>	<i>For information/decision</i>
Report on recent developments in the Sectoral Initiatives	ECE/TRADE/CTCS/WP.6/2020/7	Information

36. The representative of Sectoral Initiative for Equipment for Explosive Environments presented the work undertaken on the common regulatory framework for equipment used in environment with an explosive atmosphere. The next steps included publication of the Informative Guideline for national officials for regulation and Common Regulatory Arrangements (CRA) 2nd edition in 2021. A workshop was planned for 2021, jointly organized by the UNECE and International Electrotechnical Commission for Explosive Atmospheres (IECEX).

37. The representative of the Sectoral Initiative for Earth-Moving Machinery presented the ISO 19948 Standard to Support the Earth-Moving Machineries (EMM) Sectorial Project Process. Future work of the initiative included training and assistance for using the ECE EMM Model Regulation.

38. The secretariat, on behalf of the Convener of the Initiative on Education on Standardization (START-Ed Group), presented the activities of the group. A webinar on education on standardization was organized in the morning of 2 November. The summary of the discussion was reported to the Working Party. The group discussed the potential for introducing work on education on standards on leadership and environmental issues.

39. The Coordinator of the Sectoral Initiative on Pipeline Safety reported on the main results of the initiative. Given the major changes in the global oil and gas market, the role of the ECE initiative was to develop common rules for the safe transport of energy resources.

40. The meeting took note of the reports and presentations of the initiatives and thanked them for their contribution towards the international discussion on standards, standardization, and the use of standards and education on standards. The meeting requested the teams and initiatives to assess their work and report to the 2021 session. (Conclusion 8)

X. Recent Developments in Conformity Assessment and Accreditation (Agenda Item 9)

Updates from intergovernmental organizations, and international and regional standardization bodies

41. The representative of International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) provided a brief update on their recent activities. All activities were being undertaken remotely. The International Accreditation Forum (IAF) and ILAC had decided to form a

single organization for accreditation and it was envisaged that 2 or 3 years would be needed for the transformation.

42. The meeting took note of the information provided by ILAC and thanked them for cooperation and coordination with ECE. The meeting invited the organizations to report again at the 2021 session. (Conclusion 9)

XI. Recent Developments in Metrology (Agenda Item 10)

43. There were no reports presented under this item.

XII. Report on Capacity-building (Agenda Item 12)

<i>Title of document</i>	<i>Document symbol</i>	<i>For information/decision</i>
Progress Report on Standards for SDGs Project II	ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2020/9	Decision

44. The secretariat delivered a presentation on the progress on standards for SDGs. The project had mapped 1,618 standards against five SDGs. An e-learning system was being developed on risk management, conformity assessment and market surveillance.

45. The capacity-building activities had been strongly impacted by the restrictions emanating from COVID-19. However, the secretariat was pursuing other approaches including webinars to continue such activities.

46. The meeting took note with appreciation of the progress report of the capacity-building activities, fully supported the continued implementation of the project and requested the secretariat to continue reporting in 2021. (Conclusion 10)

XIII. Report of the Twenty-ninth Session and Intersessional Developments (Agenda Item 13)

<i>Title of document</i>	<i>Document symbol</i>	<i>For information/decision</i>
Report of the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6)	ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2019/2	Decision

47. The Chief of the Market Access Section presented the highlights of the twenty-ninth session of the Working Party. He informed the meeting that all decisions that had been made in the twenty-ninth session, had been implemented.

48. The meeting took note of the secretariat's report and regretted the financial constraints forcing the secretariat to change formal trilingual meetings into Informal Virtual Consultations. (Conclusion 11)

XIV. Programme of Work for 2021 (Agenda Item 14)

<i>Title of document</i>	<i>Document symbol</i>	<i>For information/decision</i>
Programme of Work of the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies for 2021.	ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2020/10	Decision

49. The secretariat informed the Working Party that the Programme of Work for 2021 had been approved already by the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards earlier in 2020. This happened due to the change from a biennial budget cycle to an annual budget cycle.

50. The delegation of the UK welcomed the Working Party's work to establish an effective forum for the exchange of information on developments and experiences in the area of technical regulations, standardization, conformity assessment and related activities. In addition, the delegation welcomed the work to explore and promote links to the SDGs, including SDG 5 on gender equality. The delegation further informed that the UK acted quickly to identify and remove non-compliant products, whilst creating a regulatory environment that enabled new manufacturers of compliant products to get to market quickly. The country also supported the developing countries to increase access to standards which support the purchase of safe personal protective equipment and strengthening the national quality infrastructure to play a stronger role in post-COVID-19 reconstruction and enhancing resilience to future challenges.

51. The meeting took note of the Programme of Work of the Trade Subprogramme including that of WP.6. (Conclusion 12)

XV. Other Business (Agenda Item 15)

52. The Chair wished that the secretariat could return to a normal working mode as soon as the regulations of the United Nations and Switzerland allow, and organize the next session in November 2021.

XVI. Adoption of the report (Agenda Item 16)

53. The meeting requested the secretariat to process the election results and the Revised Recommendation P for approval in a Silence Procedure immediately after the meeting.

54. The session requested the secretariat to circulate the Chair's notes to all delegations for the correction of any mistakes in the statements made for a two-week review period. The secretariat was requested to submit the Chair's note for endorsement by the 2021 session of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards.