



Sustainable development

Product and system certification

Some 80 participants from 40 countries attended a workshop in Geneva on product and management system certification organized jointly by ISO/CASCO, Committee on conformity assessment, and ISO/DEVCO, Committee for developing country matters. It strengthened understanding of the conformity assessment processes available for developing countries and countries in transition in order to help them fulfill local and global market requirements.

ISO Secretary-General Alan Bryden underlined the important contribution that conformity assessment offers to sustainable development and trade: "The application of standards and methods of assessing conformity to those standards is integral to effective and efficient achievement of sustainable development. ISO provides the internationally agreed standards and guides for products, services and management systems that can be used in developing countries to support their development efforts and also provides the base requirements on how conformity to those standards should be assessed."

The 'triple bottom line'

Many companies today are reaching out for global markets, sustainable competitiveness and what is called "the triple bottom line", which addresses three dimensions of company performance – **economic**, **environmental** and **social**. Therefore, the quality of their technical performance and products has to be matched by environmental performance and governance practices. ISO is pro-active to the needs in these three dimensions.



For the **economic dimension**, ISO has an extensive portfolio of technical standards for products, manufacturing and distribution.

For the **environmental dimension**, ISO on the one hand offers the ISO 14000 family that provides a framework for good environmental management practices, from environmental management systems to environmental auditing, life cycle assessment, environmental labelling and environmental performance evaluation. On the other hand, it has developed more than 350 International Standards for the monitoring of specific environmental aspects such as the quality of air, water and soil. They serve in a number of cases as the technical basis for environmental regulations.

Regarding the **dimension of governance** issues, ISO decided in 2003 to hold an international conference on the social responsibility of organizations in June 2004 in Stockholm, Sweden. The input provided by the conference will complement the exploration by ISO of social responsibility initiatives around the world and issues arising. Before deciding to commit ISO resources to work on international reference or guidance documents on the social responsibility of organizations, it is important for ISO to establish that there is sufficient support for ISO to become involved and that any work that ISO would undertake would not be duplicating what already exists, but actually add value and recognition.

Helping developing countries to help themselves

ISO standards offer practical solutions to many of the problems of developing countries and economies in transition and thus contribute to their social and economic progress.



Top: Signing of the Memorandum of Understanding by Carlos Magarinos (left), Director of UNIDO and Mr. Alan Bryden, Secretary-General of ISO.

Bottom: Both ISO and UNIDO emphasize the importance of training.

The question of increased participation applies to all ISO's stakeholders, but more acutely to the developing countries that make up over 100 of ISO's total membership. Part of the response lies in assisting them to develop their information technology infrastructure in order to conquer distance and the cost of physical participation in standards development by electronic means.

There is also a real need to provide tools to enable, in particular, ISO's members in developing countries to communicate the benefits of standardization at the national level in order to increase support and participation in their work. ISO Central Secretariat is therefore providing resources to assist in designing Web sites for developing country members and, in 2003, published an updated version of *Standards work on the Net*, a manual for developing countries on the use of information technology in standards development.

ISO is also constantly seeking to identify new sources of assistance for developing countries through partner organizations. In 2003, ISO signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) that aims to make it easier for developing and least-developed countries, and economies in transition, to participate in and benefit from international trade. The first concrete measures will be the development of training material on standardization and related conformity assessment activities, and awareness raising through joint workshops and seminars.