



FIFTEENTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Report of the Director-General

Fifth Supplementary Report: Collaboration between the International Labour Office and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO)

Addendum

General information on the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) ¹

I. Introduction

1. ISO is a membership organization of national standards institutes which seeks to promote the development of standards worldwide relating to products and services in particular sectors and industries. ISO is not a public international organization; its members are not delegations of national governments. Many of the standards institutes are part of the governmental structure of their countries or operate subject to governmental mandates. Others are of private sector character and are set up by national partnerships of industry associations.

II. Membership and liaisons

2. Currently, ISO operates with 156 members and a central secretariat of 150 staff in Geneva, Switzerland. ISO has one member per country. There are three categories of ISO membership: member bodies, correspondent members and subscriber members. A member body of ISO is the national body “most representative of standardization in its country” is entitled to participate and exercise full voting rights on any technical committee and policy committee of ISO. A correspondent member is typically an organization in a country which does not yet have a fully developed national standards activity. Correspondent members do not take an active part in the technical and policy development work, but are entitled to be kept fully informed about the work of interest to them. Subscriber

¹ Most of the information in this appendix is drawn from ISO’s web site: www.iso.org.

membership has been established for countries with very small economies. Subscriber members pay reduced membership fees that nevertheless allow them to maintain contact with international standardization. The ISO Action Plan for developing countries 2005–10 notes that 65 per cent of member bodies, 94 per cent of correspondent members and 100 per cent of subscriber members are from developing countries.² A list of countries of ISO members, by category, is shown in the appendix.

3. Only member bodies are entitled to vote; they have equal voting rights on matters that require a full vote (such as approval of an international standard) and can participate in the annual meetings of the ISO General Assembly. However, the ISO Council, which governs the operations of ISO, is made up of three equal categories (big, medium, small) of six member bodies each. The categories are based on such factors as economic importance, level of participation in the work programme, and number of secretariats chaired; this results in more developed economies being represented in relation to the overall make-up of the member bodies. For a list of current members of the ISO Council, see the appendix to this document. Similarly, the great majority of technical work is done by developed country members who are more likely to have the financial ability to provide groups of experts to attend meetings and work on standards.³
4. The acceptance of external organizations as liaison organizations depends upon the area of standardization. Liaison organizations are voted on by each technical body before being referred for approval to the Technical Management Board (TMB). Technical bodies may request a particular organization to serve as a liaison, either at the initiative of those organizations or by experts within the technical body. Liaison organizations may also make the proposal for new items within a technical committee or subcommittee (see Part V below). However, the input of those concerned is considered in many cases to be provided through the participating member bodies. In principle, the opportunity for all those in a given country interested in a particular aspect of standardization to contribute towards their member body's voice in the ISO process occurs through a "mirror committee" at national level which matches the scope of work of a particular ISO committee or subcommittee. This committee meets in between the meetings of its ISO mirror to allow the member body to formulate its own positions and review technical work performed by its own national experts.

III. Operational structures

5. The overall strategic direction of ISO is referred to its members, who meet for an annual General Assembly. The operations of ISO are governed by the ISO Council, whose 18 members are drawn from the membership as a whole. The Council appoints a 12-member TMB, which advises the ISO Council on the organization, coordination, strategic planning and programming of the technical work of ISO. The TMB is responsible for all aspects of the technical work of ISO, including liaison with other standardization bodies, examining proposals for new fields of ISO activity and establishing and dissolving technical committees.

² See http://www.iso.org/iso/en/prods-services/otherpubs/pdf/actionplan_2005-en.pdf.

³ A presentation made by the chairperson of the ISO committee on developing country matters (DEVCO) in 2003 indicated that developing country members seldom attended technical meetings and held only 2 per cent of the secretariats of all ISO technical committees, subcommittees and working groups. See http://www.iso.org/iso/en/commcentre/presentations/wkshps-seminars/tcscchairs/2003/11_mutasa.ppt.

6. The development of ISO standards is carried out principally by some 3,000 technical bodies and serviced by about 50,000 experts, including 179 active technical committees, 540 subcommittees, more than 2,200 working groups and over 60 ad hoc study groups. Each body focuses on a specific area of standardization and operates with representation from ISO members, often through their delegates interested in that area. The technical committee may also have non-voting members from interested liaison organizations which ISO has decided bring sufficient benefit to assign one of the various liaison categories. Some committees work simultaneously on dozens of standards and have working groups, each with different sub-areas of standardization. Other ISO bodies also develop standards and guides, including the TMB itself which has issued several international workshop agreements (see paragraph 7), and is directly responsible for certain work items, including the development of a standard on social responsibility in the ISO/TMB/SR committee. Only a few of the largest countries maintain membership in all of the technical bodies; in practice national representation depends upon the area of standardization and on which technical body is responsible for the item concerned.

IV. Types of ISO standards

7. In the ISO family of standards, there are two general types of standards: requirements standards, and recommendations or guidance standards. Certification is possible to a requirements standard. While ISO is responsible for developing, maintaining and publishing standards, it does not itself certify compliance with those standards. Certification is carried out independently of ISO by certification bodies active around the world which are controlled by national authorities responsible for accreditation and certification.⁴ In some cases, the subject matter may be insufficiently mature or too controversial to be developed into an ISO international standard. In this event, a technical report may be developed by a technical committee because it is expected that the subject matter can only be addressed through informative guidelines without the specific mandatory requirements needed for development of a normative standard. In other cases, to ensure alternative mechanisms for responding to market needs more rapidly, ISO offers fast-track, temporary “deliverables” that do not involve the committee stage in which national positions are debated in order to reach consensus. These products are examined in a cycle of up to two three-year reviews, with the option of transformation into an international standard, or withdrawal or revision. They include:

- (a) Publicly available specifications (PAS) and technical specifications (TS) are normative in nature but not exclusive; competing technical specifications offering different technical solutions are possible so long as they do not conflict with existing international standards;
- (b) International workshop agreements (IWA) are intermediate technical specifications that essentially operate as a normative document in the marketplace with a possibility of evolving into a de facto standard and later being transformed into an ISO standard. An IWA is developed by participating organizations at a workshop outside of the technical structure of ISO with administrative support from a designated member body.

⁴ For an online directory of accreditation and certification bodies by country of operation, see <http://www.iso.org/iso/en/info/ISODirectory/countries.html>. ISO conducts a regular survey of the number and range of certificates reported under ISO 9000 and ISO 14000 series of standards (quality assurance and environmental management systems, respectively). For the latest survey, see <http://www.iso.org/iso/ei/Viso9000-14000/pdf/survey//10thcycle.pdf>.

V. ISO standards development process and beyond

8. By the end of 2006, ISO had published 16,455 international standards⁵ addressing a wide range of matters, including technical products, financial services and management systems. Because ISO members are not governmental, ISO standards have no legally binding effect in themselves. The standards may be used by governments in drafting laws or regulations, or they may be voluntarily adopted by industry; an ISO standard may become de facto compulsory if widely accepted in the industry.
9. ISO develops standards in response to market demand. The need for a standard is usually communicated by an industry or business sector to one of ISO's national member bodies which proposes the new work item to ISO. If it involves a new field of technical activity, the proposal is examined by the TMB. If the subject matter falls within the scope of an existing technical committee, the proposal is examined by that committee.
10. The development of an ISO standard typically takes three to five years but can take much longer if the subject matter is controversial. According to ISO, its standards are developed on the basis of the principles of industry-wide consensus and voluntary involvement of all marketplace interests, including manufacturers, vendors and users, consumer groups, testing laboratories, governments, engineering professions and research organizations. The three main phases in the process are: (1) defining the technical scope of a future standard; (2) building consensus through country negotiation of the detailed specifications; and (3) submitting a draft international standard for approval and, if the text is agreed, for publication. The specific rules for this process are defined in the ISO/IEC Directives.
11. The technical work of developing standards is performed by experts on loan from the industrial, technical and business sectors which have asked for the standards, and which subsequently put them to use. The experts participate as national delegations, chosen by the ISO member for the country concerned to represent not just the views of the organizations in which the experts work, but a full national consensus on the issues involved. The principal cost of developing standards is the time and travel expenses of these experts. In some cases the ISO member may have a budget funded by its government or by member fees at the national level to help fund the work in ISO. In other cases the various interested parties must fund the full cost of developing a standard themselves. The cost of the ISO central secretariat, however, is paid by membership dues of the ISO members and by the sale of ISO publications.
12. The various stages of development of an international standard are illustrated in table 1, from Part I of the ISO/IEC Directives (fifth edition, 2004). References to the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) are present because the same directives are used in both organizations' standards. In the case of Joint Technical Committee 1 on information technology and its subcommittees, ISO and IEC develop standards together, resulting in ISO/IEC standards. The process for developing technical reports and accelerated products such as publicly available specifications or technical specifications is similar, except that some of the stages are skipped.
13. After publication of an international standard, the standard is "maintained", where applicable by the technical committee that developed it. If errors are discovered or information becomes out of date, technical corrigenda can be published. If new material or changes to specific parts of the standard are necessary, an amendment can be developed. Regardless of the development of corrigenda or amendments, every standard and other deliverable published by ISO or jointly with IEC is subject to systematic review in order to determine whether it should be confirmed, revised/amended, converted to another form of deliverable, or withdrawn. The only exception is the international workshop agreement which does not fall within the scope of documents covered by the ISO/IEC Directives.

⁵ See <http://www.iso.org/iso/en./aboutiso/isoinfigures/January/2007-p2.html>.

Table 1. Summary of ISO publication development process

Project stage	Normal procedure	Draft submitted with proposal	"Fast-track procedure"	Technical specification	Technical report	Publicly available specification
Proposal stage	Acceptance of proposal	Acceptance of proposal	Acceptance of proposal	Acceptance of proposal		Acceptance of proposal
Preparatory stage	Preparation of working draft	<i>Study by working group</i>		Preparation of draft		Approval of draft PAS
Committee stage	Development and acceptance of committee draft	<i>Development and acceptance of committee draft</i>		Acceptance of draft	Acceptance of draft	
Inquiry stage	Development and acceptance of inquiry draft	Development and acceptance of inquiry draft	Acceptance of inquiry draft			
Approval stage	<i>Approval of FDIS</i>	<i>Approval of FDIS</i>	Approval of FDIS			
Publication stage	Publication of international standard	Publication of international standard	Publication of international standard	Publication of Technical Specification	Publication of technical report	Publication of PAS

Note: Stages in italics enclosed by dotted circles may be omitted.

Appendix

Membership lists ¹

A1. ISO membership by category

Note: The country of the member is followed by the acronym of the national standards institute.

Full members of ISO
(i.e. those with full participation and voting rights)

Algeria (IANOR)	Finland (SFS)
Argentina (IRAM)	France (AFNOR)
Armenia (SARM)	Germany (DIN)
Australia (SA)	Ghana (GSB)
Austria (ON)	Greece (ELOT)
Azerbaijan (AZSTAND)	Hungary (MSZT)
Bahrain (BSMD)	Iceland (IST)
Bangladesh (BSTI)	India (BIS)
Barbados (BNSI)	Indonesia (BSN)
Belarus (BELST)	Iran, Islamic Republic of (ISIRI)
Belgium (NBN)	Iraq (COSQC)
Bosnia and Herzegovina (BASMP)	Ireland (NSAI)
Botswana (BOBS)	Israel (SII)
Brazil (ABNT)	Italy (UNI)
Bulgaria (BDS)	Jamaica (JBS)
Canada (SCC)	Japan (JISC)
Chile (INN)	Jordan (JISM)
China (SAC)	Kazakhstan (KAZMEMST)
Colombia (ICONTEC)	Kenya (KEBS)
Congo, Democratic Republic of (OCC)	Korea, Democratic People's Republic (CSK)
Costa Rica (INTECO)	Korea, Republic of (KATS)
Croatia (HZN)	Kuwait (KOWSMD)
Cuba (NC)	Lebanon (LIBNOR)
Cyprus (CYS)	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya (LNCSM)
Czech Republic (CNI)	Luxembourg (SEE)
Côte d'Ivoire (CODINORM)	Malaysia (DSM)
Denmark (DS)	Malta (MSA)
Ecuador (INEN)	Mauritius (MSB)
Egypt (EOS)	Mexico (DGN)
Ethiopia (QSAE)	Mongolia (MASM)
Fiji (FTSQCO)	Morocco (SNIMA)

¹ Based on lists available at: <http://www.iso.org/iso/en/aboutiso/isomembers/index.html/>.

Netherlands (NEN)	Spain (AENOR)
New Zealand (SNZ)	Sri Lanka (SLSI)
Nigeria (SON)	Sudan (SSMO)
Norway (SN)	Sweden (SIS)
Oman (DGSM)	Switzerland (SNV)
Pakistan (PSQCA)	Syrian Arab Republic (SASMO)
Panama (COPANIT)	Tanzania, United Republic of (TBS)
Peru (INDECOPI)	Thailand (TISI)
Philippines (BPS)	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (ISRM)
Poland (PKN)	Trinidad and Tobago (TTBS)
Portugal (IPQ)	Tunisia (INNORPI)
Qatar (QS)	Turkey (TSE)
Romania (ASRO)	United States (ANSI)
Russian Federation (GOST R)	Ukraine (DSSU)
Saint Lucia (SLBS)	United Arab Emirates (ESMA)
Saudi Arabia (SASO)	United Kingdom (BSI)
Serbia (ISS)	Uruguay (UNIT)
Singapore (SPRING SG)	Uzbekistan (UZSTANDARD)
Slovakia (SUTN)	Venezuela, Bolivarian Republic of (FONDONORMA)
Slovenia (SIST)	Viet Nam (TCVN)
South Africa (SABS)	Zimbabwe (SAZ)

Correspondent members of ISO

Afghanistan (ANSA)	Macau, China (CPTTM)
Albania (DPS)	Madagascar (BNM)
Angola (IANORQ)	Malawi (MBS)
Benin (CEBENOR)	Moldova, Republic of (MOLDST)
Bhutan (SQCA)	Mozambique (INNOQ)
Bolivia (IBNORCA)	Myanmar (MSTRD)
Brunei Darussalam (CPRU)	Namibia (NSIQO)
Burkina Faso (FASONORM)	Nepal (NBSM)
Cameroon (CDNQ)	Nicaragua (DTNM)
Dominican Republic (DIGENOR)	Palestine (PSI)
El Salvador (CONACYT)	Papua New Guinea (NISIT)
Eritrea (ESI)	Paraguay (INTN)
Estonia (EVS)	Rwanda (RBS)
Georgia (GEOSTM)	Senegal (ASN)
Guatemala (COGUANOR)	Seychelles (SBS)
Guinea (INNM)	Swaziland (SQAS)
Guinea-Bissau (DSNPQ)	Tajikistan (TJKSTN)
Hong Kong, China (ITCHKSAR)	Turkmenistan (MSST)
Kyrgyzstan (KYRGYZST)	Uganda (UNBS)
Latvia (LVS)	Yemen (YSMO)
Lithuania (LST)	Zambia (ZABS)

Subscriber members of ISO

Antigua and Barbuda (ABBS)

Burundi (BBN)

Cambodia (ISC)

Dominica (DBOS)

Guyana (GNBS)

Honduras (COHCIT)

Lao People's Democratic Republic (DISM)

Lesotho (LSQAS)

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (SVGBS)

A2. Current members of the ISO Council

Note: The acronym of the national standards institute is followed by the country of the member and the year in which the membership term will expire.

AFNOR France (2008)

ANSI United States (2008)

BSI United Kingdom (2007)

DIN Germany (2008)

DS Denmark (2008)

DSM Malaysia (2008)

GOST R Russian Federation (2007)

IRAM Argentina (2007)

JISC Japan (2007)

KATS Korea, Republic of (2007)

MSA Malta (2008)

SABS South Africa (2008)

SCC Canada (2007)

SIST Slovenia (2007)

SNV Switzerland (2007)

SPRING SG Singapore (2008)

SUTN Slovakia (2008)

UNI Italy (2007)