Standards Council of Canada
Conseil canadien des normes

SCC (Canada) contribution to
ISO Horizon 2010

**Consultation to update
ISO's strategy for 2005-2010**

October 2003

Canada

SCC (Canada) contribution to
ISO Horizon 2010
Consultation to update ISO's strategy for 2005-2010

Element 1 – Scope:

SCC supports the current extent and scope of ISO's work, but ISO must remain open and flexible to new fields of technical activity to remain a globally relevant organization.

The area of social responsibility remains of great interest and once the Technical Report is available for review, it is possible that 'formal' and traditional deliverables will be required in this area. Other potential areas for work within ISO could be: biotechnology, nanotechnology, a code of good practice for regulatory use of ISO standards, standards for services, e-commerce, tourism, urban infrastructures, sustainable development, Integrated Management Systems, privacy of personal information and horizontal risk-based safety standards for products and services. Market relevance should be assured and adequate resources must be available before embarking on any new areas of standards work.

Element 2 – Involvement of stakeholders

Current practices are reasonable from an organizational perspective in that ISO maintains active liaison with other outside bodies (both international and regional) with relevant or particular interest. However, more needs to be done to ensure the fullest extent of stakeholder involvement at the national level with respect to the technical work. One area of particular concern is that the joint ISO and IEC policy statement on Consumer Participation has not been implemented fully or consistently around the world. Most countries are trying to follow the policy but are not always successful due to financial constraints or attitudes of some TC members who feel that consumers are not needed on technical committees addressing products and services destined for consumers. It would be beneficial to see ISO taking a more proactive role in having this policy implemented fully; this could mean establishing a fund for consumer representatives on appropriate technical committees and reducing the predominance of meetings in Europe. Small business is another group that needs to be encouraged and assisted to become more involved in the standards development process. Another item which SCC would like to bring to the forefront is that ISO Member Bodies be required to be transparent regarding the composition of their national mirror committees to ensure that all potentially affected stakeholders are part of their national consultations.

There needs to be a system whereby the National Standards Bodies that participate in the technical work of ISO give objective evidence that they have done their due diligence in engaging their national stakeholders in determining their positions and failure to provide such evidence should have repercussions on the member's standing within ISO.

SCC (Canada) contribution to
ISO Horizon 2010
Consultation to update ISO's strategy for 2005-2010

Element 3 – Global market relevance

ISO should be looking at a much more comprehensive program to challenge the need for standards before work is started, recognizing that the impact today of an ISO standard has changed. ISO needs to ensure when standards activities are undertaken that a "significant" level of interest and engagement is truly demonstrated. What is "significant" for today's environment is quite different from the past before these trade agreements were established.

It should be borne in mind that according to ISO/IEC Guide 21 and to the WTO TBT Agreement Annex 3, there are more reasons for creating options to ISO Standards than those listed in the ISO Horizon 2010 document. Such reasons as regional or national security, protection of human health or safety, or protection of the environment are also legitimate reasons for regional or national deviations. These should always be mentioned at length in order to eliminate incorrect interpretation for such sensitive issues. ISO can increase its relevance and assure its long-term viability through the systematic use of objectives, and by reaching out to developing countries and the people of the world who use languages other than English. Balance requirements for international standards committees should include global representation requirements and a means of judging relevance. *Standards committees in which members are from only one region should be required to justify their existence.*

The efforts and work of ISO's Technical Management Board on developing a global relevance policy should be recognized, and ISO is encouraged to align its policy and future implementation framework along the lines undertaken by the IEC.

Element 4 – Participation of developing countries

Participation of developing countries in the technical work of ISO is key to producing true globally relevant standards. ISO must find new means to support the active participation of developing countries. SCC would strongly recommend the continued inclusion of key elements of ISO's Developing Country Programme 2001-2003 (DEVPRO) that support training and capacity building among developing country members. In particular, initiatives such as the highly successful Mediterranean 2000 project,which support the improvement of ICT infrastructure and enhance the ability of recipients to participate in international standards development, should be extended to other regions wherever possible.

In order to become a truly inclusive international organization, there is a need to find new ways of assuring the involvement of developing countries. As well, there is a need for the creation of a mechanism so that developing countries can systematically receive financial assistance. Similarly, at the member country level there is a need for mechanisms to provide financial assistance for Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs), consumers, and public interest groups, whenever their participation is warranted. In addition, funding mechanisms should be encouraged for developing countries as well as consumer groups to improve participation. Further, the policy of "twinning" leadership positions within the ISO structure that encourages developing countries to co-chair committees, should be more widely adopted. The Canadian initiative to have a twinning arrangement for co-chairs for the COPOLCO Priorities Working Group is an example of what is possible and could be emulated.

ISO needs to go beyond its current limits by forging stronger co-operation with development agencies and banks. Another possibility is more cooperative work and joint projects with ITU and IEC in appropriate projects of interest to developing countries.

SCC (Canada) contribution to
ISO Horizon 2010
Consultation to update ISO's strategy for 2005-2010

Element 5 – Collaboration with IEC and ITU-T

The major issue of concern raised in our national consultation on this element is that COPOLCO members have repeatedly requested better representation on conformity assessment groups and IEC technical committees with very limited success. Specifically, COPOLCO representatives could be granted membership on such bodies as: ISO CASCO, IEC CAB and on IEC ACOS and this should be an ISO priority in the coming years.

The separation of activities does not always appear clear cut between ISO and IEC. The treatment of the convergence of technologies or convergence of subjects needs to be addressed.

SCC would recommend that ISO efforts continue to be made to ensure that compatibility of standards is achieved, duplication of requirements is minimized, and consumer interests are adequately represented at both the technical work and policy setting level between the three groups.

As a final note on this element, the existence of the World Standards Cooperation (WSC) needs to be promoted more effectively.

Element 6 – Inclusiveness

ISO is making good strides in this area, specifically with the Cooperative Agreements with other standards development bodies, which has thus far proven beneficial to all concerned. Canada would like to note that speed, scope and market relevance are not the only concerns for standards work, but that other criteria such as improving the quality of life by ensuring that health, safety and performance requirements meet reasonable expectations should also be given equal importance.

ISO should look at potential new pilot projects at the technical level which could help to increase the market relevance of the organization and provide benefit to standards users.

Element 7 – Use of ISO standards in relation to technical regulations

The role which standards can play in support of technical regulations is becoming a much more valuable tool for regulators and this potential needs to be more fully exploited in the coming years. The trend is for increased usage by regulators and this should be promoted more aggressively. Extra effort should be made to ensure that the linkage between standards and technical regulations does not in any way become detrimental to developing countries.

Increased promotional/explanatory efforts that highlight the benefits of regulatory usage of voluntary standards and Conformity Assessment procedures (e.g. joint presentations / publications with organizations like the OECD, WTO – perhaps a 'code of good practice' document for regulatory usage of adopted ISO standards, voluntary standardization / regulatory seminars, etc.) are needed. WTO members should also be asked to report regularly on progress of their adoption of standards in regulations since there is little objective data. Additional emphasis should also be placed on further promoting the value proposition for standards used in the regulatory process. This is particularly important given the potential threat of losing copyright on standards referenced in legislation.

SCC (Canada) contribution to
ISO Horizon 2010
Consultation to update ISO's strategy for 2005-2010

Element 8 – Providing support to conformity assessment

CASCO work to develop / update the ISO/IEC 17000 series of conformity assessment standards should be noted and further encouraged.

ISO needs to monitor and evaluate the use of its name or 'branding' when it comes to the various conformity assessment schemes that exist in the marketplace. This raises more questions than it provides answers: what form would this take? Would it fall to the ISO member bodies to operate/monitor?

ISO itself should not operate any Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs), it should however, have some role to play in evaluating MRAs and promotion thereof where appropriate. Clear distinction needs to be drawn between voluntary Multi-Lateral Arrangements (MLAs) and Government-to-Government MRAs for this question to have real meaning. For ISO, evaluation may prove difficult and controversial. SCC recommends that promotion of MRAs is the appropriate role for ISO to play using such tools as ISO/IEC Guides 60 & 68 as the preferable mechanism.

Element 9 – Processes and deliverables

SCC is of the opinion that the existing development processes and range of deliverables are more than adequate to meet the demands of stakeholders. However, an effort should be made to clearly define each deliverable and the development process that goes with each so that there is a clearer understanding in the marketplace. More summary documents and flowcharts could be used to explain the various development processes.

One area for improvement is the case of rapidly developing and changing technologies where the time lines need to be abbreviated. This should be supplemented by an educational process which explains the full range of other deliverables and how best to employ them.

It would be good to create templates for each of the deliverables and to make them as visible as possible so that committees remain aware of the time lines. The discussion of project time lines should be a compulsory item on the agenda of all committee meetings. There should always be an objective to decrease time to publication.

We would like to see more accountability throughout the ISO organization. Performance indicators (PIs) and objectives could be used to continually improve the functioning of ISO. For example, PIs could be used to measure the contribution of national members of committees and their participation at meetings.

SCC (Canada) contribution to
ISO Horizon 2010
Consultation to update ISO's strategy for 2005-2010

Element 10 – IT tools

The Canadian use of e-Services is extensive and for the most part our experience is extremely positive. Although we use a different electronic committee platform for our national work our two systems co-exist effectively.

One area for significant improvement would be to standardize the electronic notification systems used by all ISO technical committees and sub committees. The contents of such notifications are described in TMB Resolution 14/2002 and these details should become mandatory for all committees. This would lead to greater efficiency and effectiveness for the National Standards Bodies in their work with their national mirror committees.

Element 11 – Education and communication

SCC agrees there is a paucity of educational tools at the international level and any efforts made in this area would be constructive and widely used.

The most prominent stakeholder groups that should be the focus of this initiative are consumers and persons just becoming a part of the standards development process. Other prominent stakeholder groups are developing countries, and the academic sector - undergraduate and graduate level as well as technical schools. It must also be noted that education and information needs should not be limited to new members as those who have been working within the system for years could also benefit from a refresher of international standardization objectives. In addition to these groups, SCC would put forward that Convenors of working groups could also benefit from these initiatives. On a national level, education initiatives aimed at employees of SMEs and enforcement staff of regulatory agencies could also reap great benefit.

Element 12 – Resources and services provided by the ISO Central Secretariat

Since we are looking to the future one key issue that SCC would like to put forward is that of language. The use of languages other than English cannot be overlooked. There is a need to produce documents in the major languages of the world, at least at the public enquiry and publication stages. Thus, it is necessary to make financial arrangements for the reasonable translation of documents and to organize the sharing of translated documents amongst the various countries with needs for the same language. This problem affects both developing and developed countries.