

IEC REPORT TO THE WTO TBT COMMITTEE

The following information was provided by the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) at the TBT Committee meeting of 5 July 2007 under Agenda Item 4 (Updating by Observers).

1. The IEC is pleased to report on its membership, the programme for developing countries, IEC conformity assessment activities, its regional centres, and cooperation with other international organizations.

I. MEMBERSHIP

2. Cuba joined the IEC as an Associate Member in May, and has now access to all IEC International Standards and working documents (draft standards) in addition to voting rights on four technical committees.

3. The IEC Family now counts 143 countries comprising 68 Members and 75 Affiliates (see Affiliate Country Programme below).

4. Following continued reductions in its membership costs as part of its Masterplan 2006 Strategic Action Plan, several developing countries have shown their intention to join the IEC. Eleven Affiliate countries have already established national electrotechnical committees, a prerequisite to working more closely with the IEC.

II. AFFILIATE COUNTRY PROGRAMME

5. One of the primary aims of the IEC Affiliate Country Programme is to encourage developing countries to use and adopt IEC International Standards. In this respect, the Programme has recorded continued success:

- 52 Affiliate countries have now started an electronic library of IEC International Standards;
- Trinidad and Tobago has started to adopt IEC Standards; and
- In total, 2200 IEC International Standards are now used as national standards in 26 Affiliate countries.

6. The IEC Affiliate Country Programme, which was established in 2001, is a free programme which has enabled 75 countries to become familiar with IEC's International Standards and its technical work programme. The Programme now counts 75 participants following the change in Cuba's status from Affiliate to IEC Member.

7. Since the March 2007 TBT Committee meeting, 17 new experts from IEC Affiliates have been nominated by their respective countries (the Dominican Republic, Guinea, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago). This brings the total number of experts who have access to IEC standardization development process from the Affiliates to 228.

8. Carlos Rodríguez of Costa Rica has continued to represent the interests of the Affiliates in the IEC as the Leader of the Programme. Highlights include:

- He has pursued his commitment to encourage Affiliates to establish a fully representative national electrotechnical committee that will serve better their developing economies;
- He has encouraged Affiliates to participate in IEC standardization activities and adopt IEC Standards;
- In addition, he has facilitated the use of Spanish translations of the IEC Standards as supplied by the Spanish-speaking members of the IEC for IEC Affiliates to use in adopting relevant IEC Standards.

III. REGIONAL CENTRES

9. The new IEC Regional Centre for Latin America (IEC-LARC) was officially inaugurated in São Paulo, Brazil, in May 2007. The Regional Manager is Mr. Amaury Santos and his contact details are:

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10. The IEC-LARC is the focal point and resource for the IEC in Latin American, helping to:

- Promote awareness of the IEC in the region;
- Increase the use of IEC International Standards and IEC Conformity Assessment Schemes;
- Enhance participation and membership of countries in the region.

11. All of the above will be achieved by improved communication with businesses, industries and governments in the region. Located in central São Paulo, the IEC-LARC offers meeting facilities for IEC activities.

12. The IEC-LARC also coordinates and organizes training events and seminars and workshops that match the needs of the region. Events range from seminars on the use of IT tools in the IEC to workshops on specific technical areas.

13. The IEC Asia-Pacific Regional Centre (located in Singapore) continues to support IEC Members and Affiliates in the Asia-Pacific region, most notably with training sessions in Lao PDR (Affiliate) and Cambodia (Affiliate), including assistance in establishing its national electrotechnical committee. In addition, through its regional centre the IEC continues to participate in all relevant APEC and ASEAN groupings.

IV. INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

14. Since the last TBT meeting, the IEC has participated in two WTO regional workshops (Bahrain and Botswana).

15. A special joint meeting in Cartagena, Colombia in April, of two key regional bodies for the Americas (COPANT) and the Pacific Rim (PASC) provided an opportunity for IEC President Renzo Tani to update the respective memberships on IEC activities.

16. IEC participated in SADCSTAN General Meeting held on 25 April in Antananarivo, Madagascar, and took the opportunity to conduct training at the Bureau des Normes de Madagascar (BNM), also helping to establish a national electrotechnical committee by meeting with BNM stakeholders.

17. On 28-29 May, the IEC attended the electrotechnical standardization forum organized by the African electrical utilities (UPDEA) in Cape Town, South Africa. IEC shared its experience during the African Electrotechnical Standardization Commission (AFSEC) stakeholders' forum.

18. In an effort to help the experts supporting the assistance provided by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) to developing nations, the IEC joined ILAC at a training session in May aimed at helping the UNIDO experts to understand better the conformity assessment world and the possibilities offered by the peer assessment model (IEC) and the accreditation model (ILAC).

19. As part of IEC efforts to coordinate its developing countries programme with that of its sister organization, ISO, the International Organization for Standardization, the IEC undertook several initiatives including:

- The IEC Affiliate Country Programme was presented at the ISO DEVCO Chair's Advisory Group in March. This session provided the opportunity for this specialist ISO group to understand better the IEC's programme for developing nations and find areas to improve co-ordination and co-operation;
- In addition, the IEC's Conformity Assessment Board Secretary participated in an ISO regional workshop on conformity assessment held in South Africa in May.

20. IEC continued its coordination efforts with JCDCMAS, the grouping of the world's leading organizations in metrology, accreditation and standardization. While not an organization in its own right, JCDCMAS does offer the potential for organizations to coordinate their assistance to developing countries (avoiding, for example, duplication of training etc.).

V. FURTHER INFORMATION

21. If you have any questions relating to this report, or would like to receive further information on the IEC, its work and its International Standards and Conformity Assessment activities, please do not hesitate to contact our Geneva Office or one of the IEC regional centres:

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