



Commission Electrotechnique Internationale
International Electrotechnical Commission
Международная Электротехническая Комиссия

Report to the WTO Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade 22-23 March 2005

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1. Introduction

This report presents an update of the IEC's international standardization and conformity assessment activities since the last meeting of the WTO TBT Committee held in Geneva on 4 November 2004.

2. Technical Assistance Activities

Asia-Pacific

The third JISC/IEC Asia-Pacific Human Resource Development Seminar, organized by the Japanese Industrial Standards Committee (JISC), was held at the IEC's Asia-Pacific Regional Centre in Singapore from 9-10 December 2004. This event, which was open to members and non-members of the IEC, built on the successes of the previous two such seminars and focused understanding how the participating countries are using IEC International Standards and participating in the elaboration of International Standards. Presentations from the 15 participating countries, as well as group discussion exercises were also included to give participant countries the opportunity to share their experiences and views. Specific themes such as electricity transmission and distribution and safety of household and similar electrical appliances were also introduced to shed more light on the scope of IEC's activities. Participating countries were: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Fiji, Indonesia, Korea (D.P.R. of), Lao P.D.R, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Africa

The benefits of IEC International Standards, the need to participate in the elaboration of standards, and the IEC Affiliate Country Programme were given prominence at the recent meetings of the African Regional Organization for Standardization (ARSO) held in Accra, Ghana in February 2005. On 23 February 2005, ARSO held its inaugural workshop on "Standardization and Poverty Alleviation in Africa". The purpose of this platform was to review regional standardization in relation to socio-economic performance by regulators, standards publishers, users and consumers to improve the quality of goods. The IEC presented an update of its activities and focused on the IEC Affiliate Country Programme. Of ARSO's 24 members, 3 countries are IEC members, while a further 15 countries are participating in the Affiliate Country Programme. The six remaining countries have been invited to participate in the Affiliate Programme.

3. IEC Conformity Assessment Activities

IEC and ILAC

The IEC and the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on 9 February 2005 that aims to improve efficiency and reduce assessment costs for testing laboratories. The agreement makes official a working relationship that had been operating informally since December 2003. The IEC/ILAC MoU also covers the common



understanding of ISO/IEC 17025 General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories, which is dealt with by the joint working group set up between the IEC Conformity Assessment Board (CAB) and ILAC.

Openness in the IECEE System

Further to the questions received during the WTO TBT Workshop on Conformity Assessment in June 2004, the IEC would like to clarify that the IECEE CB Scheme is for testing electrical and electronic products. The CB Scheme allows participation by, and therefore offers its advantages to, manufacturing industry and its customers world-wide, even in the absence of IEC participation or membership in the IECEE system. Membership in the IECEE, and therefore full and entire participation in the CB Scheme, is open to countries which are not themselves members of the IEC. This constitutes the first level of openness, and allows every activity defined in the CB Scheme: testing of products and issuing of relevant test certificates which will be recognized world-wide, as well as using the test certificates issued elsewhere. Use of the CB Scheme without membership in the IECEE is also possible, at two levels. A manufacturer from a non-member country may apply to any CB Scheme certification body to obtain CB Scheme test certificates, which are then usable in exactly the same way as any other. The difference in this case is simply that the certification body will be situated in a different country. Finally, any distributor, user or government regulator may require or make use of existing CB test certificates, independently of whether his country is itself directly involved in IECEE.

4. IEC Family

Since the last WTO TBT Committee Meeting, the *IEC Membership* has increased from 65 to 68, with three countries making the transition from participants in the IEC Affiliate Country Programme to Membership. The three new Associate Members are: Kazakhstan (October 2004), the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (January 2005), and Kenya (February 2005).

There are two types of IEC Membership. Full Membership allows countries to participate fully in international standardization activities. Full Members are National Committees each having equal voting rights. Associate Membership allows for limited participation of countries with limited resources. Associate members may contribute to the work of up to four technical committees and subcommittees and attend IEC General Meetings, especially Council.

Launched in June 2001, the *Affiliate Country Programme* is the IEC's direct response to calls from the WTO TBT Committee for the means to offer all WTO members the means to use IEC International Standards and to participate in their elaboration, as well as the IEC International Conformity Assessment Schemes. The Programme operates in a 100% electronic environment and allows participants to involve themselves in the IEC technical work according to needs and resources available. It also offers free access to a basic library of IEC International Standards in electronic format, and through dedicated procedure, facilitates the adoption of IEC International Standards. Today the Programme counts 65 participating countries (down from 68 as three countries have now joined the IEC as members). To date, 37 countries have now started their basic library of IEC International Standards (up by 8 since the last TBT Committee Meeting), while 27 countries are now able to access the technical work in their selected areas of interest (up by 6 since the last meeting). As the result of a facilitated adoption procedure, four countries have started to adopt IEC International Standards at National Standards or regulations. A special Workshop for IEC Affiliate Countries is being organized to coincide with the IEC General Meeting which will be held in Cape Town, South Africa from 16-22 October 2005.



5. Regional Centres

Following the successful performance of the IEC's regional centres in North America (Boston, MA, USA) and the Asia-Pacific (Singapore), the IEC will establish a Latin American Regional Centre in Brazil by mid-2005. The Centre's goals will be to promote the awareness and use of IEC International Standards, and to increase the participation in the Commission's technical work. The Centre's activities will be targeted at IEC member and non-member countries.

6. International Cooperation

IEC and MERCOSUR

A co-operation agreement between the IEC and MERCOSUR's standardization arm, the Asociación MERCOSUR de Normalización (AMN), came into effect on 31 January 2005. The agreement was entered into by the IEC General Secretary Aharon Amit and the Executive Secretary of MERCOSUR AMN, Lilian Martinez de Alonso, the Director General of the Instituto Nacional de Tecnología Y Normalización (INTN) of Paraguay. The agreement's principal objective is the implementation of IEC International Standards as regional standards among the MERCOSUR member countries, and to increase the awareness of the IEC and its standardization activities among non-IEC member countries in the region. MERCOSUR currently comprises IEC members Argentina and Brazil, and IEC Affiliates, Paraguay and Uruguay. The IEC has similar such agreements with CANENA (Council for Harmonization of Electrotechnical Standards of the Nations of the Americas), COPANT (Comisión Panamericana de Normas Técnicas or Pan American Standards Commission), and EASC (Euro-Asian Interstate Council for Standardization, Metrology and Certification).

Cooperation between IEC, ISO and ITU

Thirty participants from national standards bodies and national committees have been invited to the second week-long WSC Standardization Community Management Course, to be held in Geneva from 11 to 15 April 2005. The course is being organized by the World Standards Cooperation (WSC) – the entity created by the IEC, International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU-T) to strengthen and advance the voluntary consensus-based international standards system. The course is intended to prepare managers for their participation in the future development of the international standardization community and provide them with a detailed insight into the business. The first such event was held in Geneva in September 2004 and offered participants a high level preparation for their current and future participation in the international standardization process and community. The upcoming course is intended to do the same with sessions focusing on why International Standards are important, how they are produced made and used, and how the three international standardization organizations function. The first course was oversubscribed and as a result of the comments received from participants, it was agreed to hold a second one to ensure that those who missed the first one could attend.

