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**ADDRESS BY THE ISO PRESIDENT, *Prof. GIACOMO ELIAS,***  
***UNDER AGENDA ITEM 1 OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY***  
***BEIJING, China, 20 OCTOBER 1999***

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Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues and friends.

First of all, many thanks to our Chinese Colleagues for the magnificent welcome and for the perfect organization of this Assembly, both suited to a great country with a millenary history.

Two years ago you elected me President of our Organization. On that occasion I said to you that I was convinced that:

- ISO was offering itself as a proper service organization in support of the business world in the tricky phase of the globalization of trade, and that
- we were in the position to give a substantial contribution to the transparency of behaviour, procedures, products and processes and to the easing of communication between the people involved, while respecting the specific regional and national aspects and the correctness and transparency of the commercial exchanges.

In my two years as President-Elect and President, worked in strict and fruitful cooperation with the Members, Council, the two Vice-Presidents, the Secretary-General and the entire ISO structure, and after many visits to different countries around the world, I can say that my belief of yesterday has become a certitude.

Of the important goals to continuously improve the efficiency of our Organization and the quality of our production, of which the Secretary-General will inform you later in detail, two important actions have been implemented:

The first one is the introduction of telematics to our set of working tools.

It is well known that it is too burdensome for the NSBs with smaller human and financial resources to participate in standardization work, thus weakening the fundamental role that consensus has in our activity. It's also a fact that the method, based in physical meetings to produce standards, slows down the process.

For these reasons, the Central Secretariat is working hard to deliver every day more documents via Internet, to allow the NSBs to participate in the production of standards, rarely having to move from their home base.

But the Central Secretariat's efforts need to be supported by you all, because we have to remember that ISO is a system. You have to organize and train yourself at home to be able to link and talk with the central system. The Central Secretariat is at your

complete disposal to give you the necessary instruction, but you have to be in the mood to learn. I am certain that you all understand very well the advantages and the savings that this new tool represents for us.

The second action is the “Forum for Standards Actions in the Global Market ”.

More than a year ago we took the initiative to contact, at the highest level, international organizations belonging to four main groups:

- The United Nations: WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organization), UNCTAD (UN Commission on Trade and Development), UNIDO (UN Industrial Development Organization), ITC (International Trade Centre, WTO and UNCTAD initiative), UN/ECE (Economic Commission for Europe of the UN)
- Enterprises representatives: ICC (International Chamber of Commerce), ICSCA (Industry Cooperation on Standards and Conformity Assessment), IFAN (International Federation for the Application of Standards)
- Standardization: ISO, IEC (International Electrotechnical Commission), ITU-T (Telecommunications Standardization Sector).
- The WTO (World Trade Organization).

The aim of those contacts was to create a cooperation and collaboration network:

- to foster efficiency in standardization and clarify links between standardization and regulations worldwide;
- to facilitate the adoption and application of international standards by users;
- to identify projects (and their financing needs) aimed at improving the understanding of priorities for new international standardization work and the necessary local and regional structural support and training programmes, with particular regard to the developing countries.

I am proud to announce to you today that this initiative has been successful because the great majority of the above-mentioned organizations (we are still waiting for final answers from ITC, IEC and ITU) have agreed with us on a Memorandum of Understanding, establishing the **Forum on Standards Actions in the Global Market (SGM Forum)**. Particularly, the WTO will participate at the SGM Forum as an observer. The first meeting of the Forum will be held next November. The Secretary-General will give you all the details later on.

I consider this cooperation very important for the correct development of the Global Market because new partnerships are needed to rise to the challenges that international standardization will face in the changing regulatory environment. For this reason I am very grateful to the CEOs of the above-mentioned organizations for their positive attitude manifested to our initiative and for their important suggestions given to improve it.

Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues and friends.

In closing, I would like to say that I think that we have to be very proud for the credibility ISO enjoys among important governmental and non governmental organizations, thanks to more than fifty years of hard and serious work. But we also

have to be conscious of the responsibilities implied in the important role we are playing for the common good of the international community.

Finally, I ask you to join me in thanking the Council, the Vice-Presidents, the Treasurer, the Secretary-General, the Technical Management Board, the entire Central Secretariat, that works always heartily and professionally, and, last but not least, all the members of the TCs for their intelligent and careful work.