

ISO actions in support of developing countries



■ International standardization and international trade

There is increasing realization among policy makers in developing countries that international trade, which contributes to economic growth and alleviation of poverty, is underpinned by the adoption and application of standards in all spheres of economic activity. The importance of International Standards is further stressed in the WTO rules, especially the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) agreement, which encourages WTO members to use, as far as possible, such standards as a basis for mandatory technical regulations. Regional integration efforts, which concern many of the ISO members, also rely on harmonization and mutual recognition of standards and of results of conformity assessment such as testing, inspection or certification. There is thus a tremendous need, especially on the part of developing countries, to understand and implement good practices in standardization as well as to contribute in the process of standardization.

■ ISO Action Plan for developing countries 2005-2010

ISO has been implementing technical assistance programmes targeted at its members from developing countries since the early 1980s. Aligned with the *ISO Strategic Plan 2005-2010*, the current *ISO Action Plan for developing countries 2005-2010* sets the direction for the support to be provided to members in developing countries, which account for three-quarters of ISO's 162 members. The *Action Plan* defines five key objectives, namely to raise awareness, build capacity, foster regional cooperation, develop expertise in information and communication technologies (ICTs) and to enhance the participation of developing countries in ISO technical work.

■ Implementation of the ISO Action Plan for developing countries

The volume of technical assistance provided to developing countries, funded by donors and ISO members, has nearly tripled from their 2005 level to reach CHF 1 526 000 in 2008. In aggregate, around 195 activities covering the five objectives of the *Action Plan* have taken place during that period and more than 10 000 participants from developing countries have benefited. ISO continues to adjust the contents of its technical assistance deliverables in light of the needs expressed by its members each year.

■ Deliverables for 2010

For 2010, ISO has identified the following areas in which awareness seminars and workshops as well as training-of-trainers courses may be offered in accordance with requests from members :

- Adopting and referencing International Standards
- Conformity assessment (testing, certification, inspection)
- Consumer participation in international standardization
- Energy management
- Environment (environmental management systems, life cycle assessment, greenhouse gas accounting)
- Food safety management systems
- Information security management systems
- Management of a national standards body
- Participation in international standardization (policy and practice, roles and responsibilities)
- Role of standards in economic development and trade
- Social responsibility
- Societal security
- Stakeholder participation in international standardization through national mirror committees.



Since 2008, ISO has enhanced awareness on topics related to good standardization practices and infrastructure building as a direct support to the operations of national standards bodies (NSBs). The series of topics will further be enriched in 2010 by offering awareness on sustainability of NSBs.

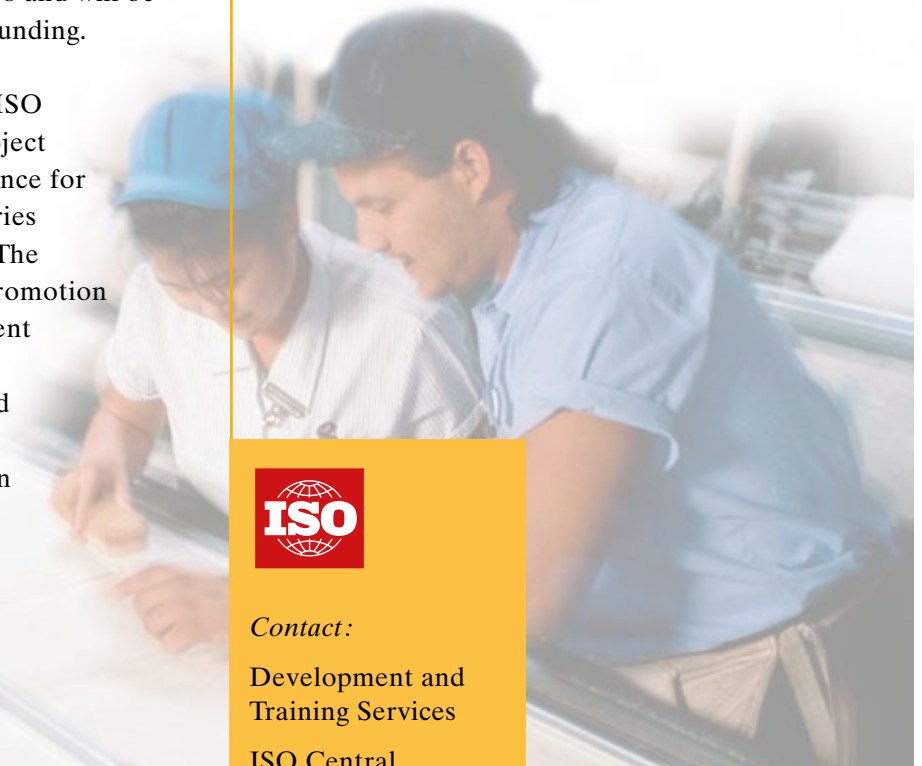
Besides, support to help members participate in ISO technical work in specific areas (energy management, societal security, social responsibility, food safety, and environment) has increased since 2008 and will be maintained in 2010 thanks to donor funding.

ICT projects are being delivered to ISO member bodies through the ISO Project entitled "IT tools and related assistance for member bodies in developing countries (ICTDEV)" spanning 2009 to 2011. The objective of this development and promotion project is to accelerate the deployment of four customized ICT packages (comprising equipment, software and assistance) and training, targeted at different groups of member bodies in developing countries.

For further information on the training and development courses and programmes offered by ISO please visit www.iso.org and click on "Technical assistance" or "Training".

■ The next Action Plan

The same consultation process that was used for the formulation of the *ISO Action Plan for developing countries 2005-2010* will be carried out for the next *Action Plan*. Consultations will kick-off at the DEVCO meeting on 14 September 2009 in Cape Town. Much information is already available on the needs and expectations of developing countries and it is hoped that ISO will continue to benefit from the goodwill it has enjoyed up to now with donors to fund the implementation of the next *Action Plan*.



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