



---

**REPORT OF THE**  
***ISO SECRETARY-GENERAL TO THE ISO GENERAL ASSEMBLY***  
***BEIJING,***  
***20 OCTOBER 1999***

---

Distinguished Guests  
ISO Officers,  
ISO Members and Friends

Please allow me to add my own welcome to ISO's 22<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly which is the last but one year of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and our first in China. I hope that your travel arrangements went smoothly, that you are nicely settled in to your hotel accommodations, and that you are ready for a productive General Assembly and a memorable visit to China. I would also like to welcome, in particular, our new members: Kazakstan, Azerbaijan, Madagascar and Congo – although strictly speaking, I should say, “Welcome back!” to Kazakstan. Each of you is now part of an ISO family that includes the national standards institutes of 132 countries. Our membership currently comprises 90 member bodies, 34 correspondent members and eight subscriber members.

It is one indicator of the health of our organization that so many countries around the world perceive that it is in their self-interest to belong to ISO, not only because ISO is seen as having more and more successes in solving technical problems in world communication and trade but also because ISO's progress is very often seen as orchestrating the success of partnerships between major players intending to advance economic development for all countries and, at the same time, as improving the quality of life for all people.

These are excellent reasons for any country to belong to any international organization, and I believe that we all hope they shall continue to be the obvious reasons why ISO's membership will remain large and strong long into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

ISO and its members would not be where they are today without their numerous international partners and I would like to extend a special welcome to the representatives in this room of the large network of relations ISO has established in the international organizations.

[Slide 2 ]

If you were able to attend one or more of the last few General Assemblies, you are probably getting used to the idea that at this point in the proceedings, I try to give what fellow Americans might characterize as a “State of the Union” address. My intention is to give an annual update on what I see as the main developments in ISO since we met for our General Assembly meeting in 1998. As this slide suggests, this is the “Secretary-

General's eye view" of where we are now. I should qualify it as a personal view – it is not at all necessary that you agree with all the points of view that I shall be expressing.

In this report, I will not cover information or subjects that will be covered by the ISO Officers and invited speakers under the items that are scheduled for discussion later in the General Assembly agenda (e.g. issues concerning organizational policy, international partnerships, strategic agendas, statutes, etc.).

I also promise this year not to talk very much about our "Internet Imperative", or to show off my amateur computer skills, because I would essentially be repeating the same things I said and showed to you during my report last year. Please be assured that I believe more than ever in ISO's Internet Imperative, but if you were not yet convinced, any more preaching from me would likely be wasted.

My topics for this morning are:

- Facts and figures – production and performance
  - management traps and averages
- Sales – storm warning brewing
- New horizons for ISO
  - Risk analysis
  - Doping control in sports
  - Standards' needs of the elderly
  - Pilot projects and ASTM
- Concrete results
  - Cost benefits in the petroleum industry
  - Gas cylinders
  - MPEG4 – audio visual magic
  - Boilers and pressure vessels
  - ISO 9000 and ISO 14000
- ISO and its developing country members
  - DEVPRO
  - ISO's White Paper and Envoys
- ISO's Officers
- Prospects for Y2k

## **Facts and figures**

[Slide 3]

In 1998, we achieved a new production record of 1 058 standards – approximately 42 000 printed pages. A month ago, the ISO portfolio stood at 12 235 standards and 337 119 pages.

In 1998 and 1999, we have had a steady input from the TC/SC's of 85 to 87 DIS per month. We had expected an increase that has not yet materialized, so it appears that our production is flattening to around 1 000 standards per year – this from an active work programme of around 6 000 ongoing projects in our TC's and SC's.

[Slide 4 ]

As you know, we often criticize ourselves, and are criticized by others about how long it takes to develop and publish ISO standards. Sometimes, I think we fall into the trap of looking too much at averages. To explain what I mean, let me show you two statistical presentations that are both correct, but give very different interpretations of how slow we really are.

This slide was one prepared for the ISO Council meeting last June. We were trying to see if slowness or fastness in the ISO system was highly dependent on the different industrial sectors in which ISO is active. Without asking you to look at the detail, I can tell you that the averages for each sector are not much different. It seems hard to believe that there is not a lot of difference between “average slowness” in the information technology sector, and the ores and metals sector, but the averaged figures tend to confirm this to be the case.

These kind of statistics can be rather discouraging and give an impression that it is the system and its bureaucratic process that create some kind of inherent slowness in international standardization. And from such interpretations, we are often urged to take drastic steps to re-engineer our processes, or even to abandon our consensus-building principles.

But maybe we were not looking at the right averages?

Please have a look at the next statistical presentation.

[Slide 5 ]

This slide showing the average time taken from start to finish for ISO standards published in 1997 and 1998 gives some interesting insights. Here we have done the counting and averaging on a standard-by-standard basis regardless of the sector from which it came. And the interpretation we can infer is rather different.

A statistician might call this a skewed bell (or normal) distribution with a major tail.

What we can see is that many ISO standards do, in fact, make it from start to finish in four years or less, and that another large group completes the process within eight years. This is more or less what you would expect for a group of work tasks in any organization that vary in difficulty, complexity and urgency. ISO 9000, for example, took nine years from start to finish, but ISO 14000 took only three.

The major tail is interesting because these kinds of standards are the ones responsible for distorting the averages that often trap us into thinking that our system is always slow and cumbersome. The tail is also interesting because it represents a series of standards that might have been cancelled by the TMB (in the 1997 house cleaning), if it had not been for convincing arguments put forward by the TC's that these standards were clearly needed by the market despite their long gestation times.

I think there is something for all of us (including myself) to learn from this new, yet simple graphic. It is that we need always to be aware that averages, particularly when they hide or distort relevant facts, can become dangerous traps for any manager, including ourselves.

There is nothing wrong with having an overall target of three years for producing a standard. But that target should be considered by the TC's in planning how much they can reasonably put on their plate and expect to get done in time to meet a particular market need. However, if a particular standard, or even a significant number of standards, don't make it from start to finish in three years, we should not jump to the conclusion that our system is badly flawed or that we have failed as managers.

### **Sales – a brewing storm!**

It is a fact of life for most standards institutions that the sale of standards is a survival issue, and for ISO the same is true.

Concerning sales of ISO standards, three big trends that were anticipated now appear to be confirmed:

- An increasing number of ISO standards are being adopted as national standards by our member bodies, and as a result the size of our marketable standards portfolio is constantly decreasing;
- An increasing number of ISO and national standards are being sold in electronic form and Web delivered;
- Sales revenues allocated to the ISO Central Secretariat are shifting from hard copy revenues to copyright (royalty) revenues and decreasing.

It is fair to say that most of us had expected these trends to materialize sooner or later, and that we consider them to be healthy developments for the cause of international standardization. What we are seeing is an important change in the distribution infrastructures for our core products that at the same time are shrinking in size. The change is technology driven and cannot be successfully resisted.

The new technologies and, in particular, the use of IT tools on the Internet, are bringing drastic changes to the system of distribution of ISO standards for many of our members and they have a direct impact on the ISO/CS sales revenue. An increasing number of members are reproducing ISO standards, using Print On Demand (POD) systems, or are distributing standards electronically to the end-users.

It is also fair to say that these healthy developments will require that we make other changes in the ways we do business and, unfortunately, in how we pay for doing our business.

[Slide 6]

This slide shows the picture over the past ten years in graphic form.

As we can see, the Central Secretariat has experienced a decrease of the hard-copy sales, which has occurred faster than I anticipated. The revenue from copyright also shows a small decrease which is, however, less than I expected. Nevertheless, the bottom line is the total sales revenues allocated to the ISO Central Secretariat and, as I said, it is clearly going down.

I have taken the time to describe this situation to you in some detail because I feel you should be aware that we in the ISO Council, your elected representatives, will need to find a solution to the problem of decreasing revenues for the Central Secretariat, and we will have to do it soon! We have already started to grapple with the issues and will be taking a series of important policy and financial decisions next January.

WARNING!

WARNING!

WARNING!

There is a good chance that these decisions will not be popular or easily accepted by the members since nobody likes the choice of paying more for a given service or getting less service for the same cost.

### **New ISO horizons**

Even if we will have some financial challenges in keeping our house running smoothly, we should not overlook the fact that we are at the same time seeing some really interesting new opportunities for ISO to increase its technological and social relevance in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Let me point to just a few of these new opportunities that have surfaced since we met last in Geneva.

[Slide 7]

#### *Risk assessment and safety*

Making sure that nightmares do not come true has always been one of the important jobs for standardization, but until recently the job has been tackled primarily at the national or even sub-national level. The reasons why ISO has had limited activity in such work is because the need for and existence of standards and regulations dealing with risk assessment and safety have been very much localized – even different from city to city in the same country.

Most of us realize that this local approach is neither rational nor efficient since risk assessment and setting safety standards is not really that much different from one place to another. We also see some of the world's most obvious “technical barriers to trade” existing because of diverse technical and testing requirements for the same products in different regulatory jurisdictions.

Is this a problem where ISO can help? It looks like the door of opportunity is opening at least for risk assessment, and for that we have Europe to thank.

The safety of machinery has received a high priority in Europe. In order to meet the high levels of safety expected by the central regulator (the European Commission) not only the specifications of individual machines need careful attention, but a clearly defined methodology is also needed to provide standards writers with a foundation for risk assessment.

ISO 14121, recently published jointly with CEN, gives guidance in meeting the essential safety requirements (regulations) at a high level to standards writers preparing standards for a specific product, or a family of products. In addition, it provides users with a basis for a reasoned evaluation of the safety measures recommended by machine manufacturers, as well as being an important tool for safety professionals and the designers of training.

From this new standard, we have realized a broadly based consensus that risk assessment is part of the iterative process of risk reduction. The process is continued until the tolerable safety level is reached. This concept of “tolerable risk” is presented in the other new ISO publication which I wanted to mention in this context, Guide 51, which gives excellent guidelines for the inclusion of safety aspects in standards. “Tolerable risk” is defined as risk which is accepted in a given context, based on the current values of society.

The developments reflected in these now ISO standards are breaking new ground for ISO and we can expect that they will go a long way toward ensuring that consumers can have reasonable expectations for products, processes and services at the desired level of safety. And, at the same time, suppliers can expect to have much easier access to the global market without legal barriers being erected by regulatory authorities.

[Slide 8]

*Doping control in sport*

With safety-related standards, we illustrate once again that ISO has not only economic motivations and technical competencies but also a respect for social responsibility. A landmark in this context is ISO's adoption this year of its Publicly Available Specification for Doping Control in sport. This specification, one of ISO's new normative deliverables, is not yet a full fledged International Standard as we understand that term within ISO but it is definitely headed in that direction with enthusiastic support from sporting associations and governments in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Norway, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom. They believe that ISO's adoption of this specification will significantly increase its rate of worldwide acceptance by their own and other's governments, sports organizations and athletes.

Personally, as one who places a high value on the benefits of competitive sports and the international Olympic movement, I could not be more pleased with this turn to ISO for help. We are keenly aware that international sporting competitions have become “very big business” and that governments are large subsidizers of the sporting business. All of us therefore, even if only as taxpayers, can benefit in one or many ways if the illicit use of drugs in sport can be more objectively and effectively monitored and controlled. For all of these reasons, I think that ISO has made the right decision in lending its support to this doping control initiative, particularly since the development of standardized procedures and testing methods is clearly one of our pre-eminent areas of expertise and competence.

Three cheers then for you, the members of ISO, who have not hesitated to step outside of the traditional boundaries of our day to day work to help solve one of the highly publicized International Standards problems of our modern society!

[Slide 9]

*The needs of the elderly*

I think you all know that we in the standards world enjoy our spirited debates about who best represents the needs of consumers in respect to standardization. After having been introduced to very many organizations that claim to represent consumers' interests, I have become convinced that there is no better body, national or international, than ISO's own COPOLCO, our consumer affairs policy development committee.

What, you might ask, is COPOLCO up to now?

In this year declared by the United Nations as the Year of Older Persons, COPOLCO decided to devote its annual workshop to the theme, "Meeting the Needs of Ageing Populations: Enhancing the Quality of Life through Standards". I have no doubt that this will become a major preoccupation for standardization in the 21st Century. COPOLCO, that wonderful ISO committee that doesn't know anything about science, engineering or the limitations of what standards can do, has again pushed open the door of opportunity for ISO, and invites us to venture in.

The stakes are high: by the year 2025, we are told that one in every four persons in developed countries will be over 60 and many developing countries too are faced with challenges arising from the increasing elderly composition of their populations. You will be hearing much more on this subject from the COPOLCO Chairman when he reports later in the agenda.

[ Slide 10]

*Pilot projects with US SDO's - ASTM and dosimetry standards*

Most of you are aware that the ISO model for organizational responsibility in the development of standards is not always compatible with the way standards are developed in the United States, and that over the years we have often engaged in many long and unproductive debates with our professional colleagues in the States about which model is best at producing "real" International Standards. You may remember that at last year's General Assembly when that debate started to warm up again, one of our colleagues referred to it as an "Elephant's Dance" and suggested that the dance should continue "off line" with the mice safely out of the way.

In fact, that suggestion was taken very seriously and, that same week, Council decided to set up a special group headed by John Kean as TMB Chairman to meet with ANSI and several of the major US SDO's to see how, by working more closely together, we might convert the Elephant's Dance into a more productive exercise. The group has worked hard and had some important successes - agreeing with each of the SDO's involved to develop joint pilot projects in specific fields from which we can expect to learn how to improve our dancing skills.

A major breakthrough came in June of this year when Council approved a proposal supported fully by ANSI to start a pilot project with the ASTM, whereby it will be possible for ASTM and ISO to develop standards in parallel and publish one, and only one document as an ASTM/ISO standard. ISO/TC 85 *Nuclear energy* will be the first ISO

committee involved in this pilot project, which, in its first phase, will cover a package of standards on food irradiation dosimetry.

Knowing that the ASTM President, Jim Thomas, is in the audience as part of the ANSI delegation, I would like to pay a special tribute to him and to his excellent staff. They have done a lot of work and taken some very important initiatives in breaking new ground for ASTM's partnership in this experiment. It is nice, especially for me, to be pulling with Jim on the same rope and in the same direction.

I should also mention that John Kean's group continues to work with ANSI and some other US SDO's, and that similar pilot projects with these organizations (API, ASME and IEEE) are now under consideration.

### **Concrete results – Standards highlights**

When we speak about the public's image of ISO, I am sure that most of you share an experience with the ISO Officers as they travel and speak around the world. That particular experience is finding that hardly anyone understands that ISO has produced anything other than the ISO 9000 standards. Our President has joked that every speech about ISO should start by explaining that ISO 9000 is in fact preceded by 8 999 other standards, and in between ISO 9000 and ISO 14000 you will find 4 999 other ISO standards.

The point is clear, we need to find better ways to get people to appreciate that our management systems standards, while important, make up a very small percentage of our full product offering, and I will follow the President's advice here and highlight a few good examples of other important ISO accomplishments in 1999.

I will come back to mention some salient information about the worldwide acceptance of ISO 9000 and ISO 14000 at the end of this section, but first I'll focus my remarks on some other ISO work.

[Slide 11]

#### *Gas cylinders*

The first standards that I will highlight deal with the design, construction and testing of, respectively, steel and aluminium cylinders for the safe storage and transport of high-pressure gas. A conservative estimate puts the number of such cylinders in use around the world at over 130 million. While these are mainly used in industry, there are other significant, diverse applications in fields such as medicine, fire-fighting, emergency operations, sports and drink-dispensing, all of which bring gas cylinders close to the public. While such devices are in most countries the subjects of government regulations, consolidation within the compressed gases industry makes the advent of good ISO standards opportune.

In addition, the new standards should be influential in the removal of trade obstacles by providing regulatory bodies with the assurance that gas cylinders manufactured to ISO standards are safe and reliable. Global acceptance of these new standards will be greatly enhanced by their promotion within the United Nations. The Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods, which is part of the UN Economic and Social Council, has been closely following the progress of the new ISO standards with a view to their adoption within international transport regulations.

To sum up, we learn from the leaders of ISO TC 58 that ISO 9809-1 and ISO 7866 are good examples of ISO standards that come at the right time to meet the requirements of industry around the world, while at the same time playing a role in the social dimension in meeting the needs of regulators concerned with health and safety issues.

It is interesting to note here that we are “trying again” with these standards, because a previous version (ISO 4705 which apparently came before its time) failed to gain acceptance in the market and was never really used.

[Slide 12]

### *Oil and gas industry*

When organizations are considering participation in ISO standards' development programmes, or implementation of our standards, then one of their principal concerns is return on investment, which can be boiled down to the very simple question, “What's in it for me?” While we know both logically and intuitively that there are substantial advantages to be gleaned from standardization, it is often difficult for us to come up with hard figures to justify our positive expectations. Also, it would be a little suspect for some, since we could be accused of just wanting to sell our service. When our customers come up with calculations of the cost benefits that ISO's work can bring them, then those figures have much more credibility.

This example from the oil and gas industry comes from a projection by the Shell Company of the potential benefits of implementing ISO standards. The total expenditure of oil and gas industry operations amounts to 30 billion Swiss francs per annum. Shell calculates that if the systematic use of ISO standards could be expected to save 1 % of this expenditure, then the saving would amount to 300 million Swiss francs. As the total cost of development of a consistent set of standards covering all operations of this industry sector is evaluated at around 12 million Swiss francs, then the return on investment would correspond to a ratio of 25 to one. I think you will agree with me that if a Chief Executive Officer in the oil and gas industry might ask about international standardization, “What's in it for my company?” then the projections I have just quoted make a pretty convincing answer.

[Slide 13]

### *MPEG 1-4*

Someone once described standardization as “a pillow for the non-creative”. The idea he was trying to get over was that truly creative companies lead the field, while the rest rely on standards to provide the technological solutions which they are too lazy or not gifted enough to develop themselves. Obviously I would disagree with this view, and to illustrate my point I would argue that if the experts of JTC 1, *Information technology*, have been using a pillow, then it is to dream on and then go on to develop the technical content to make those dreams come true. I am referring to the MPEG suite of standards for multimedia applications that reveal an unbroken trajectory of progress from MPEG 1 to MPEG 4.

The first two standards, MPEG 1 and MPEG 2 were highly specific, respectively, to CD-ROM's and digital television. The latest standard in the suite, MPEG 4, introduces several new developments. For example, it enables users to have universal access to

multimedia information. In laymen's terms this means that the user is not dependent on any one distribution system – that is to say, network, radio relay, microwave beam, satellite system, wireless, etc. – because the information is transmitted in exactly the same standard format through all these channels.

The standard also enables users to interact with the information provided: they will be able to surf around the video the same way they can navigate inside the Web. The standard will have an impact on the general public in many different ways, such as giving everyone the possibility of cutting and editing audio-visual material up to now only accessible by professionals using complex studio techniques. This is not the place to give you a complete rundown of the possibilities, but to sum up, in making MPEG 4 available, ISO is providing a platform for new developments not yet invented or even imagined.

Creative dreams, even wild ones, can come true, thanks also to standardization.

[Slide 14]

### **Boilers and pressure vessels – a thorny problem**

By now, you might have been lulled into thinking that everything in the ISO garden was beautiful. So, I have decided to include the next item to show you that the price of a beautiful garden is eternal vigilance. ISO/TC 11, *Boilers and pressure vessels*, is one of our oldest committees – and for good reason. Boilers and pressure vessels are part of the systems that drive our industrial machinery, heat and cool our homes, offices, hospitals, schools, factories and places of worship. Industrial production, from the most traditional to the most modern, would not be possible without safe, reliable boilers and pressure vessels. But ISO has no standards in this field: it seems strange, but it is true!

The problem is that even though ISO TC 11 was one of the first ISO technical committees, by the time it was established, many countries had already firmly established national standards for boilers and pressure vessels, complicated by the fact that these devices were also subject to national and local safety regulations. The result is that national delegations to TC 11 have stuck relentlessly to their positions and movement to developing International Standards has been hopelessly deadlocked.

A way out of this impasse came with a proposal a couple of years ago to re-activate the committee in order to prepare an umbrella standard which would specify performance requirements for pressure equipment codes and standards that are in current use throughout the world. I greeted this development enthusiastically, because it seemed to me a means by which ISO could recognize and validate the realities of different, but equally good standards solutions existing in world trade, even though they may not be design compatible.

Hope is eternal – at least in the mind of your Secretary-General.

### **ISO's management system standards – ISO 9000 and ISO 14000**

[Slide 15]

So now, it's time for a few words on ISO 9000 and ISO 14000.

For those of use who live in countries where it rains often, many will have come across individuals who, when you greet them with a cheerful, "Nice day today!" reply with a

mournful, "Yes, but it won't last. It's going to rain!" Of course, they are right. Sooner or later, it will rain.

The reason I make this short digression is that over the course of the last two or three years, I have regularly heard the view expressed that interest in our ISO 9000 family of quality management standards is waning and that the bubble has burst. All I can say to such opinions is, "Maybe you're right. Sooner or later, you will probably be right – but not yet!"

The latest edition of *The ISO Survey* showed that up to the end of 1998, 270 000 ISO 9000 conformance certificates had been issued, an increase of 48 000 over the previous year. Over the same period, the number of countries in which certificates had been issued rose from 128 to 143. The country showing the biggest growth in new certificates in 1998 was the United States. Of course, this does not mean that ISO 9000 is perfect, or that certification is appropriate for all organizations that implement quality systems, but the facts do not support the view that interest in ISO 9000 is waning.

In fact, interest in ISO 9000 is especially high just now in view of the new revisions of the standards which are scheduled for publication in the last quarter of the Year 2000, and there are many people worrying about what they will have to do when these new revisions are completed and published. We, the ISO family, should already now be telling them not to worry.

- They will not have to revamp their existing quality management systems to become or stay certified.
- They do not need to wait to implement a new system until the 2000 versions are published.
- They can easily access information about the new revisions which are, in fact, focused largely on improving the usability of the standards: starting with the *ISO Online* Web site devoted to answering all conceivable questions about ISO 9000:2000.

As you probably know, *The ISO Survey* also provides data on the state of worldwide certification to the ISO 14000 environmental management system standards. The latest survey shows that the number of ISO 14000 certificates increased by 3 400 from the end of 1997 when 4 400 certificates had been issued in 55 countries to reach a total of 7 800 in 72 countries by the end of 1998. This represented an impressive 78 % increase, with ISO 14000 implementation spreading to 17 additional countries.

The broad success of ISO 9000 and ISO 14000 can also have a downside in that it can prove to be a tempting avenue for exploitation by bogus or incompetent consultants, lax certification auditors, misleading publicity, and so on. As you know, it is impossible for ISO Central Secretariat to police the whole 9000 world from Geneva, and I take this opportunity to repeat the message I sent to you on this matter this past July.

We all have to rely on you our members to do what you can to ensure that ISO 9000 and ISO 14000-related business in your country is carried out in a manner consistent with ISO's good reputation. I know this is not always simple because ISO exercises no direct right of control over many ISO 9000 and ISO 14000 related activities such as consultancy and certification. However, it would be naive to expect all sections of the

business community and general public to make such fine distinctions. For many people, whatever bad image is connected to ISO 9000 and ISO 14000 will be automatically connected to ISO. Any mud that sticks to our standards, or what some bad apples make out of them, also risks sticking to ISO's reputation. We should be aware of that and be ready to take energetic measures to protect our collective reputation.

### **Assistance to our developing country members**

[Slide 16]

I should not, in this report, fail to mention the continuing success of our programme for assisting our developing country members. DEVPRO has continued to break new ground in 1999.

Since the publication of the ISO 14000 family began in September 1996, our Programme for Developing Countries (DEVPRO) has done a remarkable job in getting the message about environmental management standards across to a broad public in industry, service organizations and environmental agencies in developing countries.

In just three years, 33 seminars have been held in all corners of the developing world and economies in transition: in places as diverse as India and Malta, Mozambique and Latvia, Saudi Arabia and Costa Rica. About 3 300 persons from industry, service organizations, government departments and nongovernmental organizations have participated in these seminars at which they were able to obtain reliable information from world-class experts participating in ISO/TC 207 about the ISO 14000 standards and the role they can play in preserving and improving the environment.

Environmental problems know no borders and so it is important that all countries have an opportunity to participate in finding solutions. It is understandable, therefore, that environmentalists and international organizations have been concerned that developing countries and economies in transition should be able to participate in the work of TC 207. In this respect, ISO/DEVPRO has sponsored some 90 delegates from developing countries and economies in transition to attend the meetings of this technical committee and its subcommittees over roughly the same three-year period. In addition, ISO Development Manual on the subject of Environmental Management and ISO 14000 has been published for the benefit of users in developing countries.

Providing guidance on how to manage standardization and related activities in developing countries is a prime objective of the programme. This year, a series of meetings devoted to this purpose was launched with two events: firstly, a meeting held jointly with UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the regional standards organization AIDMO for participants from the Arab region, and secondly, a seminar for participants from Latin America held jointly with COPANT, the regional standards organization for the Americas and ICONTEC, the ISO member body from Colombia.

In order to prepare national standards bodies from developing countries to participate more actively in international standardization in the 21st century, our Programme for Developing Countries has succeeded in obtaining funds donated by the Italian Government to support standards information in a number of developing countries in the Mediterranean Basin and the Horn of Africa. This project, which will be implemented in cooperation with the UNCTAD, will help the beneficiary countries achieve modern on-line access to standards information and specially prepared training

material, available on Web sites for the benefit of industrial users, including small and medium enterprises. We have great hope that this pilot project will succeed and thus serve as a model for other donors and in other regions of the developing world.

At last year's General Assembly, you endorsed President Liew's idea for an "ISO White Paper" for distribution to top-level leaders in governments and industry in developing countries, aimed at providing them with an overview of the importance of International Standards in global trading, technology development and transfer, and in a country's development programme. The General Assembly further endorsed Mr. Liew's idea of sending "ISO Envoys" who would support the work of the Officers in explaining the relevance of international standardization to high-level officials in interested countries.

The White Paper embodying the concept of ISO Envoys was subsequently completed and I asked the Chief Executive Officers of the ISO members in developing countries to provide names of government executives to whom they would like the White Paper to be sent, along with a covering letter from the ISO President. Following the requests we received, 85 letters have so far been sent to Heads of State, Prime Ministers and Ministers in 51 countries – you have a list among the annexes to your papers. I believe strongly that an effective follow-up can only be achieved through a personal meeting between the recipients of the White Paper and the CEO of the ISO member in that country.

Regarding the ISO Envoys, one country so far has formally requested an Envoy visit, and as a result **Bernard Vaucelle** will be going to Benin in the next months.

I remind you that the intention is that ISO Envoys are drawn from retired CEO's of national standards bodies who have a wealth of experience from their longstanding leadership in that capacity and can give much valuable advice, tailored to specific conditions.

Finally, I have pleasure in announcing a new initiative intended to encourage young standardizers in developing countries and economies in transition to embark on a successful career in the field of standardization and related activities. This is the ISO Contest for Young Standardizers. The Board of the DIN/ISO Endowment has agreed to finance the Contest that will be launched before the end of the year. It is my pleasure to announce that the prize for the winner of this contest will be named after **Helmut Reihlen**, a friend who has served standardization for many years and who has always given his strong and energetic support to promoting standardization in developing countries.

### **Tribute to the ISO Officers**

[Slide 17]

For shining examples of energetic behaviour on ISO's behalf, then we need go no further than ISO's elected Officers who spare no effort in advancing the objectives of our Organization. Our President, our two Vice-Presidents and our Treasurer are all unpaid volunteers. The considerable amount of work, not to mention the air miles, that they put in for ISO is highly appreciated by all of the ISO members who realize how fortunate we are in having such high-calibre, dedicated people providing leadership in our Organization. Our Officers are people who make a difference, even though their period of service with us may be relatively short. I invite you to join me in a round of applause to express our appreciation of them. Thank you.

**ISO's prospects for Y2k**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This brings me to the end of my remarks this morning on the state of ISO's affairs as I see them today, but it is fair to anticipate that you have not yet heard the "last word" from me during this last ISO General Assembly of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

I am sure you are now anxious to embark on our business agenda and I agree that we have many important items to discuss and move forward as we get ready for our step into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Thank you for your kind attention.