

*FOR AGENDA ITEM 11***SUMMARY OF THE OPEN SESSION ON “INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS AND PUBLIC POLICIES”, GENEVA, 20 SEPTEMBER 2007**

At this open session, public policies were considered in the broad sense, covering technical regulations relating to public responsibilities such as safety, security, health, social protection or the environment, as well as policies to support research and development and encourage innovation and its dissemination, competitiveness of industry, quality and efficiency of public services, public procurements, etc.

At the opening of the session, Mr. Serguei Ordzhonikidze, Director General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, underlined the importance of International Standards of the type produced by ISO as practical tools to support public policies and the three dimensions of a sustainable world development and, in that respect, the increasing need and topicality for partnerships between ISO and the various components of the UN system.

Prof. Jonathan Koppell, from the Yale School of Management, gave an introductory presentation on the politics of quasi government and the role of International Standards in relation to public policies in the globalized world. He underlined that the broadening of the needs for International Standards, and of the corresponding increase of the scope of ISO, implies to reach out to new categories of stakeholders and adjust the development processes in a flexible manner to ensure adequate participation, and thus the quality of the double level of consensus which underlie ISO standards (across countries and amongst stakeholders), as well as their global relevance and take-up. He also alerted that many new stakeholders are paying greater attention to the ISO system and therefore ISO should be prepared for this trend.

The first panel, moderated by Mr. Paul Hohnen, focused on the contribution of International Standards for public policies relating to the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic growth, environmental integrity and social equity. In this area, it was first underlined that ISO could contribute to refining the scope and understanding of sustainable development. Indeed the concept of sustainable development has already been highlighted on the world scene for the past 20 years, but concrete actions are now urgently needed, in particular in relation to climate change, energy efficiency, scarcity of natural resources, as well as access to world markets for developing countries and social responsibility. Good public governance calls for the use of International Standards, both to promote the efficiency of public services and to implement good regulatory practices. Public policies and regulations, increasingly coordinated at the regional and international levels, should set targets and objectives, whilst recognized International Standards should enable a level playing field and provide tools to promote good practices, support clear communication, measure progress and monitor achievements. Governments should pay attention to the emergence and growing impact of private standards on trade, especially from SMEs in developing countries, and ISO should ensure proper collaboration and complementarity with these initiatives and associated organizations.

The second panel, moderated by Prof. Koppell, was dedicated to the contribution of International Standards to public policies relating to safety, security and health. Whilst it was recognized that these areas had for a long time been addressed by voluntary standards, as a complement to technical regulations, it was underlined that these issues must now be treated at a global level, because the corresponding hazards know no frontier and in order to reconcile adequate protection and the avoidance of unnecessary technical barriers to trade. Hazards faced by consumers,

citizens and society at large have indeed evolved due to the pervasiveness of information and communication technologies, the globalization of trade in products and services, which broadens and complexifies the supply chain and the potential for increase of environmental and hazards due to industrial activities and new technologies. Responding to natural disasters, threats on homeland security and pandemics require international cooperation, to which technical and organizational standards can greatly contribute. It was recognized that the consumer has evolved towards citizenship in a global village. He/she wishes at the same time to be protected against these new hazards and to be able, through his/her buying or general behaviour, to contribute positively to environmental protection or social progress. In this context, the panel concluded that research and development on safety, security or health issues should include the upstream identification of needs for and the development of International Standards. It also recommended that ISO collaborate with international organizations and groups having a role in the harmonization of regulations, and promote the proper involvement of interested and affected stakeholders in the development of its standards to be used as a support or substitute to regulations. The publication of the "Information document on the use of ISO and IEC standards for technical regulations", announced and distributed at the Open Session, was acknowledged as a useful tool to assist regulators in making the best of the ISO and IEC systems. The issue of compliance and market surveillance was also addressed by the panel, as an indispensable complement to the development of standards. ISO's contribution in the form of guidance on good compliance and conformity assessment practices should be enhanced.

In his conclusion of the Open Session, the ISO President, Håkan Murby, thanked the UN Director General, the moderators and the panelists for their excellent contributions, as well as the numerous participants having intervened with questions and contributions. He indicated that the ISO General Assembly would consider shortly the follow-up to the debates and to the advice and suggestions received. He encouraged the ISO members to pursue the dialogue and collaboration with public authorities and other stakeholders at the national level, whilst ISO would continue to build and reinforce its cooperation and partnerships with international and regional intergovernmental organizations. He suggested that this could, in particular, be done on the occasion of World Standards Day to be celebrated on 14 October 2007, precisely dedicated this year to the theme: "Standards and the Citizen: contributing to society". He recommended that the September 2007 issue of ISO Focus, containing many examples and testimonies of relevant contributions of the ISO System, be widely used in this context.