Guest Interview:
Director General of Consumers International

Testing resistance to jet fires
As consumers, we want to know that goods and services meet an acceptable standard. We need agreements that set the benchmark to ensure that they are fit for their purpose. The consistent use of standards that reflect consumer interests in performance, as well as safety and specifications of products and services, enhances consumer confidence by increasing certainty and clarity regardless of where they are produced or marketed. Wherever we are and whatever we do, these standards are an important part of our daily lives.

Over the past 32 years of its existence – despite a radically changing economic and social backdrop – the ISO Committee on consumer policy (ISO/COPOLCO) has sought to address many of the same essential issues that it took on right at the start. One of its primary objectives is to bring pressing consumer concerns to the attention of the international standardization community and to provide practical recommendations for how these issues can be addressed.

For example, ISO/COPOLCO chose as the theme for its 2010 workshop “Restoring consumer confidence in global financial services – Can standards help?”. The reason for this choice was that consumers cannot always count on accessibility, affordability, availability, fair treatment and accountability in financial services.

Our committee is encouraging ISO to assume a leadership role in developing standards that assist financial services providers to develop and communicate better information so that consumers can make informed choices. ISO/COPOLCO also identified standard needs for emerging new technologies as alternative means of providing financial services to consumers, including disenfranchised consumers, for example through the delivery of financial services by mobile devices. Consumers will also benefit from the development of standards for innovative models, such as micro-finance initiatives and cooperative societies, along with dissemination of best practices for managing these models.

ISO/COPOLCO recognizes the important role of standards in ensuring consumer protection. For this reason, our committee supports and encourages consumer participation which has influenced the development of many standards and guidelines, including ISO/IEC Guide 50 on child safety, ISO’s “customer satisfaction” suite of standards including one on complaints handling and, more recently, the development of ISO 26000 on social responsibility.

**Standards are an important part of our daily lives.**

The latter encourages organizations to conduct their operations in a sustainable and socially responsible manner by developing products and services that are not only safe and reliable, but also produced in an environmentally responsible and socially equitable manner.

This issue of ISO Focus+ illustrates some of the different ways ISO/COPOLCO values and recognizes the importance of consumer involvement, recruits and retains consumer volunteers, and trains and support them to make a meaningful contribution. It also identifies issues that are of interest and concern to consumers today.

ISO/COPOLCO appreciates the ongoing support of the ISO leadership and of all ISO members who ensure that consumers’ voices are heard – from developed and developing countries alike – and that their advice and input are heeded.

Highlighting the important work of ISO/COPOLCO would be incomplete without a mention of our broad and diverse membership as well as the dedicated and involved volunteers who contribute to our ambitious work programme. ISO/COPOLCO also benefits from the support and contribution of its liaison members, Consumers International and the Committee on Consumer Policy of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

We will continue to do our part to ensure that consumers are well-represented within ISO by identifying and raising issues that are important to consumers. While ISO/COPOLCO’s accomplishments have been considerable over the past 32 years, there is still a great deal to do.

ISO has acknowledged these concerns in its Strategic Plan 2011-2015. One of the seven key objectives contained in the strategy is ensuring the involvement of stakeholders. What needs to be considered now is how to realize this strategic commitment in practical terms.

ISO’s commitment to customer satisfaction, the theme highlighted in ISO’s Annual Report 2009 is very encouraging and suggests that ISO will continue to reach out to stakeholders and engage them even more in the years to come.

Together, as consumers, we can make a difference!

Norma McCormick, Chair of ISO/COPOLCO (ISO Committee on consumer policy).
World Water Week in September 2010, which opened with calls for better facilitated efforts addressing escalating global water challenges.

The 2010 Stockholm Statement, voted on by participants, clearly stipulates how water is at the core of achieving all of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

“Lack of water and sanitation makes people poor. Inadequate access to water and sanitation deprives billions of people, especially women and girls, of opportunities, dignity, safety and well being.”

The statement concludes that sanitation and water are the fundamental basis for life and indispensable to sustainable economic and social development. Diseases caused by poor water quality still contribute to half of the malnourishment in the world.

ISO’s portfolio of more than 18 000 International Standards includes at least 430 which directly or indirectly support the objectives of this year’s World Water Week, whose theme is “Responding to Global Changes: The Water Quality Challenge”.

ISO’s standards provide practical tools for developing common understanding and cooperation between countries on aspects such as water quality and measurement, and the management of water supply services, including under crisis conditions.

Food safety

The Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) held its 33rd session in Geneva, Switzerland, in July 2010. ISO engaged on a number of key interface issues with CAC (e.g., private standards, work programme coordination) through interventions by the ISO Deputy Secretary-General Kevin McKinley, and with the support of leaders from ISO/TC 34 on food products.

A workshop organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Health Organization (FAO/WHO) on private food safety standards was also held during the week. The aim was to address the relationship of private food standards to trade and International Standards.

As a panelist in the workshop, the ISO Deputy Secretary-General summarized some good progress being made in ISO’s collaboration with private standard schemes and highlighted future challenges and opportunities. Other panelists included the WTO/SPS Secretariat, the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI), and food safety stakeholders from developed and developing countries.

The Codex Alimentarius Commission was created in 1963 by FAO and WHO to develop food standards, guidelines and related texts such as codes of practice under the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme.

Canada endorses ISO cosmetic standard

In order to help cosmetics makers meet Canadian safety and quality requirements regarding cosmetics, the Canadian government has endorsed the use of ISO 22716 on good manufacturing practices (GMPs) for cosmetics.

Cosmetics that are manufactured, prepared, preserved, packaged or stored under unsanitary conditions, or that consist of any filthy or decomposed substance or any foreign matter, may cause injury to the health of the user.

The Canadian health administration encourages all cosmetic manufacturers to adhere to GMPs. These guidelines are used to ensure product quality control and an effective approach to risk management. They set out standards for product manufacturing, testing, storage, handling and distribution, to ensure that each step of manufacturing is acceptable for quality and safety of the product.

“GMPs do not provide specifics on how products are to be manufactured. Instead they outline the expected outcome of the processes. Each manufacturer, large or small, may have a unique means of achieving these outcomes,” says Health Canada.
Joost Martens is Director General of Consumers International (CI), the global federation of consumer organizations with over 220 member organizations worldwide. His role is to lead the consumer movement’s global strategy of putting consumer rights and interests at the heart of public and private sector decision-making.

Mr. Martens joined CI in October 2008, after eight years working as Oxfam Regional Director for Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean. Prior to that he has been working with the International Labour Organization, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Dutch Development Organization, SNV. This work included postings in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Mr. Martens, who is from the Netherlands, holds Master degrees in Business Economics and Urban and Regional Planning from the State University, Groningen, Netherlands.

ISO Focus+: Consumers International (CI) turns 50 years old in 2010. Can you please describe briefly CI’s role and mission and how it has evolved over the past 50 years? What is your vision for the next 50 years?

Joost Martens: CI, or the International Organization of Consumer Unions (IOCU) as it was initially called, was established as a global information exchange between the increasing number of consumer product-testing organizations that sprung up in the post-war boom years, wanting to help ordinary people make informed buying decisions. Over the years, CI turned into an agent for change on consumer issues of the day, on the basis of its capacity for research and policy formulation, and innovative ways of campaigning and advocacy. Its membership grew, from the original five founding members, to the more than 220 member organizations it has today.

CI’s vision is a world where people have access to safe and sustainable goods and services, exercising their individual rights as consumers, and using the force of their collective power for the good of consumers everywhere. This is to be achieved through the strength that the diversity of our membership brings, with CI providing support for building and increasing its members’ capacities.

Looking towards the future, CI will continue securing basic consumer rights for individuals and families, and ensuring that consumers have a lasting voice, as well as an impact in the marketplace – locally or globally. Whether by promoting access to basic goods and services, information to make smart choices, sustainable consumption for the health of our planet, or justice in the market place, CI will be the catalyst for building an ever more powerful global consumer movement that unites often disparate voices into one formidable force for change.

An important event in the process of looking forward will be the 2011 Consumers International World Congress, to be held early May in Hong Kong, China, under the theme of “Empowering tomorrow’s consumers”. The World Congress will address...
such issues as fair financial markets, consumer rights in the digital world, and sustainable consumption, among others.

ISO Focus+: For over 30 years, ISO has benefited from the views of consumer representatives who have identified new areas for standardization, such as services and social responsibility, and who have participated in technical committees producing standards that influence consumer products. What do you believe ISO should do to further increase and enhance consumer representation in its standardization work?

Joost Martens: When it comes to policy, ISO works with consumer organizations in two ways. Firstly, directly through CI’s liaison with ISO’s Committee on consumer policy (ISO/COPOLCO). Secondly through CI members and other consumer organizations working with ISO/COPOLCO members (national standard bodies – NSBs), although this depends on the extent that the different NSBs are working with consumers nationally.

The situation with regard to technical work is rather different. It’s widely accepted that there is a lack of consumer representation at both international and national levels in areas of importance for consumer protection.

To ensure that standards are credible, representative and useful, ISO and its members will need to continue to seek ways to ensure consumer representation. Consumers need to participate effectively, both nationally and internationally, for policy and in technical work.

To do this, consumer organizations have to overcome many challenges. These include a lack of resources, both staff-wise and financial, and the need to determine where to focus efforts in the ever growing raft of consumer protection issues, such as safety, access, performance, sustainability, and privacy.

Standards play a key role in consumer protection.

Emerging, rapidly developing and complex technologies bring new challenges. This has meant that consumers continue to be one of the least represented stakeholder groups in standards making, despite the recognition of the need for their input.

An example that stands out in this regard is the development of ISO 26000, which adopted a unique standards process that recognized consumers as a key stakeholder group. The multi-stakeholder process and ensuing procedures ensured that all stakeholders could participate effectively in consensus building. This resulted in the participation of the largest number of consumer organizations not only at the international working group meetings, but also within national mirror committees. This must send a very clear message to ISO that traditional standards development processes need to be reformed, and recent ISO initiatives in this field would indicate that this message has been heard.

I believe that ISO could increase and enhance consumer representation by responding in a number of key areas:

- Review and revise ISO procedures
- Engage effectively with its members to replicate efforts at the national level
- Continue to build on the successful ISO training programmes for consumer participation in which we at CI have been closely involved
- Expand the use of ISO Funds-in-Trust to support developing country consumer representatives (and other underrepresented groups).

1) Consumers International co-ordinates over 80 consumer experts from across the world within the ISO process. They have been central to developing the process and content of ISO 26000.
2) See the report from ISO/COPOLCO’s Training Group.
ISO Focus+: Following years of work by an international, multistakeholder group, which included CI and its members, ISO will publish ISO 26000 at the end of 2010. What added value would you expect from this standard?

Joost Martens: The scope of ISO 26000 goes to great lengths to stress that it is not appropriate for certification. What it does do is create, for the first time, a common understanding of social responsibility; its principles, core issues and trends.

ISO 26000 provides guidance on how to identify and engage with stakeholders and how to communicate commitments and performance. It took a long time, but there is now an international harmonized definition for social responsibility, albeit a lengthy one. To be able to validate and compare how socially responsible corporations are, and for organizations to have a clear concept of how to behave responsibly – it’s important for everyone globally to speak the same language and interpret that language in the same way. The ISO 26000 standard provides this necessary guidance.

ISO 26000 recognizes consumer issues as one of the essential elements of social responsibility. Elements such as fair marketing practices, the protection of consumers’ health and safety, sustainable consumption and access to essential services are embedded within the heart of the standard. ISO 26000 is the result of the most credible and integrated global debate on standards about responsible conduct, having its roots in a balanced, multi-stakeholder consensus. The authority that this gives should not be underestimated.

In terms of information disclosure and reporting, the standard, with its clear structure of required actions, is invaluable. It presents what should at least be carried out, before any organization calls itself a responsible organization. Comparison of organizations’ activities becomes possible using the context of ISO 26000.

Consumer protection agencies should use ISO 26000 as the prime reference model for ranking or assessing corporation’s activities in the future.

ISO Focus+: Both CI, through its World Consumers Rights Day (WCRD), and ISO, through its ISO/COPOLCO workshop, addressed the problems of the financial services sector. How do you see the development of International Standards for financial services? How can International Standards help achieve consumer protection for financial services of high priority for consumers?

Joost Martens: Consumers International carried out a survey of its members, ahead of WCRD 2010, through which we found that the key issues for consumers were access to basic financial services, transparency of information, impartiality of advisors and fairness of agreements.

We also encountered consumer protection issues in the rapidly developing microfinance sector, not just in poor and rural areas, but also in European countries and the USA. There will soon be 1.7 billion people in the world with mobile phones, but with no bank accounts. This clearly has implications for the newly emerging field of money transfer by mobile telephone. Consumers in this massive new market need protection too.

A lack of regulation in these areas has resulted in the development of standards by providers, such as a code of ethics by Compartamos Banco of Mexico and transparency guidelines developed and endorsed by various NGOs, development agencies and service providers working to raise standards in the absence of standards developed by governments.

About Consumers International

Consumers International (CI), formerly known as the International Organization of Consumers Unions (IOCU), was started in 1960 by a group of five consumer organizations from the USA, Western Europe and Australia.

Originally established as a global information exchange between the increasing number of consumer product-testing organizations that had sprung up in the post-war boom years, CI quickly established a formidable reputation as an agent for change on the consumer issues of the day. In 10 short years, CI attracted 50 member organizations. Another decade later, CI had achieved “ general consultative status ” at the United Nations (UN).

Today, CI has more than 220 member organizations in 115 countries. Its priorities and programmes have evolved to reflect greater involvement in issues ranging from public utilities and financial services, to food and drug safety and the environment, that affect consumers everywhere.

As CI celebrates its 50th year, its vision continues to be a world where everyone has access to safe and sustainable goods and services, and where the strength of collective power is used for the good of consumers throughout the world.
Guest Interview

In Uganda for example, the Association of Microfinance Institutions (MFIs) has developed a code of practice for consumer protection with a focus on disclosure and financial education. It has been adopted by 42 MFIs and is a condition of entry to the association, thus providing a “badge” of conduct to reassure consumers. In this one example we can see a clear need for a universal approach to consumer protection in financial services. There are some early moves towards self-regulation in the mobile money transfer area too, but consumer input is much needed.

Consumers International participated in the development of ISO 24510:2007, Activities relating to drinking water and wastewater services – Guidelines for the assessment and for the improvement of the service to users, and we have found that there are clear analogies that can be drawn with the provision of financial services, such as disclosure of information to consumers, implicit contractual rights, governance issues, access issues and so on. This was one important direction that was suggested in this year’s ISO/COPOLCO workshop and one that is already being road-tested in the water services sector.

CI, like ISO, is an organization that consults its members, and its priorities for the future will reflect member demands. Currently, CI is developing its strategy for the next period (2012 to 2016). Its priority areas for the future will reflect the current world economic situation, including such issues as financial services, sustainability, health and safety, as well as energy and climate change.

CI and its members have participated in the development of ISO and its national members’ standards for many years. During this time we campaigned for rigorous and transparent standards, developed through accountable processes of engagement. It is critical that new technical areas be appraised to identify key stakeholders and their needs, and that every effort is taken to ensure their engagement.

ISO has recognized the need for positive action to involve underrepresented groups, such as consumers and developing countries, to produce meaningful consensus-based International Standards. My belief is that implementation of these actions is critical to the credibility and usefulness of standards, not just at the international level, but within national standards bodies too.

I sincerely hope to see increasing consumer participation within areas of standards activity that are key to consumers. This can only further improve the value and applicability of ISO’s standards. ISO must help by leading the way to make this happen.

ISO Focus+: Given the challenges facing consumers, can you describe the areas in which you believe standardization can play an important role in the future? How can ISO standards help?

Joost Martens: Consumers International has long seen that standards are tools that play a key role in consumer protection, and in contributing to sustainability. CI has prioritized its work to meet the vision statement that I previously mentioned.

Consumer protection agencies should use ISO 26000 as the prime reference model.

ISO Focus+ October 2010

CI meeting in Malaysia celebrates in style, in April 2010. The meeting was attended by Samuel Ochieng, CI President and many CI Council Members.
You have to be organized.

The integrated use of management system standards.

Organizations face multiple challenges. Quality and environmental management, information security, food safety, supply chain security and occupational health and safety among others. More and more are turning to management system standards (MSS) to help them meet such challenges efficiently and effectively. The combined book and CD, The integrated use of management system standards, explains how to integrate the required elements of different standards within the organization’s overall management system. Based on the practical experience of organizations large and small, the book identifies methodologies, tools and good practice. An investment of only 50 Swiss francs.

Available from ISO national member institutes (listed with contact details on the ISO Website at www.iso.org) and from the ISO Central Secretariat Webstore at www.iso.org/面store or e-mail to sales@iso.org.

ISO Central Secretariat
1, ch. de la Voie-Creuse
Case postale 56
CH-1211 Genève 20

© ISO Focus+, www.iso.org/isofocus+
Consumers for change

by Elizabeth Gasiorowski-Denis

Consumers have expectations about the design, performance, safety, quality and reliability of the products and services that they buy and use. No one wants products of poor quality, that do not fit, which are incompatible with equipment he or she already has, are unreliable or dangerous. International Standards help to raise levels of quality, safety, reliability, efficiency and interchangeability, and provide these benefits economically.

Products that take into account consumer needs regarding design, packaging, and usage are more likely to be accepted into the marketplace, and more likely to be adopted into regulation. So ideally, a business should both strive to satisfy and respond to consumers’ needs and expectations.

Consumer involvement in standardization not only promotes safer, healthier and more environmentally sound products and services, it also increases consumer confidence in the quality and reliability of products and services, and provides consumers a greater selection of goods and services at lower costs.

More than 30 years ago, ISO recognized the need for much closer links between the standards world and that of its ultimate customers and beneficiaries – consumers. Since 1978, the organization has had a specialized Committee on consumer policy (ISO/COPOLCO). The committee has systematically sought to ensure that consumers’ demands and needs are taken into account when standards are developed.

Consumer representatives have played an important role in raising awareness of issues for consumers having special needs, for example, children, the elderly and persons with disabilities. Consumer representatives also have recommended entire new subject areas for standardization. For example, complaints handling, product recalls, counterfeiting and fraud, as well as social responsibility, are all subjects that were introduced by consumer advocates.

The October 2010 issue of ISO Focus+ brings together a portfolio of articles that highlight consumer-driven initiatives within ISO, success stories as well as areas of particular concern for consumers, and how they are being addressed within ISO/COPOLCO.

Articles cover an array of topics from addressing the voice of consumers in developing countries, to enhancing consumer representation in ISO technical work, to searching for solutions in the areas of financial services and customer contact centres. Case studies shed light on specific national projects as well as the trials and triumphs of committee consumer representatives. The work of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Committee on Consumer Policy and Consumer International (see interview with Joost Martens on page 3) are also covered.

If one single message emerges from this issue, it is: ISO values stakeholder input. By providing precious feedback and a “reality check” for such characteristics as safety, ecology, reliability, efficiency, compatibility, customer service, transparent information, and reasonable cost, consumers play a vital role in ensuring ISO’s global relevance and market responsiveness.

Elizabeth Gasiorowski-Denis is Editor, ISO Focus+.
Customer contact centres

Love or loathe them, they’re here to stay

by Bill Dee and Clif Johnston

We live in a world of convenient and inexpensive communication by telephone, fax, e-mail, SMS, or any number of Web-based applications. Consumers use these channels to make enquiries, and businesses use them to target potential customers. As a result, all medium to large organizations directly or indirectly serving the general public need to dedicate a group of people to handle communication. This team and its resources constitute a customer contact centre (or call centre).

Thanks to modern communications technology, these centres may be within the organization itself or outsourced to a different company situated almost anywhere with a favourable combination of labour costs and communications infrastructure.

When a customer contact centre functions properly and efficiently, the consumer may be unaware that he or she is communicating with someone geographically distant from the target organization, and who indeed might be located on the other side of the world. But when its functioning is deficient, a customer contact centre, even when situated within the organization itself, can become a source of enormous frustration to customers.

As communications systems advance, the importance of customer contact centres will continue to increase, and the success of businesses will become more dependent on their efficient and effective operation. Consumers receiving bad service will simply use the myriad of available communications systems to seek out other suppliers – and they may well use Web-based forums to communicate their dissatisfaction to potential customers.

This makes it important for consumers and suppliers, as well as government agencies, that customer contact centres provide a positive customer experience. Because so many of these centres are outsourced across national boundaries, ISO could play an important role in providing appropriate standards or other guidance material to facilitate their operations and to promote consistent service.

A need for an ISO standard?

At its 2009 meeting in New Delhi, the ISO Committee on consumer policy (ISO/COPOLCO) discussed this matter and resolved to invite its working group on consumer protection in the global marketplace “to research current standards and other initiatives in this area in greater depth, with a view to developing a proposal for ISO/COPOLCO to consider at its 2010 plenary meeting.”

It was decided that the best way forward was to ask ISO members what standards or other guidance materials were available, and to poll national bodies on the desirability of ISO developing an International Standard on the subject. This work has been completed and the results were presented at the 2010 ISO/COPOLCO meeting in Bali.

This consultation took the form of a questionnaire circulated to ISO/COPOLCO member bodies, which were encouraged to consult locally, including
consumer groups, in developing their responses. All 105 ISO/COPOLCO members were approached and 24 responses were received. Such a low return is not unusual in surveys of this nature, but importantly the responses covered both large and small countries, wealthy and developing nations, and all continents except Australasia and North America. The answers were tightly focused, and it is unlikely that additional responses would lead to significantly different conclusions.

**Results reveal standards gap**

The consultation found that there were national standards in South Africa and Republic of Korea; a regional standard (with national adoptions) in the European Union; regulations in India and Brazil; guideline standards, recommendations and codes of conduct in the United Kingdom and Germany; and various regulations dealing with the peripheral issues of privacy and cyber-crime.

The countries providing this information were asked if the documents had resulted in any improvements in the standard of service. More than half responded that it was too early to say, but a significant number (38%) indicated that there had been an improvement.

All member bodies were requested to indicate the level of satisfaction among the general public with customer contact centres on a four-part scale, which avoided a neutral response. Only one of the responses indicated “all or nearly all satisfactory” and another one response indicated “all or nearly all unsatisfactory”. There was a preference for “more good than bad” (50%) as against “more bad than good” (38%). Despite this slight positive bias in the results, there is clearly significant room for improvement.

The most significant areas of dissatisfaction (in descending order) were:

- Telephone waiting times (call queuing) too long
- Telephone lines unanswered or continually busy
- Response to written enquiries (mail, fax, email) too slow.

Other areas of dissatisfaction included:

- Written enquiries (mail, fax, email) not answered
- Unable to resolve enquiry (by telephone or written communication)
- Incorrect, incomplete or misleading information provided
- Unclear (inarticulate) verbal communication and language difficulties
- Calls not returned, or written communication not sent, when promised
- Cost of calls, especially on mobile phones to “freephone” numbers
- Repeated transfers to other agents, with no-one taking responsibility
- Repeated calling from the same company, even after offer of service is refused.

**Consumer product warranties**

In another ISO/COPOLCO survey, respondents said that an International Standard or guidance of some sort on consumer product warranties would be helpful – despite the existence of relevant laws in many of these countries. It is worth noting that most of the national standards bodies expressing a need for action were from developing countries. These responses were supported by examples of the kinds of benefits that could be expected from such a tool.

A guidance standard would be intended for use by sellers of consumer products when offering written consumer product warranty information to consumers (sometimes referred to as commercial guarantees).

ISO/COPOLCO is aware there are many international and national consumer laws that apply to consumer product warranties and that this standard could potentially help sellers comply with the various laws. However, its primary purpose is to assist sellers who wish to provide written product warranties that are easy to understand, unambiguous, and have terms and conditions that respond to consumer needs and expectations.

Respondents expressed strong support for the development of an International Standard or guidance document addressing issues with customer contact centres; 65% gave an unqualified “yes” and a further 17% indicated “possibly”. Only one respondent answered “no”. Almost all those responding “yes” or “possibly” supported inclusion of the following aspects in an
Bill Dee is Covenor of ISO/COPOLCO working group on consumer protection in the global marketplace, and of ISO/TC 176, Quality management, SC 3, Supporting technologies, WG 10, Complaints handling. He is also an expert on the ISO Working Group on Social Responsibility (ISO/WG SR), and a member of the ISO working groups developing standards for market-based codes of conduct and external dispute resolution schemes for customers. Mr. Dee is the Chair of ISO/TC 207, Environmental management, SC 3, Environmental labelling.

Clif Johnston holds a PhD in Electrical Engineering, and during his long (33 year) career as a senior official at South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) was involved in all aspects of standardization and conformity assessment at national, regional and international levels. He served as Vice-President of the IEC in the years 1996 - 2002. Since his retirement in 2007, he has been active in the South African National Consumer Union where he is currently its Vice Chairman. He has led the South African delegation to the last two ISO/COPOLCO meetings.

ISO Focus+

The way forward

In its presentation of the findings, the working group recommended the development of an International Standard dealing with consumer requirements in customer contact centres, taking into account provisions within regional and national standards and codes of conduct such as those in South Africa, Republic of Korea, Germany and other countries. The ISO/COPOLCO plenary approved the recommendation and tasked the working group with developing a new work item proposal based on the research and discussions to date. This activity is currently in progress.
The concept of financial inclusion focuses primarily on poor and low-income citizens who may not be included in a country’s formal banking system. Lacking bank accounts or credit/debit cards, these people generally cannot access formal financial support or credit, and tend to rely mainly on local moneylenders operating in informal financial systems. This article addresses the relatively new service of mobile banking (also known as M-banking or SMS banking), in which financial services are delivered through mobile phones. M-banking has the potential to make financial services more accessible to millions of poor people across the world.

The mobile phone is the first communication technology to have more users in developing countries than in developed ones. Mobile devices can reduce the cost of financial transactions for provider and customer alike, while also enabling the entry of new financial service providers, as well as the establishment of new means of distribution. These changes hold the prospect of accelerating access to financial services on the back of the mobile telephony infrastructure.

Promoting financial inclusion for all

by Sri Ram Khanna

Mobile devices can reduce the cost of financial transactions.

Millions of new mobile users are being added every month in developing countries, and many of these customers do not have bank accounts. Although it is technically feasible to transfer payments via mobile phones, this is not happening on the scale required to serve this vast population of mobile users who are excluded from the formal banking system. A variety of technological aspects appear to be acting as barriers to this change.

A number of telecom operators and banks are working to introduce M-banking, but the proliferation of competing technologies acts as a barrier to their widespread adoption.
Africa leads the way

Some telecom operators now offer services that allow clients to send money home via text messages. If the receiving household lacks a bank account, the remitted sum may be converted into a pre-paid debit card that can be used to make purchases. Alternatively, an SMS-based, password-protected line of credit can be opened at local stores. Services such as these are appearing primarily in Africa.

Safaricom in Kenya introduced M-PESA in March 2007, with initial support from the UK Department for International Development (DFID). The service provides a low-cost, SMS-based, person-to-person money transfer facility, which also allows the user to purchase pre-paid goods and services such as mobile top-up time and utilities.

A global standard would facilitate diffusion of M-banking.

The number of M-PESA subscribers increased from around 100,000 at its launch to more than seven million by August 2009. During that time M-PESA has handled some 130 billion Kenyan shillings (USD 1.7 billion). With average transactions of just over USD 20, volume has now risen to some USD 2 million per day.

Meanwhile, South Africa’s MTN recently announced plans for a full-service banking on mobile phones, including an optional credit card. The service is slated for extension to the 20 countries where MTN operates, including Uganda, Nigeria, Cameroon and Ivory Coast, which combined have more than 90 million mobile phone users.

M-banking in the Philippines, Pakistan and Bangladesh

In the Philippines, Smart Communications and Globe Telecom, competing operators which together have more than 2.5 million active users of mobile money services, offer the equivalent of small-scale transaction banking to a potential total of 5.5 million customers. FINO (Financial Information Network and Operations), a technology provider offering various financial services on behalf of banks, reached 5.8 million poor clients within two years.

The success of mobile banking is attributed in large part to cost savings. In the Philippines, where the adoption of mobile banking has been particularly rapid, the 49% level of mobile phone penetration significantly exceeds banking penetration of about 26%. In other Asian countries, however, these levels are reversed – for example, 15% of the population of Bangladesh owns mobile phones, while 32% have bank accounts.

Mobile operators in the Philippines have designed and marketed payment and transfer services to the mass market in a way that traditional banks have not. Transaction costs through a Filipino bank are about USD 2.50 per item, while M-banking cuts the cost to the bank to around USD 0.50. In Pakistan, the cost of setting up a bank branch in the Orangi slum in Karachi is estimated to be 30 times more expensive than setting up an agency to manage branchless transactions electronically.

In 2009, the operator Telenor Pakistan purchased a majority stake in Tameer Microfinance Bank with the aim of introducing the branchless mobile banking platform known as Easy Paisa (Easy Money). Reports suggest that Tameer Bank in Pakistan has decided not to open any more branches outside of major cities. It has been claimed that millions of subscribers of one of the top three mobile operators will soon become account holders at Tameer, although these customers may rarely, if ever, visit a Tameer branch.

In the boat markets of Bangkok, it is possible to make payments through charge cards provided by mobile operators. Bangladesh’s Gramin Phone works on same principle.
India lags behind

The number of telephone subscribers in India increased from 601 million to 621 million between March 2009 and February 2010. The vast bulk of these phone lines, 584 million, are wireless accounts. Broadband subscription is a mere 8.75 million. Banks have looked at the feasibility of using mobile phones as an alternative delivery channel for banking services, but so far these efforts have met little success. Figure 1 shows the steady growth in mobile penetration in India, where nearly 20 million new users have been added every month during the first quarter of 2010. That’s a total of 59 million new subscribers over a three-month period.

In June 2008, the Reserve Bank of India set up a working group on mobile banking, the Mobile Payments Forum of India (MPFI), to examine different aspects of M-banking. Based on the recommendations of the MPFI, RBI has issued guidelines for implementation, including issues around technology and security, business, and regulation and supervision.

The first mobile commerce players in India were not banks but platform providers who offered links between merchants and customers. These include MChek, NGpay and Paymate, each of which employs a proprietary technical system for registration and requires company-specific application downloads. In one case, registration is via credit or debit cards, which excludes most mobile users. Other non-bank actors on the Indian market are Atom Technologies, ITZ Cash Card and Beam Technologies, each of which has developed a proprietary technical system.

Banks seize opportunities

Two types of facilities are currently offered by banks in India. Account status enquiries provide users with information on basic balance, credit card limit alerts, payment due dates and cheque rejection status. Payment services include funds transfer, bill payment and stop payment. Of 39 Indian banks that have received approval to launch M-banking services, 30 had systems in place in February 2010.

Each bank and non-banking service provider is trying to invent its own wheel using different technology platforms, and this leads to a range of technological barriers. For example, the consumer must use specific handsets to access some services, such as Java-enabled phones for specific systems. In general, GPRS must be enabled in the mobile phone network for password input and registration. GPRS is not widely available for users in rural India.

Figure 1: Proliferation of technology in M-banking applications.

A global standard for M-banking

This proliferation of technologies, systems, encryption schemes, security solutions and device requirements makes interoperability virtually impossible. Consumers will be confused and innovation will be delayed. Central banks should agree on a platform which can be used by all partners in mobile commerce and banking to bring financial inclusion within the reach of large numbers of users.

A global standard would facilitate diffusion of M-banking throughout the developing world. It would also put an end to the proliferation of competing systems. A standard covering a wide variety of banking and non-banking intermediaries would facilitate deployment of mobile banking platforms over a wider user base.

About the author

Prof. Sri Ram Khanna is a professor in the Department of Commerce at Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi, India, where he teaches international business with specialization in marketing research, consumer affairs and international business law. He is also the founder and honorary managing editor of Consumer Voice, a consumer organization which publishes comparative testing results in India. Prof. Khanna is the author of six books and several articles and papers, and manages the National Consumers Helpline at the Delhi University Campus in India. Email: sriramkhanna@yahoo.co.in
Consumer policy at the OECD

Empowering and protecting consumers worldwide

by Michael Jenkin

Over the past several decades, consumer markets have undergone major transformations. Regulatory reform, trade liberalization, new technologies and the growth of services have all provided consumers with greater choice, while the Internet has profoundly changed the way consumers compare products, purchase goods and services, and participate in the economy as a whole.

In many instances, these changes have provided valuable benefits to consumers. However, the availability of a broader array of increasingly complex products has also created significant challenges, for consumers and policy makers alike.

The OECD, through its Committee on Consumer Policy (CCP), has been following these developments closely and has served as an important forum for addressing emerging policy issues. The Committee comprises senior consumer policy and enforcement officials from OECD member economies, as well as from Egypt and India, which participate as regular observers. Moreover, as outlined below, other non-members are taking part in its work, on an ad hoc basis, in areas of mutual interest.

The CCP aims to help public authorities enhance the development and enforcement of effective consumer policies. It does this by carrying out research and analysis on topics of common interest, exchanging information on current and emerging trends, developing guidelines for addressing challenging areas, and examining ways to strengthen policy outcomes through law enforcement cooperation, both among governments and with other stakeholders.

In addition to a major project to develop and disseminate a toolkit for consumer policy makers, CCP work covers ground that is also of interest to the ISO, including e-commerce, product safety, the green marketplace, and the review of the OECD’s Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises.

The toolkit shows policy makers how to draw on developments in information and behavioural economics to enhance their understanding of how markets actually operate and of how consumers make decisions in real world situations.

The core themes of the toolkit are under continuing examination by the CCP. A major project is currently underway, for example, examining how industry can support consumer policy objectives more effectively through self-regulation and in partnership with government agencies and other stakeholders.

What has been learned in developing the toolkit is already being used to support the CCP’s work. Its influence and impact will, however, become greater as its use by member governments – in national standards work and other areas – grows (see www.oecd.org/sti/consumer-policy/toolkit).

E-commerce

The CCP recently completed discussions on its programme of work for 2011 and 2012, during which e-commerce emerged as its top priority.
In 1999, the OECD Council approved the *Guidelines for consumer protection in the context of electronic commerce* (“the 1999 Guidelines”) developed by the Committee. The Guidelines provide recommendations on ways that online markets can be designed so that consumers enjoy protections equivalent to those that exist in more traditional offline settings. Over the past decade, the Committee has built on the principles in the 1999 Guidelines to develop policy instruments, on combating cross-border fraud, improving dispute resolution and redress, and enhancing consumers’ digital competence, among others.

In 2008, the CCP contributed to the OECD’s 2008 Seoul Ministerial on the future of the Internet economy through the development of policy guidance on mobile commerce, online identity theft, and communication services. To follow up on the Ministerial, the Committee launched a review of the 1999 Guidelines to identify ongoing and emerging consumer challenges in the Internet economy that needed to be addressed. As part of the review, the CCP organized a meeting on electronic commerce jointly with the International Consumer Protection and Enforcement Network (ICPEN), and held a major conference in Washington, D.C. in December 2009 (see [www.oecd.org/ict/econsumerconference](http://www.oecd.org/ict/econsumerconference)). The conference examined e-commerce trends and a number of specific policy issues, including online behavioural advertising, consumer-to-consumer transactions, the protection of children online, dispute resolution, law enforcement cooperation, digital content products, and the participative Web (such as sites devoted to social networking).

Research and analysis is now underway on online payment protection and security issues, and future work will include a focus on digital content products and participative Web issues. The Committee also cooperates closely with other OECD bodies that are currently addressing related areas including privacy, and the role played by Internet intermediaries in protecting consumers.

Drawing on the conclusions at the Washington Conference, the CCP Secretariat has been involved in the ISO’s new project to develop international guidance on the development and implementation of efficient processes in business-to-consumer e-commerce transactions. Coordination and cooperation will continue to be important in this field.

**Consumer product safety**

In 2007, the CCP initiated new work on consumer product safety, with a view towards finding ways to enhance international cooperation in addressing safety issues. A multi-stakeholder roundtable was organized in 2008, following which the Committee decided to focus its attention on ways to improve information-sharing mechanisms.

In May 2010, it agreed to a 10-point action plan and, to support this work, established the CCP Working Party on Consumer Product Safety. In addition to member governments and observers, the Working Party is open to non-members and other international organizations that are active in the field. This includes economies with which the OECD has established enhanced engagement programmes (including Brazil, China, India, Indonesia and South Africa), as well as the International Consumer Product Safety Caucus, the Organization of American States, and the Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum.
Initial work is focusing on the development of a Web-based global recalls database, which may be operational in 2011. The portal is being tailored to meet the needs of product safety agencies, but it will also be open to the public. Given the mutual interest, the Working Party is closely following the ISO’s work on a guidance standard on consumer product recall and corrective action, being developed by ISO/TC 240, Product recall (see www.oecd.org/sti/consumer-policy/productsafety).

Green growth

The CCP has been discussing topics related to promoting sustainable consumption for several years. The Committee supported horizontal work carried out by the OECD in 2008 and, in connection with its own work on consumer education, developed a number of recommendations in 2009 for heightening consumer awareness and knowledge of green issues, in cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme and the Marrakech Task Force on education for sustainable consumption (Consumer education: Policy recommendations of the OECD’s Committee on Consumer Policy).

Subsequently, the CCP launched a project to identify ways that consumer agencies could work to enhance the value and effectiveness of the environmental claims that firms are making when marketing their products. The project was launched following a decision by member economies to develop a green growth strategy as part of the response to the financial and economic crisis.

A workshop was held with stakeholders in April 2010, at which a series of recommendations were made. In preparation for the workshop, the CCP collaborated with the ISO, which is working on environmental labels and declarations as well as lifecycle analysis. The Committee is currently evaluating the workshop results and will provide its conclusions in the coming months (see www.oecd.org/sti/consumer-policy/greencorporate). We welcome continued cooperation with ISO.

There is much to be done in the coming years in the field of consumer policy, not only at the OECD, but also in other international organizations, including the ISO. Achieving our desired results requires us to continue working together in areas of mutual interest. We welcome the valuable cooperation with the ISO, and look forward to continued collaboration, particularly in the areas of e-commerce and product safety.

OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises

The OECD’s Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises are currently being updated. These Guidelines are recommendations from governments to multinational enterprises regarding voluntary principles and standards for responsible business conduct worldwide. The CCP is actively involved in updating Chapter VII of the Guidelines, on consumer interests. This chapter makes recommendations relating to many of the key areas of concern to both the CCP and ISO, such as product safety and recalls, labelling, complaints handling, and privacy. In 2009, prior to the launch of the review, the CCP and the OECD Committee on International Investment (which is responsible for the Guidelines), co-organized a roundtable on corporate social responsibility. The discussion focused on actions that businesses could take in key areas to promote consumer interests (see www.oecd.org/daf/investment/guidelines).

About the author

Dr. Michael Jenkin assumed the duties of Director General, Office of Consumer Affairs (Canada) in 1999. He is the Chair of the OECD Committee on Consumer Policy. Dr. Jenkin has held senior positions in the industry department, working for federal departments and agencies including the Ministry of State for Economic and Regional Development and the Federal-Provincial Relations Office, and he served as a Science Adviser with the Science Council of Canada. Dr. Jenkin obtained his Bachelor degree (with honours) from Trent University. He received an MA in Economics and a PhD in Government from the University of Manchester on a Commonwealth Scholarship. He has written a number of articles and books on federal-provincial relations and on industrial policy.
Evaluation of product safety for children is conducted by public officials, consumer advocates and commercial companies in any number of countries around the world. These efforts often duplicate one another, resulting in added costs and reduced efficacy. Moreover, compliance to different standards stating differing limits hampers distribution to a global market.

To this end, the ISO/COPOLCO working group on product safety circulated a survey to ISO/COPOLCO members in 2007 concerning standards for toys. The aim was to gather information on how various parts of ISO 8124, Safety of toys, were being used – in comparison to other standards – to manage the risks posed by toys. Respondents were also asked to specify their reasons for giving preference of one toy standard over another.

In 2009, this survey was recirculated, with the specific aim of encouraging responses from developing countries. The two sets of comments were collated in a report presented to the 2010 ISO/COPOLCO plenary in Bali, Indonesia.

Regional variation
The survey’s results indicate that the ISO series of standards tends to be referenced by countries located in the southern hemisphere. The European standard EN 71 is used predominantly in countries covered by the European Union toy safety directive and by non-European countries in the northern hemisphere.

A few countries, primarily in Asia, use a combination of both standards. The ISO suite of standards is used by China, while EN 71 is referenced in India. The trend amongst many other developing countries is towards an uptake of ISO standards. Whereas Canada relies largely on national legislation, the USA requires compliance to the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) standard, ASTM F 963.

Other work
The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) has conducted a similar survey of its members, requesting information on the application of toy standards. The ISO/COPOLCO results have been shared with APEC in order to integrate comments from countries outside the Asia-Pacific region. This information sharing will further encourage understanding and advance global harmonization, particularly as APEC economies produce at least 80 percent of the world’s toy supply and 19 of the 21 APEC member economies are toy exporters.

In addition to surveys, the International Council of Toy Industries (ICTI) has detailed a comparison of the individual differences between the major toy standards. Some adjustments are minor, such as quoting weight and measurement dimensions in metric units with imperial values included in brackets. Age grading, however, varies considerably, with the European standard using 3 years of age as the vital marker, while ISO and ASTM apply a range of age categories (18, 36, 60 and 96 months).

ISO, ASTM and EN standards recognize 14 years as the limit of childhood. Limits for more contentious issues such as heavy metal content, flammability, the testing of projectiles, and use and abuse testing, still differ between international experts. ANEC, the European consumer voice in standardization, has analysed this comparative study for further discussion and recently published a position paper on possible streamlining of legal and standardization frameworks for toy safety.

A gap analysis is still required to cover any safety issues not addressed by all three standards.

The power of one!
Standards developers, regulators and users should continue their efforts to actively pursue alignment, or at least convergence, of the ISO, EN and ASTM toy safety standards, particularly for new requirements and emerging issues. The ultimate aim is one international toy safety standard to increase consumer confidence and give users worldwide the safest possible protection.

Robyn Easton is Chair of the ISO/COPOLCO working group on product safety.
Calling all consumers

How outreach efforts facilitate participation

by Jim McCabe

Consumer participation in standardization adds credibility to the process. It also helps ensure that products and services are based on standards developed with consumer input and that address consumer needs. The value of consumer involvement has been formally recognized by ISO and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) in their joint statement on “Consumer participation in standardization work” and in their strategic planning.

For the last few years, the ISO Committee on consumer policy (ISO/COPOLCO) and its working group on consumer participation (CPWG) have been taking steps to address and implement a number of actions identified by ISO/COPOLCO in its 2007-2010 Action Plan.

The CPWG has developed a brochure (whose publication is expected by the end of 2010) that provides national standards bodies (NSBs), and other standards development organizations with practical guidance on promoting consumer participation in standardization. The brochure includes national, regional and international case studies illustrating how various aspects of consumer participation have been organized. Topics covered include:

- Why, when, where and how to involve consumers
- Who is a consumer representative
- How NSBs interface with ISO/COPOLCO
- Funding and training of consumer representatives.

The brochure will also includes links to various organizational resources, including a distance learning module developed by the ISO/COPOLCO training group available on CD and online under the title Consumers and standards: partnership for a better world. The brochure will be a valuable tool to assist standards bodies in their efforts to engage consumers in standardization.

Money matters

Consumer representatives often require financial assistance to participate in international standardization. Over the years, ISO/COPOLCO and the CPWG have endeavored to identify solutions to tackle this issue directly. The CPWG recently noted the establishment of a trust fund by the ISO Working Group on Social Responsibility (ISO/WG SR), which helps facilitate the involvement of consumers and other stakeholders. It also noted the ISO Funds-in-Trust programme and donor grants, which provide assistance to representatives of developing countries to participate in such activities as the ISO/WG SR and ISO/COPOLCO training events and meetings.

Communication channels

A major initiative of ISO/COPOLCO and the CPWG over the past two years was to transform what was previously a paper-based directory of ISO/COPOLCO members into a dynamic, online resource for all ISO members. The ISO Directory of consumer interest at its 2010 meeting in Bali, ISO/COPOLCO approved funding recommendations made by the CPWG, aimed primarily at facilitating the participation of consumer representatives from developing countries in standardization, including persons with special needs. These include:

- Continuing to align training events where relevant with ISO/COPOLCO meetings and pursuing donor grants
- Allowing ISO Funds-in-Trust donors to earmark their contributions to support consumer representatives’ attendance at ISO/COPOLCO and ISO technical committee meetings
- Working to develop further guidance for national standards bodies (NSBs) on the importance of supporting consumer participation and fundraising.

The CPWG welcomes suggestions that will contribute to further progress in this area.

Communication channels

A major initiative of ISO/COPOLCO and the CPWG over the past two years was to transform what was previously a paper-based directory of ISO/COPOLCO members into a dynamic, online resource for all ISO members. The ISO Directory of consumer interest...
est participation enables NSBs to report on their national efforts to involve consumers in standardization in a single location.

This includes data on consumer participation in ISO and IEC technical committees, national committees and mirror committees, particularly in the priority areas of consumer interest identified by ISO/COPOLCO.

Data also includes the contact person for consumer matters at the NSB and information about other types of support that an NSB may provide, such as funding, training, and Web resources. Updates can be supplied at any time, although ISO/COPOLCO will encourage members to do so annually. The CPWG will monitor usage of the directory.

Another significant achievement for ISO/COPOLCO was the launch of an electronic newsletter. Published quarterly, ISO Consumer Update provides members of ISO/COPOLCO and interested constituents news and information on events and developments of relevance to consumers within ISO/IEC and at the national and international level. The newsletter also draws attention to issues and consultations involving ISO/COPOLCO’s work. As a free publication to which anyone can subscribe, it is hoped that the newsletter will serve as a direct line of communication that will both stimulate and engage consumer organizations and others interested in ISO/COPOLCO’s work.

Key performance indicators

Another milestone was the establishment of a set of key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure ISO/COPOLCO’s effectiveness as a policy development committee of ISO, as well as consumer participation in ISO/COPOLCO and in standards work generally. Developed by the CPWG and approved by ISO/COPOLCO, these KPIs include such items as:

- Participation in ISO/COPOLCO and its working groups
- Attendance at the annual ISO/COPOLCO plenary meeting, including the number of delegations that have a consumer representative
- Response to ISO/COPOLCO consultations
- Use of the ISO/COPOLCO sections of ISO Online
- Use of the ISO Directory of consumer interest participation
- Participation by consumers in the technical committees identified as ISO/COPOLCO priority areas
- Use of ISO/COPOLCO publications
- Use and evaluation of ISO/COPOLCO training resources and events
- Advancement of ISO/COPOLCO-recognized new work item proposals
- The impact of ISO/COPOLCO policy recommendations

ISO/COPOLCO has put in place mechanisms to monitor these KPIs on an annual basis.

Room for improvement

ISO/COPOLCO also undertook an investigation of ways to increase membership and participation in ISO/COPOLCO and its working groups. Former ISO/COPOLCO Chair, Caroline Warne, from the British Standards Institution’s consumer and public interest network, who also co-chairs the committee’s training group, spearheaded the development of a paper exploring barriers to participation and possible remedies.

One outcome of this exercise was the development of summary information about ISO/COPOLCO’s working groups and projects underway to orient new members and participants. This was accompanied by an orientation session held prior to the working group meetings in conjunction with the 2010 ISO/COPOLCO plenary meeting, and is part of an overall induction programme developed in conjunction with the training group.

With much of ISO/COPOLCO’s work being done between meetings, a second area for investigation was how to improve response rates to consultations. Sensitivity to language and translation issues, adequate timeframes for response, and the need to include organizations outside the NSB were considered.

The value of consumer involvement has been formally recognized by ISO and IEC.

An outcome from this exercise was the drafting of a checklist intended to promote good practices in the design and delivery of ISO/COPOLCO consultations and surveys, with the aim of improving response rates and the quality of information obtained. The checklist has already been successfully pilot-tested and should prove a useful tool for the committee’s work in the future.

ISO/COPOLCO and its CPWG will continue to explore various ways to reach out to consumers and to facilitate their involvement in standardization. We welcome the input of others in this dialogue.

About the author

Jim McCabe is Senior Director of Consumer Relations at the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), ISO member for the USA. He manages ANSI’s Consumer Interest Forum and coordinates the participation of consumers in ANSI governance activities. A member of the ANSI delegation to the ISO Committee on consumer policy (ISO/COPOLCO) since 1998, he has served for the last four years as Chair of ISO/COPOLCO’s working group on consumer participation. Since joining ANSI in 1995, he has also been involved in standards coordination activities related to identity theft, personal data privacy, occupational safety and health, government affairs, and corporate member relations.
Consumers influence the development of standards at the national level, and are doing so increasingly. We look at five countries, Canada, Colombia, France, Republic of Korea, and South Africa, to see in what areas specifically they have made a difference.

Canada

Canada is committed to engaging consumers in its standardization work. The Standards Council of Canada (SCC), ISO member for the country, directs Canadian standards development organizations. It ensures that the interests of consumers are represented throughout the standardization process, from initial planning to the consensus process. In particular, this requirement covers areas involving health and safety issues related to consumer products and services.

Part of SCC’s mandate is to “benefit the health, safety and welfare of the public and assist and protect consumers.” Within this context, Canada has developed a framework to ensure consumer participation in standards work, aimed at enhancing the system’s credibility and effectiveness.

Consumer representatives

SCC has developed a system of advisory committees within its organization, and consumers play a major role in these committees.

A Consumer and Public Interest Committee (CPIC) works to ensure that the consumer perspective is considered during the development of policies related to standards work in Canada, monitoring emerging consumer and public interest issues and making recommendations to the SCC.

The consumer is the only stakeholder group within the Canadian standards system that has representation on all SCC advisory committees. In addition, there is a consumer voice on the Council itself.

The Canadian Advisory Committee (CAC), a subcommittee of CPIC, brings a Canadian consumer voice to the ISO Committee on consumer policy (ISO/COPOLCO). It is involved in a variety of ISO/COPOLCO activities and committees, including its working
groups on priorities, product safety, needs of the elderly and disabled, and complaints handling.

In 2000, Canada developed the Canadian Standards Strategy (CSS) which aims to provide direction and improve our effectiveness in both national and international arenas. Consumer representatives were involved in developing the CSS, and they figure prominently within the strategy. One of the key elements was development of a priority-setting mechanism to assist Canadian committees in selecting work areas and priority issues.

A strong consumer presence

The Canadian government recognizes the importance of standards to Canadians’ well being and quality of life. The federal government has set up an Office of Consumer Affairs (OAC) within the Industry Canada Ministry. As a result, government officials have long been involved in standards work. An OAC staff person sits on, and is very engaged with, both CPIC and CAC. This helps to develop positions and air all sides of issues, as well as provide both research and financial support for special projects and travel for consumer representatives.

The four Canadian standards development organizations are obliged under Canadian procedural documents to include consumer representatives on technical committees involving consumer health and safety. All of the standard development organizations recruit consumer representatives to their committee work.

The Canadian Standards Association (CSA) has a well-developed programme of services for consumer representatives, with a network of more than 200 volunteers who are trained and supported to ensure a strong consumer voice on both policy committees and technical committees.

SCC and Canadian standards development organizations maintain active contacts with consumer organizations involved in advocacy and educational activities on behalf of consumers in the marketplace. This helps attract some members to eventually become new consumer representatives in standards work. It is also very helpful in educating the general public about standards and their value to society.

While recruitment of volunteers for standards work in all sectors is a challenge, finding consumer representatives is an even bigger task. Our recruiting efforts involve a number of strategies, including recommendations from active consumer representatives, networking with consumer groups, working with university academics, using local and national standards publications, using the standards development organizations and SCC Websites, and approaching retired professionals.

SCC and CSA have both developed excellent training programs for their volunteers, which contributes to increased self-confidence and engagement among volunteers.

Awareness raising

Among these strategies is raising awareness of the uses and benefits of standards with the publication of articles in magazines and newspapers all over the country. These publications are written in simple language so they may be easily understood by the intelligent layperson.

Seminars are also used to disseminate information on ISO/COPOLCO and the Colombian national committee (198 COPOLCO). These seminars, which are open to all interested stakeholders, are aimed at specific sectors such as textiles and transportation, and examine topics such as quality and environmental management.

Another ICONTEC’s strategy is to encourage active participation in ISO/COPOLCO and the Pan American Standards Commission (COPANT) TC 153 PAN-COPOLCO. National consumer representatives participate in ISO/COPOLCO working groups, organize workshops (e.g. the first regional workshop for promoting consumer participation in standardization in Buenos Aires, Argentina) and showcase national success stories, such as the ICONTEC document “Care services for girls, boys and teenagers under protection programmes” at the 2005 ISO/COPOLCO meeting.

Speaking with one voice

Colombian committee 198 COPOLCO was established by ICONTEC to further encourage the voice of consumers. The committee, a mirror committee to ISO, includes the participation of consumers associations, governmental bodies, manufacturers, service providers, designers and traders. It is responsible for sending comments on behalf of Colombia regarding the work of ISO/COPOLCO and TC 153 PAN-COPOLCO.

Another important role of Colombia’s national committee 198 COPOLCO is to provide consumer feedback on issues of importance to consumers in other technical committees. For example, when national committee 44, Meat products, made a query about the suitability of classes for meat products, 198 COPOLCO came back with the view that consumers would be best served by three, rather than two, classes.

We anticipate that the application of these strategies will continue strength-
ening participation of Colombian consumers in standardization, both nationally and internationally.

Sandra Herrera is the Colombian delegate to ISO/COPOLCO and COPANT TC 153 PAN-COPOLCO, as well as several ISO committees.

France

The French consumer movement holds a prominent place in standardization. The many challenges related to fairness and the complexity of transactions, the impact of new technologies as well as sustainable development give rise to a number of difficulties for consumers who require clear and objective information.

Standards experts

Within AFNOR, ISO member for France, consumers are recognized as experts in standardization committees. As members of AFNOR’s Consumer committee, they are responsible for providing the consumer perspective. The Committee Chair, who is a representative of a consumer association, presents its annual activity report to AFNOR’s Board of Directors.

Consumers are also active within AFNOR’s governance bodies. Three representatives are members of the Board of Directors of AFNOR.

In addition, French consumer representatives are also involved with many other national organizations, in areas such as certification and accreditation with the French Committee for Accreditation (COFRAC), or in the food sector with the French Institute for Designations of Origin (INAO).

As regards standardization work at European and international levels, the Consumer Committee members discuss and agree on projects that are likely to influence French standards, and consequently, consumer issues. The Committee Chair and the AFNOR official in charge of consumer issues, participate in ISO/COPOLCO.

For this work, consumer associations receive financial support provided for by an agreement between the French National Consumer Institute (INC) and the French Ministry of Industry. This support has enabled them to participate directly as members of the French delegation in major international projects, such as social responsibility or universal cell phone chargers.

Future remains bright

Besides, AFNOR’s Consumer Committee plans to consolidate its links and relations with equivalent structures in other national standards bodies, particularly in Europe, as is currently the case with DIN’s Consumer Council (ISO member for Germany).

Today, new possibilities emerge for standardization work involving consumer organizations. During the Round Table process – the so-called Grenelle de l’environnement – initiated in France in 2007 in order to define key points of the government’s policy on ecological and sustainable development issues for the coming years, several questions were raised concerning environmental labeling (the carbon footprint), the position of environmental NGOs within standardization, etc.

Finally, the French National Consumer Council (CNC – the national body responsible for building consensus between business and consumers on all consumer issues) has issued a position paper on the central role played by standards in the field of nanotechnologies.

Republic of Korea

For almost 30 years, Consumers Korea (CK) has been involved in consumer-related policy issues, research, and complaint resolution. In the last decade, CK has begun to participate in standardization, conducting standards-related consumer surveys and research, consultation to identify areas for standardization, and initiatives aimed at enhancing consumer welfare and safety.

CK suggests potential areas for standardization to the Korean Agency for Technology and Standards (KATS). At the same time, CK promotes consumer participation in standardization through awareness and leadership programmes for consumer advocates in the Republic of Korea.

At the forefront

CK conducted research this year on Korean Standard items to identify areas which need new or revised standards. Although they are generally in compliance with ISO standards, the study indicates that some standards should be revised. CK analysed consumer complaints and surveyed consumer and expert opinion of Korean standard-certified products. CK suggested that KATS should establish or revise Korean standards for certain items, including:

- Odour control functions in refrigerators
- Testing specifications for energy efficiency of televisions, and regulations regarding electricity consumption labelling for TVs
- Durability and energy efficiency standard for electric blankets, providing additional surface temperature limit functions
• Digital door locks
• Clothing and shoe sizes.

In 2009, CK conducted a survey on interoperability. The results suggested that KATS should establish standards to improve the interoperability of various consumer products and, in so doing, reduce inconvenience and resources. As a result, KATS is now developing standard for items such as kimchi refrigerators. Refrigerators for kimchi, the traditional Korean fermented vegetable dish, are among the most popular appliances in Korea. This work is proceeding with support from CK and manufacturers.

Studies and surveys

CK has conducted a series of surveys on standards-related issues to identify areas which need standardization and to suggest policy changes. This includes:

• Research on consumer-oriented standardization (2006)
• Research on recalls (2006)
• Research on standards for electric appliances (2007)
• Study of the development of safety risk assessment guidelines (2007)
• Study of safety management for consumer medical instruments (2008).

CK also conducted studies to promote alignment of national and International Standards. This includes:

• Study of product quality improvement of KS certified products (2010)
• Standardization for interoperability (2009)
• International standardization for network service billing system (2008)
• Study of policy for compatibility of global standard in national social norms and life standard (2008)
• Study of promotion of consumers’ participation in standardization (2008).

Outreach efforts

Together with KATS and the Korean Standards Association, ISO member for the Republic of Korea, CK has conducted a series of consumer awareness and leadership training programmes on standardization. CK aims to promote consumer-oriented standardization by encouraging participation of consumers and consumer advocates in standardization. In particular, the leadership training programme was designed to involve consumer representatives in identification and establishment of appropriate standards.

CK formed its committee for consumer participation in standardization in 2006 and conducted training programmes during 2009. The focus was on the safety of children’s toy and consumer products, and on standards for climate change and energy efficiency. In 2010, CK is organizing a new programme series aimed at helping trainees become leaders in standardization.

South Africa

South African National Standards (SANS) cover many products and practices relevant to consumers. Apart from reflecting local needs and capabilities, these standards are also used by the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS), ISO member for the country, as the basis for product and system certification.

In addition, the National Regulator for Compulsory Specifications (NRCS) is required by law to use SANS standards (where they exist) to define the technical requirements for products under regulation.

Standardization is but one of a multitude of issues local consumer bodies must deal with. While SABS has always been willing to accept legitimate consumer body representation on any of its standards technical committees, consumer bodies lack the resources needed to support suitably qualified representation on all relevant committees. This is where ISO/COPOLCO and its mirrored local activities play an important role.

A strategic role

SABS technical committee SABS/TC 185, Consumer standards, acts as a mirror committee to ISO/COPOLCO. But SABS SABS/TC 185 also has a wider role. It develops, maintains and promotes national standards in areas relevant to consumers but which do not fall within the scope of other SABS/TCs (an example of this is the national adoption of ISO’s toy safety standards).

SABS/TC 185 also examines the strategic policy statements of other relevant SABS/TCs to determine whether consumers are adequately represented. In that regard, the ISO/COPOLCO priority programme provides a useful checklist of projects. Sometimes direct consumer representation is not feasible on a particular SABS/TC, especially if only a few of its standards projects are of direct consumer relevance. In these cases, SABS/TC 185 requests a liaison with the other SABS/TCs to track or provide input to specific projects of interest, and sometimes to seek consumer membership of relevant working groups.

There are two main national consumer bodies in South Africa: the South African National Consumer Union (SANCU) and the National Consumer Forum (NCF). Both are members of SABS/TC 185, which is currently chaired by a member of SANCU. For many years, SABS has funded the attendance of at least one representative of a national consumer body (in addition to its own personnel) to attend the annual ISO/COPOLCO meetings.

Reports from ISO/COPOLCO meetings are discussed in detail by SABS/TC 185, providing guidance for much of the technical committee’s work until the next ISO/COPOLCO meeting.
Standards for a better world

Road safety

Cosmetics

Water safety

Products for elderly persons

Performance of household appliances*

Financial services

Counterfeiting and fraud

Wastewater disposal

Cosmetics

Road safety

For more about ISO’s work programme as it affects consumers, see the ISO Directory for consumer interest participation: www.iso.org/COPOLCO_interest

* In collaboration with IEC.

ISO Focus+ October 2010
There is a marked discrepancy between wish and reality when it comes to the participation of consumer interest groups, especially those from the developing world, in the field of standardization. This concern has received the attention of standardizers internationally in recent times.

Although developing countries constitute 75% of the membership of the ISO Committee on consumer policy (ISO/COPOLCO), many of them do not have the capacity and financial resources required to fully address consumer concerns.

ISO has included as part of its main business strategy the need to encourage and increase the role of consumer representatives, including those from developing countries, in the international standardization process.

Take, for instance, the developing countries ISO/COPOLCO group (DCCG), which aims to encourage participation of consumer representatives and associations from developing countries in the committee’s activities and the international standardization process. DCCG also works to ensure continuity in the handling of issues involving developing countries.

In addition, a large share of these developing countries are dependent on imports of goods and services from the more developed countries to satisfy the needs of their populations. Recognizing that International Standards are an accepted benchmark for the manufacture and production of goods and services, participation by consumer representatives from developing countries in the standardization process is essential.

The voice of developing countries
How can it be heard?

by Steve Williams

International Standards give developing countries access to foreign markets.

Of course, many developing countries are also involved in the export of goods and services. Again, International Standards constitute the benchmark to determine their quality and fitness for use. Goods and services that satisfy the specifications defined in International Standards are generally considered acceptable for trade. This means that International Standards can give developing countries access to foreign markets and promote economic development.

Fruitful participation

Other important factors that are addressed through the international standardization process are health, safety and environmental concerns, particularly in developing countries where product availability, consumer choice and financial resources may be very limited. In short, it is imperative that standards development includes consideration of the concerns of developing countries.

Since 2003, consumer representatives from developing countries have been meeting at the annual ISO/COPOLCO events in an attempt to ensure fruitful participation in standardization activities. This includes:

• Raising the concerns of developing countries within the ISO/COPOLCO plenary, working groups and other fora
to ensure they receive high-level attention in the standardization process

- Providing a forum for closer and more effective working relationships between consumer representatives from developing countries, and communicating progress in areas of concern to group members
- Identifying issues and agreeing on required actions so that the wider membership can benefit from the collective decisions of the group
- Encouraging and facilitating DCCG members’ participation as chairs, co-chairs and other leadership roles in the international standardization process.

**A record of accomplishment**

In collaboration with Consumers International (see page 3), the DCCG has advocated for an International Standard for cross-border trade in second-hand goods (SHGs). In recent years, trade in SHGs has burgeoned to become a lucrative business for companies in more developed countries. To some extent, the growth in this trade has had a negative impact on developing countries for several reasons.

SHGs are pre-owned goods traded in by the initial owner for varying reasons, including problems requiring costly repairs, increased maintenance costs, or wear and tear that has led to safety issues. A prime example of the latter is used vehicle tyres. These unsafe but less costly SHGs may be seen as attractive alternatives to consumers in developing countries, where limited incomes may preclude the purchase of new items. These consumers are often unaware of the risks associated with purchasing SHGs, which are generally sold without any guarantee against defects. The result may be that consumers spend their meagre resources on products offering little or no value for money.

In addition, lacking International Standards covering trade in SHGs, developing countries may be used as a dumping ground for items that are costly to dispose of, such as automobiles, CRT televisions and computers.

Despite the risks faced by both developed and developing countries from the increased trade in SHGs, there can also be benefits to consumers if an International Standard provided some form of guidance. As a result of intervention by the DCCG, ISO has established a project committee that is working on the development of a guide for cross-border trade of SHGs.

Both the ISO/COPOLCO working group on priorities and the working group on product safety are co-chaired by members of the DCCG. These two working groups play an important role in ISO/COPOLCO and the international standardization process. Having members from the DCCG participate at leadership levels allows developing countries’ concerns to be raised and receive due consideration among all ISO/COPOLCO members.

**A global standard for warranties**

Members of the DCCG have also been very supportive of the view that an International Standard is needed in the area of guarantees and warranties. While discussions are still in the early stages, we recommend and strongly support the development of an International Standard in this area.

Concerns related to guarantees and warranties are not unique to developing countries alone; they are global in nature because products may be manufactured in one part of the world and sold internationally. However, in developing countries, where legislation, systems and procedures may not be as sophisticated as those in the developed world, the problems become paramount.

Since the formation of the DCCG, its involvement in the international standardization process has also led to increased promotional activity by national standards bodies and consumer organizations. Their interest and willingness to promote participation by consumer representatives in the standardization process is encouraging. In India, for example, there has been a positive move towards allocating financial and other resources to support expert participation at international policy and technical meetings.

To facilitate more effective working relationships among consumer representatives from developing countries, the DCCG has established a Web-based tool that allows members to share ideas, raise concerns, comment on documents and, in a more general sense, increase participation by consumer representatives from developing countries in the international standardization process. However, we are committed to exploring new and better ways of communication that will allow us to fulfil our mandate.
Special Report

Steve Williams is a senior Standards Officer at the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards (TTBS), ISO member for the country. He previously worked in the TTBS Laboratory Services Division testing materials for conformance to national compulsory standards, and in the Implementation Division in the area of Conformity Assessment. Mr. Williams is Co-Chair of the ISO/COPOLCO working group on priorities, and Convener of the developing countries COPOLCO group (DCCG).

Next steps

The DCCG has identified key elements that must be addressed in the short- to medium-term if the group is to grow and continue meeting its goals, including:

• The need for greater financial assistance
• Encouraging consumer representatives from developing countries to accept leading roles (key persons and co-chairs for the working group)
• Establishing a closer relationship with the ISO Committee on developing country matters (ISO/DEVCO).

Funding is an important issue.

One might argue that, with the increased availability of electronic communication, active participation may still be possible. However, attendance at these meetings provides the best opportunities for concerns to be heard and acted upon. Having consumer representatives from developing countries accept leading roles provides opportunities for growth and development, and allows them to build their capacity to contribute to the standardization process.

The main objective of the DCCG is to maximize the participation and collaboration of consumer representatives from developing countries in ISO/COPOLCO’s activities. Establishing a closer relationship with ISO/DEVCO would facilitate further networking with representatives from developing countries outside of ISO/COPOLCO, giving the DCCG greater ability to identify the concerns of developing countries.

Consumer representatives wishing to become involved in the work of the DCCG are invited to contact Steve Williams at steve.williams@ttbs.org.tt or Premila Kumar at premila@consumerfifi.org.

About the author

Steve Williams is a senior Standards Officer at the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards (TTBS), ISO member for the country. He previously worked in the TTBS Laboratory Services Division testing materials for conformance to national compulsory standards, and in the Implementation Division in the area of Conformity Assessment. Mr. Williams is Co-Chair of the ISO/COPOLCO working group on priorities, and Convener of the developing countries COPOLCO group (DCCG).
Bridging gaps

Strategies for effective consumer participation

by Caroline Warne and Sadie Homer

The ISO/COPOLCO training group aims to assist and support the ISO development and training programmes (DEVT) in developing effective training and support activities, with the goal of improving consumer representation in International Standards development. The training group’s philosophy is that capacity must be developed first at the national level, but in a manner that leads to effective participation at the international level.

The current programme was developed following the success of seven regional awareness-raising seminars between 2003 and 2007, which focused on developing countries. An overarching principle of the programme is that national standards bodies need to build bridges with consumer organizations in order to develop their participation in both policy and technical areas.

Train the trainer

The group adopted the “train-the-trainer” approach to create a cadre of experts worldwide with the knowledge and skills required to train consumer representatives regionally and nationally. The design of the programme included supporting trainers in developing their own training and representational activities. An important effect of this approach is that it allows national training to be conducted in the local language.

The training group recognized the investment being made by sponsors and the potential benefits for consumer participation in standardization. This makes it important to apply strict criteria to ensure that candidates for the training had the potential and commitment and were suitable.

More than 40 suitable candidates from developing countries applied for 16 places at the first event held in Ghana in 2008. The same criteria were applied to the French-speaking “train-the-trainer” event held in Paris, France, in 2009. To date, more than 30 trainers have been trained, with 12 of these already running their own workshops.

A two-year follow-up evaluation of the Ghana event shows that all respondents had used the acquired skills to promote consumer involvement and other training for consumers. The evaluation indicated a growing interest and awareness of the importance of consumer engagement in standards development at the national level – a precursor to increasing participation at the international level. Some of the new trainers have already participated at ISO/COPOLCO and in the development of ISO 26000 on social responsibility.

1) Held in Austria, Botswana, Canada (for Latin America), Czech Republic, Egypt, Malaysia and Thailand.

2) The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) has been a major sponsor throughout the programme alongside other sponsors and the host countries for each training activity.
Supporting new members

Being a newcomer is always difficult and the training group has introduced two initiatives to ensure that new representatives can participate effectively at ISO/COPOLCO as quickly as possible.

Induction activities include a welcome letter and telephone call, a pre-ISO/COPOLCO call to walk through key plenary papers and more in-depth information about events in conjunction with the committee.

An orientation session was introduced at the ISO/COPOLCO meetings in Bali this year, opening the meetings to new members and delegates. Issues covered included background to ISO/COPOLCO, protocol for commenting in plenary, and the remit of working groups. This open meeting was attended by some 50 delegates; most of these were new members, but surprisingly, some veteran delegates chose to attend as well.

The favourable feedback received indicates that this approach could be considered by other ISO committees.

Future plans

ISO/COPOLCO and its training group are always open to new ideas and suggestions to help identify and fill training needs, particularly in developing countries. We can advise on training activities, provide training resources, and move forward potential initiatives to develop with DEVT. Input from the broader standards community is always valuable.

This year, ISO Vice-President (technical management) Jacob Holmblad, addressed ISO/COPOLCO, indicating that stakeholder engagement, including consumer outreach, is a key issue for ISO. He also emphasized the importance of maintaining, developing and improving coordination between consumers and ISO members at the national level.

The ISO/COPOLCO training group expects to develop other initiatives to meet the continuing need to enhance consumer participation, especially from developing countries.

Training group activities

- Regional awareness-raising workshops
- Consumers and standards – partnership for a better world (CD and download)
- Train-the-trainer programme
- Train-the-trainer events in English and French
- Regional and national follow up workshops
- Plans for future workshops
- Induction programme for new ISO/COPOLCO members
- Orientation session at ISO/COPOLCO meetings
- Evaluation tools.

About the authors

Caroline Warne, an occupational psychologist, has studied accidents and safety, including consumer safety. She also lectured at a UK University on a course which included training theory and practice. She has contributed as a consumer representative to the development of British, European and International Standards, and she chaired ISO/COPOLCO from 2002 to 2005. Ms. Warne is Co-Chair of the ISO/COPOLCO training group.

Sadie Homer advises Consumers International on the role of standards in consumer protection. She co-ordinates representation of CI’s member organizations to ISO and IEC, at both technical and policy levels. She also provides consumer expertise to the training activities of ISO and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in their developing country programmes, and has co-chaired the ISO/COPOLCO training group for three years.
Representing the voice of consumers in ISO technical committees is not always easy, but it is a rewarding and important task. Below, five consumer representatives in very different ISO committees tell us about their personal experiences. Read about the trials and triumphs they encountered in promoting consumer needs in standardization.

Cosmetics

Being a consumer advocate on an ISO technical committee is not an easy job, but it is a crucial one. Our role is to independently represent the interests of the general public in standards development. During the process, we identify and communicate consumer concerns, such as safety. The result is increased public confidence in ISO standards.

So what does it take to be a consumer representative? Passion is key. Consumers may be underrepresented in ISO committees, so it is important to have their voice heard. It was my enthusiasm in Australia that persuaded the Chair of working group WG 7, Sun protection test methods, within ISO/TC 217, Cosmetics, to invite me to represent consumer issues.

In addition, commitment, personality and love of challenge are important to promote consumer interests, particularly in technically oriented environments. Consumer advocates rarely have individual voting rights, as they are usually members of a national delegation. If their views are overridden or ignored by their country members, they will not succeed.

The value of consumer advocacy is not always recognized, making ISO nomination difficult. In Australia, delegates must first seek nomination from mirror committee members before they can attend ISO/TC meetings. Similarly, at my first ISO meeting of WG 7, some experts queried my role by stating, “But we are all consumers here!” Yet clearly, for transparency, experts cannot represent their own sector and consumers interchangeably.

Furthermore, representation in ISO committees requires a level of expertise in both the subject matter and in committee process. Technical expertise, which many consumer advocates have, is a bonus when drafting technical standards. In addition to representing sunscreen users, I am also an organic chemist with a background in pharmaceutical manufacture, and research and development of sun protection products. Committee experience is also useful. Seventeen years on Australia’s sunscreen mirror committee for the Consumers’ Federation of Australia plus six on ISO committees has prepared me well to professionally represent consumers and to warrant equal respect from technical experts.

Another important quality is knowing how to compromise. A consumer representative must recognize when to stand firm, and when to concede on minor issues in order to secure major gains. Achieving global consensus is not easy, but the resulting International Standards will have a wide and powerful outreach.

ISO standards aim to reduce technical barriers to trade. By harmonizing requirements for products and services, they provide a valuable opportunity for globally promoting best practice. This is something consumer advocates must take advantage of. For instance, Australia has the world’s highest incidence of skin cancer due to our extreme climatic conditions. By having an Australian consumer representative on WG 7, it was possible to ensure stringent international testing procedures that we can adopt which will not compromise the safety of any consumers, but specifically Australians.
Being a consumer representative is a rewarding and challenging task. However, there are a few barriers that require consideration. One of the biggest issues is lack of funding. In Australia, consumer delegates are volunteers. Conducting independent research, gathering statistics and attending international meetings requires money. The only funding is a government grant to partially cover a proportion of travel costs. For this reason, it has not been possible for me to attend some WG 7 interim meetings.

Making a real difference is a very positive outcome and one that makes all the passion, energy and time invested rewarding. The first time I supported ISO/TC 217, publishing in vitro testing methods, there was some reluctance from committee members because sun protection products are traditionally evaluated by in vivo testing on humans. After much effort and extensive dialogue, a reliable in vitro laboratory test method for the determination of UVA is nearing publication. The world will soon embrace this new International Standard, which moves from traditional testing on human skin, to a laboratory technique – an ethical victory for consumers.

Finally, to improve consumer representation in standardization it is necessary to create a consumer delegate position for each technical committee. This would strengthen the legitimacy of consumer advocates and ensure their voice is heard. Such a position should be independent of country and representative of consumer protection worldwide. ISO voting rights will globally reinforce the vital importance of consumer representation.

**Drinking water and wastewater services**

When in 2002, I was invited to represent Consumers International (CI) in ISO/TC 224, Service activities relating to drinking water supply systems and wastewater systems – Quality criteria of the service and performance indicators, I felt a certain trepidation. Five years later, when the work was completed, I understood why. The job had not been easy. But I do not regret it for a moment.

At the outset, I was nervous about controversies linked to the water sector. Global debates in successive water forums were sometimes politicized, and could culminate in the collapse of high profile contracts. There were misgivings from some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) concerning industry involvement, and from some industry members who felt similarly about standards.

However, a lesson for me was that whatever theoretical differences existed between members of the technical committee, these tended to diminish once we got down to business.

And the result was a useful and very valuable standard. ISO 24510:2007 provides guidelines for customer care in the assessment and improvement of drinking and wastewater services. Its introduction refers to contextual issues such as the “right to water”, but the standard itself focuses on practical matters.

However, getting to this stage was by no means easy. To give you an idea, just imagine three days negotiating a draft final text in a windowless room in South America, while suffering from jetlag. Not for the faint-hearted!

As an “A” liaison organization representative, I could do everything, except have the right to vote. On the one hand, I was not constrained by positions adopted in advance by national delegations. But on the other hand, although there were occasional national consultations with consumer organizations in national mirror committees, I was the only permanent consumer representative in the committee. I therefore had to take full responsibility for ensuring that consumer interests were met.

After consulting with CI members at an early stage of the process, we agreed to a set of key objectives (all of which are met in the final standard). They stated that the standard should be applicable to, and highlight:

- “Non-reticulated” systems, that is, systems which are not physically integrated. Furthermore, if consumers are not served they should have the right to know when they will be served.

Social responsibility

The approval and publication of ISO 26000, the ISO standard on social responsibility, is a historic moment. Although many around the world are talking about it, few know that the concept originated during the 2002 plenary and workshop of the ISO Committee on consumer policy (ISO/COPOLCO) in Trinidad & Tobago. It has been a long journey. Following the workshop, ISO/COPOLCO submitted a proposal to develop a standard on corporate social responsibility. It was agreed in 2004 that ISO would go forward with the project. By then “corporate” was dropped, so that the standard could apply to all organizations, not just companies. It was also agreed that ISO 26000 would not be a management system, and that it was not intended or appropriate for certification purposes.

ISO signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the International Labour Organization, clearly specifying that the new standard would be consistent with, and complementary to, the application of international labour standards worldwide. An MoU was also signed between ISO and the UN Global Compact.

The SR Working Group finally met in Brazil in 2005. Seven more plenaries would follow, together with countless conference calls and meetings around the globe. Finally, in May 2010 in Copenhagen, Denmark, the SR Working Group approved the final draft of ISO 26000. At this point, participants represented 99 countries, and 40 plus international or broadly-based regional organizations, totalling more than 450 individual experts. ISO 26000 broke ISO records for the number of experts working on a single document.

The approval and publication of ISO 26000, the ISO standard on social responsibility, is a historic moment. Although many around the world are talking about it, few know that the concept originated during the 2002 plenary and workshop of the ISO Committee on consumer policy (ISO/COPOLCO) in Trinidad & Tobago. It has been a long journey. Following the workshop, ISO/COPOLCO submitted a proposal to develop a standard on corporate social responsibility. It was agreed in 2004 that ISO would go forward with the project. By then “corporate” was dropped, so that the standard could apply to all organizations, not just companies. It was also agreed that ISO 26000 would not be a management system, and that it was not intended or appropriate for certification purposes.

ISO signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the International Labour Organization, clearly specifying that the new standard would be consistent with, and complementary to, the application of international labour standards worldwide. An MoU was also signed between ISO and the UN Global Compact.

The SR Working Group finally met in Brazil in 2005. Seven more plenaries would follow, together with countless conference calls and meetings around the globe. Finally, in May 2010 in Copenhagen, Denmark, the SR Working Group approved the final draft of ISO 26000. At this point, participants represented 99 countries, and 40 plus international or broadly-based regional organizations, totalling more than 450 individual experts. ISO 26000 broke ISO records for the number of experts working on a single document.

The SR Working Group had a unique composition. Experts came from six different stakeholder groups: consumers; government; industry; labour; non-governmental organizations (NGOs); and service, support, research, academics and others. In addition, specific provision was made to achieve a balance between developing and developed countries. In most cases, there was an effort to twin (join developing and developed countries) leadership and representation on task groups and committees. This put the consumer stakeholder group on an equal playing field with industry, government, and all other groups.

Because of the required stakeholder balance, consumer experts were able to assume leadership positions on committees and task force. A trust fund was established to help defray the costs of participation for some experts, including consumers, and the ISO Committee on developing country matters (ISO/DEVCO) helped to fund those from developing countries.

The consumer stakeholder group was one of the smallest; however, it was well organized. From the first meeting to the last, Consumers International (CI) provided leadership and guidance for consumer experts, many of whom had never participated in the ISO

The approval and publication of ISO 26000, the ISO standard on social responsibility, is a historic moment. Although many around the world are talking about it, few know that the concept originated during the 2002 plenary and workshop of the ISO Committee on consumer policy (ISO/COPOLCO) in Trinidad & Tobago.

It has been a long journey. Following the workshop, ISO/COPOLCO submitted a proposal to develop a standard on corporate social responsibility. It was agreed in 2004 that ISO would go forward with the project. By then “corporate” was dropped, so that the standard could apply to all organizations, not just companies. It was also agreed that ISO 26000 would not be a management system, and that it was not intended or appropriate for certification purposes.

ISO signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the International Labour Organization, clearly specifying that the new standard would be consistent with, and complementary to, the application of international labour standards worldwide. An MoU was also signed between ISO and the UN Global Compact.

The SR Working Group finally met in Brazil in 2005. Seven more plenaries would follow, together with countless conference calls and meetings around the globe. Finally, in May 2010 in Copenhagen, Denmark, the SR Working Group approved the final draft of ISO 26000. At this point, participants represented 99 countries, and 40 plus international or broadly-based regional organizations, totalling more than 450 individual experts. ISO 26000 broke ISO records for the number of experts working on a single document.

The approval and publication of ISO 26000, the ISO standard on social responsibility, is a historic moment. Although many around the world are talking about it, few know that the concept originated during the 2002 plenary and workshop of the ISO Committee on consumer policy (ISO/COPOLCO) in Trinidad & Tobago.

It has been a long journey. Following the workshop, ISO/COPOLCO submitted a proposal to develop a standard on corporate social responsibility. It was agreed in 2004 that ISO would go forward with the project. By then “corporate” was dropped, so that the standard could apply to all organizations, not just companies. It was also agreed that ISO 26000 would not be a management system, and that it was not intended or appropriate for certification purposes.

ISO signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the International Labour Organization, clearly specifying that the new standard would be consistent with, and complementary to, the application of international labour standards worldwide. An MoU was also signed between ISO and the UN Global Compact.

The SR Working Group finally met in Brazil in 2005. Seven more plenaries would follow, together with countless conference calls and meetings around the globe. Finally, in May 2010 in Copenhagen, Denmark, the SR Working Group approved the final draft of ISO 26000. At this point, participants represented 99 countries, and 40 plus international or broadly-based regional organizations, totalling more than 450 individual experts. ISO 26000 broke ISO records for the number of experts working on a single document.

The approval and publication of ISO 26000, the ISO standard on social responsibility, is a historic moment. Although many around the world are talking about it, few know that the concept originated during the 2002 plenary and workshop of the ISO Committee on consumer policy (ISO/COPOLCO) in Trinidad & Tobago.

It has been a long journey. Following the workshop, ISO/COPOLCO submitted a proposal to develop a standard on corporate social responsibility. It was agreed in 2004 that ISO would go forward with the project. By then “corporate” was dropped, so that the standard could apply to all organizations, not just companies. It was also agreed that ISO 26000 would not be a management system, and that it was not intended or appropriate for certification purposes.

ISO signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the International Labour Organization, clearly specifying that the new standard would be consistent with, and complementary to, the application of international labour standards worldwide. An MoU was also signed between ISO and the UN Global Compact.

The SR Working Group finally met in Brazil in 2005. Seven more plenaries would follow, together with countless conference calls and meetings around the globe. Finally, in May 2010 in Copenhagen, Denmark, the SR Working Group approved the final draft of ISO 26000. At this point, participants represented 99 countries, and 40 plus international or broadly-based regional organizations, totalling more than 450 individual experts. ISO 26000 broke ISO records for the number of experts working on a single document.
aware of the benefits of understanding and addressing broader consumer issues, other technical experts did not believe that consumers had the necessary knowledge and expertise to contribute effectively.

When ISO/TC 229, Nanotechnologies, was established, I was therefore advised to not introduce myself as a consumer representative, but rather as an independent consultant. At first, I was somewhat uncomfortable to join the Canadian Advisory Committee to ISO/TC 229, and later, ISO technical committee, ISO/TC 229. Most scientists and participants knew each other well, and worked together on an ongoing basis. Although it took some time before I was accepted as part of the team, my previous experience in government dealing with similar situations helped a great deal, and I was successful.

The second hurdle I encountered was bringing myself up to speed with relevant technical research to develop an accurate and relevant consumer perspective. Even though I have a solid background in chemical and material sciences, it was a challenge to update my knowledge and carry out the research required to develop policy positions that represented the broad consumer concerns and issues on nanotechnology.

Without such technical knowledge, it can be very difficult for a consumer representative to participate effectively, understand new technologies and represent the views of all consumers in that field. In order to develop solid policy positions, it was essential that I find the necessary resources to carry out relevant research. In the end, the Consumers Council of Canada, with the support of Industry Canada, helped me obtain the resources to carry out a background study that involved literature review, surveying customers across Canada, and comparing results with consumer surveys carried out elsewhere. Although successful, this was an ongoing challenge, as it was necessary to always keep up to date with new developments, and the evolving views of consumers on specific issues.

The third hurdle was obtaining resources to participate in committee work involving travel. Consumer representatives do not receive a salary or have their travel expenses covered by the organization for which they work. This often means going hat in hand to various potential funding sources to obtain resources. It also makes it more difficult to make commitments to participate in certain activities because you never know from one meeting to another whether the resources to participate will be available.

As a former regulator in the field of consumer product safety, I am very aware of the contribution that voluntary standards development process. CI helped consumer representatives to develop consensus positions, and to engage in healthy discussions when there was lack of agreement. CI even organized a press conference and rally, complete with T-shirts, when the SR group met in Thailand, to inform the media and the other stakeholder groups about the significance of this work for consumers.

Some of the more heated discussions concerned whether or not consumer issues should be included as a core subject of social responsibility. Armed with the UN Guidelines for Consumer Protection and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, consumer experts clearly articulated principles for socially responsible practices to meet the legitimate needs of consumers, and persuaded working group members that consumer rights are as important as human rights and labour rights. In the final document, “consumer issues” is one of the seven core subjects. The others include organizational governance, human rights, labour practices, the environment, fair operating practices, and community involvement and development.

When developing International Standards, ISO and other standards developers can learn from the SR process, which successfully maintained an equal balance of all stakeholders, including consumers, and assured that there were adequate resources for their participation.

Linda Golodner, Consumer expert, ISO Working Group on SR.

Nanotechnologies

Being a consumer representative in a committee that deals with very technical issues can be challenging. But the results of participation benefit both consumers and industry, by looking after the safety and uptake of products by the public.

The first challenge I encountered was gaining acceptance and recognition. Having previously participated in ISO technical committees as a senior government official, I felt a difference in treatment when acting as a consumer representative. Although some committee members were
Fire safety

Developing practical solutions that actually protect people from fire hazards requires thorough research and testing. ISO technical committee ISO/TC 92, Fire safety, knows this well. Its work can be long, very detailed, time consuming and requiring a high level of technical knowledge. The end result, however, are standards that address fire related safety, health and environmental issues to save lives, reduce fire losses, and bring in substantial cost savings through effective fire safety engineering.

The scope of ISO/TC 92 is of particular interest to consumers, as it covers:

- Fire hazards and fire risks to life, property and the environment
- The contribution of design, materials, building materials, products and components to fire safety
- Methods for mitigating fire hazards and risks by determining the performance and behaviour of materials, products and components, as well as of buildings and structures
- The assessment and characterization of building occupants and their behaviour during fire.

Although fire safety standards save lives, their implementation is not equal everywhere. In many developed countries, the application of such standards is comprehensive and well administered, greatly reducing fire related incidents. However, this may give people a false sense of security. New materials and products come into the market all the time. Consumers need to be continuously aware of fire safety at home, work and public places.

ISO/TC 92 standards are of special value to developing countries. Apart from supporting fire safety design and providing for advanced measurements, they are simple to use at a low cost. Their implementation is suitable for prescriptive regulations, and provide for an easy route to increased fire safety. Member countries of the ISO Committee on developing country matters (ISO/DEVCO) are encouraged to take part in the activities of ISO/TC 92.

According to the ISO consumer representation directory, five experts have identified themselves as representing consumer interests in ISO/TC 92. Although a fairly small part of the overall TC membership, their input is important for introducing the consumer perspective into fire standards. So how do consumer inputs get into ISO/TC 92 standards and onto the world stage? Often, consumers do not have the time or ability to continuously take part in the ongoing work of the committee. But they do have a number of avenues for submitting their input.

The first one is through the records of human experience and behaviour in fires. This is often passed in through review of events, case studies, news and research. Research institutes, academics, etc. in each country bring these forward to their national mirror committees, and then to the international work of ISO/TC 92. Regulators responsible for consumer safety also promote consumer concerns within national or international committees. Flexibility and transparency in communication, together with ease of access facilitate this activity.

Consumers are encouraged to contribute and participate in ISO/TC 92 through their national mirror committee.

Currently ISO/TC 92, subcommittee SC 1, Fire initiation and growth, has just published a standard of particular interest to consumers: ISO 12863:2010, Standard test method for measuring the ignition propensity of cigarettes, and is working on another, ISO 12949, Standard test method for measuring the heat release rate of low flammability mattresses and mattress sets. The efforts and contributions from consumer groups in ISO member countries have made the development of these documents possible.

As new technologies and products are developed exiting standards will be revised and new standards may be needed. Ensuring consumer input is an ongoing important task, we encourage consumer representatives to take part and contribute.

The standards developed by ISO/TC 92 have a long-standing record of reducing loss of life, injury and property for consumers – evidence that this process is working.
ISO’s social responsibility standard approved for publication

ISO 26000, which gives organizations guidance on implementing social responsibility (SR), has successfully passed the last development phase and been approved for publication as an ISO International Standard. ISO targets publication on 1 November 2010.

Paying tribute to the “exemplary efforts” of the experts who developed the standard, ISO Secretary-General Rob Steele commented: “ISO 26000 will help organizations for whom operating in a socially responsible manner is more than ‘just a nice idea’ to implement social responsibility in a pragmatic way that targets performance. It will be a powerful tool to help organizations move from good intentions about SR to good actions.”

ISO 26000 will provide harmonized, globally relevant guidance for private and public sector organizations of all types. The standard is the result of international consensus among expert representatives of the main stakeholder groups with an interest in the subject and is designed to encourage the implementation of best practice in social responsibility worldwide.

A vote by ISO’s worldwide membership of national standards institutes on the Final Draft International Standard (FDIS) version of ISO 26000 closed on 12 September. It was approved by 94% of the countries voting, and largely supported by the liaison organizations who also participated in its development, opening the way to publication as a fully fledged International Standard.

Development of ISO 26000 was launched in 2005. The project was carried out by the multi-stakeholder ISO Working Group on Social Responsibility (ISO/WG SR), which included experts and observers from 99 ISO member countries – of which 69 were developing nations – and 42 private and public sector organizations. Six main stakeholder groups were represented: industry; government; labour; consumers: nongovernmental organizations; service, support, research and others, as well as a geographical and gender-based balance of participants. In all, some 400 people took part which made the working group ISO’s biggest ever.

ISO Secretary-General in the USA and Canada

ISO Secretary-General Rob Steele visited ISO’s members in the USA and Canada in July 2010.

The trip to the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), ISO member for the country, included a town hall meeting with ANSI stakeholders to discuss standards issues and the ISO Strategic Plan 2011-2015; a session with Dr. Patrick Gallagher, Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST); a presentation to the ANSI Board; as well as several meetings with stakeholders with an interest in the financial services sector. While in the USA, Mr. Steele also took the opportunity to meet with Dr. Jeffery Jaffe, recently appointed Chief Executive of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C).

“The diversity of standards issues and views covered during the meetings was noteworthy,” said the ISO Secretary-General of his US visit. “What was clearly evident was that while ISO is touching on some subject areas that are controversial, it is clear that the opportunity for open discussion is appreciated.”

When visiting America’s neighbours to the North, the ISO Secretary-General met with members and stakeholders of the Standards Council of Canada (SCC), where he gave the ISO perspective of the current state of national and international standardization. This was followed by an informal session with a group of Associate Ministers in the Canadian Government where the significant benefit to the Canadian economy of participating in ISO standards was highlighted.

“I can say that, as a Canadian as well as a New Zealand citizen, getting involved in the development and implementation of ISO standards in those subjects that are of key importance to the economy, makes so much sense and has such a big payback that it should be a prerequisite to any country’s economic development plans. Canada has a great reputation for getting involved in ISO and I believe even greater involvement will benefit the Canadian economy and Canadians,” said Rob Steele.

While in Canada the ISO Secretary-General met with senior management of the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) to discuss some of their key areas of work, including holding the secretariats for ISO technical committees ISO/TC 176 (quality management) and ISO/TC 207 (environmental management).

Stats and Six Sigma


ISO/TC 69 is responsible for the development of generic International Standards on statistical methods. Its standards are used by other ISO technical committees and directly by industry or service companies.

ISO/TC 69 plays a powerful role in the success of any enterprises, including the application of statistical procedures for the Six Sigma methodologies for which subcommittee SC 7 is responsible.

In conjunction with the plenary, a seminar was held comparing Six Sigma practices between public and private sectors, and variations in its deployment around the world.

For example, while the USA has the most mature market, with a trend to use more and more Six Sigma methods for the management of business opportunity, Europe and Asia use Six Sigma projects for quality management, with a focus on continuous improvement, on the one hand, and a tendency to enlarge on general management on the other.

In this perspective, the future ISO standard on Six Sigma will offer a set of good practices that can be easily customized to different management styles.

Facebook, Twitter, Youtube – Three months later

ISO is expanding awareness of ISO standards in new and exciting ways through its involvement in social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube.
as Facebook, Twitter and Youtube. The aim is to create a community of stakeholders who can share views, while learning about the latest news, exclusive video interviews, photos, cartoons, articles and more.

An example is the coverage of the ISO 33rd General Assembly (GA), held in Oslo, Norway in September 2010. SN, host of the event and ISO member for Norway, Webcasted the Open Session on IT@Work, which has been viewed by some 300 users online (http://tinyurl.com/isoslo2010). Twitter was also used extensively.

Event videos were posted in Youtube, including a song written and performed by SN which attracted more than 600 hits (www.youtube.com/standardiseringen). Videos are also available at ISO’s channel www.youtube.com/planetiso.

Some three months after ISO social media was launched, we have already more than 600 followers in Twitter (www.twitter.com/isostandards) and more than 800 in Facebook (www.facebook.com/isostandards).

More exciting social media initiatives are on the way, including ISO 26000 exclusives, new videos and more. ISO has also invited members of its technical committees and ISO staff to send news for dissemination on its social media sites.

Smart IT

Some 300 participants attended an international seminar on smart IT and global standardization in Seoul, Republic of Korea, in August 2010, to discuss ways to enhance eco-friendly growth in the industry.

The event, hosted by the Korean Agency for Technology and Standards (KATS), including global information and communication technology (ICT) standardization leaders such as the Chair of Joint Technical Committee ISO/IEC JTC 1, Information Technology, Ms. Karen Higginbottom. Discussions focused on cloud computing technologies and green growth strategies in the information technology sectors.

Ms. Higginbottom said: “ISO and IEC already had work areas initiated to promote international interoperability and connectivity. The mission of ISO/IEC JTC 1 is to develop, maintain, promote, and facilitate IT standards required by global markets, meeting business and user requirements.”

Impacts of standardization, as well as how to collaborate with other standards developing organizations, such as ITU-T (International Telecommunication Union’s standardization sector) on green ICT, cloud computing were also discussed.

The ISO/IEC JTC 1 and ITU have held joint regular meetings since 2001 to discuss outstanding issues on ICT standard. The event in the Republic of Korea is the first hosted by the country.

Dairy cooperation leaps to new level

ISO and the International Dairy Federation (IDF) have reinforced their collaboration with a new Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in July 2010 by ISO Secretary-General Rob Steele and IDF Director General Christian Robert.

The long-standing cooperation between both organizations has resulted in the joint development of over 150 International Standards on analysis and sampling of dairy products within ISO technical committee ISO/TC 34, Food products, subcommittee SC 5, Milk and milk products.

The MoU between ISO and IDF emphasizes the need to avoid duplication of efforts and fully harmonize standards for milk and milk products. According to the agreement, only one version of each standard is published bearing the logo of both organizations as well as their respective numbers. The double logo standards have a strong market penetration because they represent IDF’s expertise in the dairy field and ISO’s international recognition as a developer of global standards.

The new MoU cancels and replaces the previous one signed in 2004, reinforcing even further the collaboration of these organizations.
ISO is launching a survey of existing and potential users of ISO 9001:2008, the global benchmark for quality management, to gather feedback to help decide whether the standard needs further improvement and, if so, what needs modifying.

ISO’s rules require all its standards to be reviewed at least every five years to establish whether they should be confirmed, revised or withdrawn.

The survey can be accessed online at: www.iso.org/.tc176/sc2/ISO9000UserSurvey

Users experiencing any problems in accessing the survey online should contact TFUS.Survey@googlemail.com.

Users who have offline or general enquiries should contact: Charles.Corrie@bsigroup.com.

ISO is seeking to ensure that users of ISO 9001 continue to be satisfied.

ISO 9001 is now firmly established as the globally implemented standard for providing assurance about the ability to satisfy quality requirements and to enhance customer satisfaction in supplier-customer relationships. Up to the end of December 2008, at least 982,832 ISO 9001 (2000 and 2008) certificates had been issued in 176 countries and economies.

The survey is being carried out by subcommittee SC 2, Quality management systems, of ISO technical committee ISO/TC 176, Quality management and quality assurance. SC 2 is responsible for ISO 9001:2008, Quality management systems – Requirements.

The output goals of the survey are:
- Indicator of strengths/weaknesses of current ISO 9001:2008 content
- Indicator of gaps in current content
- Compatibility with other management system standards
- Views on the current structure of ISO 9001:2008
- Future market needs not currently addressed
- Feedback on conformity assessment for third-party certified users.

The survey is being made available in 11 languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish.

A large part of the work will be done using the online tool SurveyMonkey. The survey will be open online from October 2010 until January 2011, and the report on the results is planned for end of March 2011.

As developer of the standard, ISO is seeking to ensure through the survey that the users of ISO 9001 continue to be satisfied.

The ISO experts responsible for maintaining the relevance of ISO 9001 aim to gather feedback from both current and potential users of the standard.

Current users include:
- Third-party certified organizations
- Self-declaring organizations
- Organizations using ISO 9001 as a minimum quality standard “frame” for their quality management systems (QMS)
- Certification bodies
- Consultants
- National standard bodies
- Accreditation bodies
- Purchasers/specifiers/requirers of ISO 9001 in the supply base.

Potential users include:
- Those organizations who
  - Are aware of ISO 9001, but do not use it currently
  - Have actively chosen not to use ISO 9001
  - No longer use ISO 9001
  - Use other quality models as a basis for QMS
- Countries who have not adopted ISO standards
- Students.

ISO 9001:2008 is the fourth edition of the standard that was first published in 1987. The 2000 revision was the biggest, refocusing the standard on customer satisfaction and continual improvement. The latest revision, in 2008, introduced no new requirements and was mainly focused in improving the wording of the standard and on increasing its compatibility with the ISO 14001 for environmental management.

ISO 9001 helps thousands of organizations around the world to ensure their customers are satisfied.

Roger Frost is Head of Communication Services, ISO Central Secretariat.
ISO/TC 207 in Mexico
Focus on developing countries

by Kevin Boehmer

The 17th plenary meeting of ISO technical committee ISO/TC 207, Environmental management, held in León, Mexico, in July 2010, was hosted by the Instituto Mexicano de Normalizacion y Certificacion A.C, the Mexican Institute for Standardization and Certification, and opened by Ms. Sandra Denisse Herrera Flores, Deputy Minister of Environmental Regulation for Mexico, who urged delegates to continue their work on climate change issues, environmental management and sustainable development.

In reply, Dr. Robert Page, Chair of ISO/TC 207, stressed the importance of multilateral environmental efforts and the special circumstances of developing countries in an increasingly interdependent world, while congratulating Mexico on its outstanding leadership on international environmental issues such as climate change.

Some 275 representatives from 45 ISO member bodies and 11 liaison organizations attended, and listened to opening remarks by Mr. Gerardo Mosqueda Martínez, Secretary, Mr. Sergio Enrique Rodríguez Herrera, Secretary of Tourism Development, and Mr. Enrique Kato Miranda, Director of the Ecology Institute, of the State of Guanajuato, Mr. Francisco Ricardo Sheffield Padilla, Major of the City of León, and Mrs. Mercedes Inueste Alejandre, Director General, and Mr. Francisco Ramos Gómez, Director, of the Mexican Institute for Standardization and Certification.

ISO/TC 207 approved 16 resolutions including disbandment of the Chair’s Advisory Group’s Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises and Business Planning Task Forces, as their roles have been taken up by new Markets, Stakeholder and Portfolio Task Forces, and also of WG 7, following completion of the revised ISO Guide 64, Guide for addressing environmental issues in product standards.

The ISO Committee on developing country matters (ISO/DEVCO), national standards bodies and other funding agencies, especially the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), were thanked for supporting the participation of several developing country delegates. Thanks also went to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) for their important contributions during the meeting.

Following is a summary of the key achievements of the TC subcommittee (SC), working group (WG) and task group (TG) meetings:

Developing Countries Contact Group (DCCG)

The DCCG received presentations on deforestation, desertification/land degradation, carbon footprint, environmental challenges in East Africa, fair trade management and sustainability issues, and urged its members to seek ways to build capacity and strengthen the participation of members from developing countries in standards writing. It also agreed, through the assistance of ISO/TC 207 leadership and ISO/DEVCO, to explore opportunities to build capacity in carbon footprint, greenhouse gas quantification, validation and verification, lifecycle assessment and management system auditing.

Social Responsibility (SR) Task Force

The SR Task Force reviewed the final draft of ISO 26000, Guidance on social responsibility, due for publication on 1 November 2010, and will continue to liaise with the ISO/TMB WG SR Post Publication Organization (POP), who will monitor performance of the new International Standard.
Management Solutions

Ad hoc Group on Desertification

The group resolved to develop a new work item, **Good practice guidelines on combating land degradation and desertification**, applicable to agriculture and forestry, both in arid/semi-arid and non-arid areas, consistent with, and in support of, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification.

Spanish Translation Task Force (STTF)

The STTF met to finalize the Spanish translation of environmental standards ISO/FDIS 14005 (environmental management system implementation), ISO/DIS 14006 (ecodesign), ISO 14021 (environmental labelling), ISO 14031 (environmental performance evaluation), ISO/DIS 14051 (material flow cost accounting), and ISO/DIS 14066 (greenhouse gas validation and verification), and reported that all ISO/TC 207 standards are now available in Spanish.

Terminology Co-ordination Group (TCG)

Following publication of the third edition of ISO 14050, **Environmental management – Vocabulary**, the TCG is working with ISO/TC 207 active groups to improve the terminology of each document, with a special focus on carbon footprint terminology.

Member bodies were reminded that the multilingual ISO/TC 207 TermBank continues to be updated, maintained and available in the TCG folder on the ISO/TC server.

SCs and WGs

**SC 1, Environmental management systems**

- Established two ad hoc groups to prepare revisions of ISO Guide 72, **Guidelines for the justification and development of management system standards**, and ISO 14004:2004, **Environmental management systems – General guidelines on principles, systems and supporting techniques**, to be submitted for review at the next plenary meeting in 2011.

- Will develop a proposal for integrating the existing ISO 14001 standard into the Joint Technical Group on Management System Standards (JTCG MSS) high level structure, identical text and definitions.

**SC 2, Environmental auditing and related investigations**

- Is circulating ISO/DIS 19011, **Guidelines for auditing management systems**, with voting deadline 17 November, and has initiated an internal ballot to approve Annex A.3 on discipline, specific knowledge and skills for environmental management system auditors.

- ISO/IEC DIS 17021-2, **Conformity assessment – requirements for bodies**
Kevin Boehmer is Secretary of ISO/TC 207, Environmental management. He works for the Canadian Standards Association (CSA), has a Masters degree in Environmental Planning and 20 years of experience in the environmental sector.

About the author
As the third edition of the ISO technical specification ISO/TS 29001 for the international oil and gas industries is rolled out, feedback indicates its increasing acceptance as the baseline requirements document for quality management in these sectors.

ISO/TS 29001:2010 defines quality management system (QMS) requirements for product and service supply organizations for the petroleum, petrochemical and natural gas industries.

The third edition has been updated to include the text of ISO 9001:2008, the generic QMS standard, unaltered and in its entirety. Petroleum, petrochemical, and natural gas industry sector-specific supplemental requirements are given outside the boxes.

ISO/TS 29001:2010 is the result of cooperation between the American Petroleum Institute (API) and ISO technical committee ISO/TC 67, Materials, equipment and offshore structures for petroleum, petrochemical and natural gas industries.

They developed ISO/TS 29001 – which is also published as API Q1 – to provide a single QMS document to meet the needs of the oil and gas industries worldwide, specifically the major petroleum, petrochemical and natural gas organizations, as well as government and regulatory agencies. It provides a basis for qualification of the QMS of equipment manufacturers and service suppliers. Potential end users include the following:

- Organizations involved in exploration, production, pipelines and transportation, and refining of petroleum and natural gas products
- Organizations that provide technical, operational and support services to the various industry sectors identified above.

Ed Durante, project leader of the ISO/TC 67 working group that developed ISO/TS 29001:2010, reports the following user feedback:

“ISO/TS 29001 has now been accepted as the baseline requirement for quality management systems in the exploration and production sector of the petroleum and natural gas industry. The document is gaining acceptance in the refining sector and is being seriously considered in the pipeline sector.

“The consensus of organizations in these sectors is that product and service providers must have a functioning QMS complying with ISO/TS 29001 in order to even be considered as a viable source of supply in the petroleum and natural gas industry. ISO/TS 29001 – which is also published as API Q1 – has become the accepted industry standard.

ISO/TS 29001:2010, Petroleum, petrochemical and natural gas industries – Sector-specific quality management systems – Requirements for product and service supply organizations, is available from ISO national member institutes (listed with contact details on the ISO Website www.iso.org). It may also be obtained directly from the ISO Central Secretariat, through the online ISO Store www.iso.org or by contacting the Marketing, Communication and Information department (sales@iso.org).

Roger Frost is Head of Communication Services, ISO Central Secretariat.
Wouldn’t it be great to feel strong, calm, ready for anything?

ISO has standards that can help.

We’ve all met managers who like to pass themselves off as “real tigers”. But bluster can often be a mask for a lack of confidence. Real confidence comes from knowing you have done all in your power to prepare your organization for anything that an uncertain world can throw at it. And the power of confidence can be developed by implementing the ISO 31000 series for risk management. These standards enable organizations of all types and sizes, in both public and private sectors, to manage risk effectively. They can make all the difference between paper tigers and the real thing.

ISO 31000:2009, Risk management – Principles and guidelines
ISO/IEC 31010, Risk management – Risk assessment techniques

Available from ISO national member institutes (listed with contact details on the ISO Website at www.iso.org) and from the ISO Central Secretariat Webstore at www.iso.org/isostore or e-mail to sales@iso.org.

International Organization for Standardization – www.iso.org
Central Secretariat, 1, ch. de la Voie-Creuse
Case postale 56
CH-1211 Genève 20

© ISO Focus+, www.iso.org/isofocus+
The gaming industry in Asia generally is growing rapidly, and more manufacturers are poised to bring in gaming machines to serve this attractive market. Because integrity and fairness is of utmost importance in the industry, gaming test laboratories have an important role in ensuring safety, quality and consistency through rigorous testing of gaming machines.

To ensure that high quality is met in this testing, laboratories seek to comply with the ISO/IEC 17025:2005, General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories.

ISO/IEC 17025 is applicable to all organizations performing tests and calibrations. It is also for use by laboratories in developing their management system for quality, administrative and technical operations. Laboratory customers, regulatory authorities and accreditation bodies use it for confirming or recognizing the competence of laboratories.

Compliance to ISO/IEC 17025 will ensure that gaming test laboratories have the necessary competence, testing facilities and processes to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the gaming machines. This also gives casino patrons added assurance in the quality and integrity of the gaming industry in Singapore.

In Singapore’s two new integrated resorts – Marina Bay Sands and Resorts World Sentosa – casino patrons have the assurance of fair play as all electronic gaming machines have been tested and verified by laboratories accredited to ISO/IEC 17025.

First laboratory

BMM Compliance is the first gaming test laboratory in Singapore to be accredited by the Singapore Accreditation Board.
ISO/IEC 17025 will ensure the accuracy and reliability of gaming machines.

Test laboratories have an important role in ensuring safety, quality and consistency through rigorous testing of gaming machines. (Photo : BMM Compliance)

Easily accessible

Mr. David Kinsman, Chief Executive, Weike Gaming Technology said, “The BMM laboratory provides an easily accessible facility for Weike to test its products for various regulated markets around the world. Having a laboratory at our doorstep makes the entire process simpler and faster. We can also work closely with them to improve on our products quickly.”

With some 60 casinos and 340 clubs in Asia, the gaming industry is poised for further growth. Estimated gaming machine sales for the region average between USD 50 million and USD 75 million annually.

Mr. Kinsman added, “The presence of gaming test laboratories in Singapore will also attract other gaming machine manufacturers to set up operations here.”

Mr. Moosad Sreedharan, Senior Vice President, Technical Compliance, BMM Compliance said, “We are the first to achieve ISO/IEC 17025 accreditation for testing of the gaming equipment in Singapore and we are thrilled about that.

“Accreditation to this International Standard allows us to conduct tests and issue compliance certification reports on gaming machines, jackpots and casino central monitoring systems from our Singapore laboratory. This enables the Asian manufacturers to get their products certified in the same region for various international gaming jurisdictions and thus reduces the time and cost involved in getting their products approved”, explains Mr. Sreedharan.

Testing and certification helps elevate the standards of manufacturing. Having a gaming test laboratory in Singapore provides convenience and ease for gaming manufacturers to have their machines tested.

Council (SAC) under SAC’s Accreditation Scheme for Gaming laboratories, which is based on ISO/IEC 17025.

Mr. Png Cheong Boon, Chief Executive of SPRING Singapore, ISO member for the country, said, “The Singapore Accreditation Council expanded its accreditation scheme, which is based on ISO/IEC 17025, to cover gaming test laboratories in support of the set up of the two integrated resorts in Singapore. This ensures that the gaming machines in the casinos at both integrated resorts meet the required technical standards and operate in a fair, secure, reliable and consistent manner.”

Analysts say the two casinos in Singapore – Marina Bay Sands and Resorts World Sentosa – could bring in an estimated USD 2.5 billion in gross gaming revenue by 2011.

Mr. Moosad Sreedharan, Senior Vice President, Technical Compliance, BMM Compliance said, “We are the first to achieve ISO/IEC 17025 accreditation for testing of the gaming equipment in Singapore and we are thrilled about that.

“Accreditation to this International Standard allows us to conduct tests and issue compliance certification reports on gaming machines, jackpots and casino central monitoring systems from our Singapore laboratory. This enables the Asian manufacturers to get their products certified in the same region for various international gaming jurisdictions and thus reduces the time and cost involved in getting their products approved”, explains Mr. Sreedharan.

Testing and certification helps elevate the standards of manufacturing. Having a gaming test laboratory in Singapore provides convenience and ease for gaming manufacturers to have their machines tested.

ISO/IEC 17025 will ensure the accuracy and reliability of gaming machines.

Estimated gaming machine sales for the Asian region average between USD 50 million and USD 75 million annually. (Photo : Weike)

About the author

Geraldine Tan is on secondment to the Communication Services of ISO Central Secretariat from ISO’s member for Singapore, SPRING.
WSC Academic Week

World’s best minds discuss education in standardization

by Daniele Gerundino

More than 100 participants from 30 countries attended the first Academic Week organized by the World Standards Cooperation (WSC) in July 2010, in Geneva, Switzerland. Representatives of national standards bodies (NSBs), international organizations and industry met with university professors and other academics to discuss various aspects of the multi-faced relationship between standardization and academia.

The programme was designed to cover a plurality of topics concerning the relationship between standardization and academia. The first two days of the week were dedicated to a workshop hosted by the International Cooperation on Education about Standardization (ICES)\(^1\). The aim was to leverage already existing efforts by interested groups.

A summary of the topics covered during the various days is given below.

The various dimensions of education about standardization

Presentations and discussions focused on:

- Analysing the different needs to be met by education about standardization
- Providing examples of academic programmes and stimulating discussion between users and providers of education services
- Sharing experiences and ideas concerning educational tools, such as case studies, simulations and games, aiming at raising awareness and enriching the education experience.
- Standards and academia: recognizing academic excellence

ISO, IEC and ITU presented the most important initiatives pursued by each organization to stimulate cooperation with educational institutes and to recognize academic excellence (ISO Award, ITU Kaleidoscope, IEC Lecture series and school competition).

The ISO Secretary-General announced a new initiative – the standards simulation game competition – which will be developed as a joint WSC project.

The competition targets academic institutions and game developers interested in developing business games. As explained by the ISO Secretary-General, the development of high-quality, attractive business games can contribute to raising awareness and understanding of international standardization by students in higher education, helping to convey the message that standards:

- Matter to business
- Have a substantial impact on strategic issues facing organizations
- Are an indispensable tool supporting economic development and trade.

Participants also shared information about initiatives undertaken in the various countries (including e.g. dialogue with governments or cooperation between NSBs, SDOs and universities) to develop and promote education about standardization.

Cooperation with institutions of the Lake Geneva region and academic networks

The University of Geneva (represented by the Rector and the Dean of the faculty of Economic and Social sciences), the Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL) and the University of Lausanne, presented views, and their institutes’ academic activities that cover standardization.

Prof. Morard, Dean of the faculty of Economic and Social sciences of the University of Geneva, announced the creation of a new Masters programme in standardization, social regulation and sustainable development, developed in partnership with ISO and SNV (Schweizerische Normen-Vereinigung, the Swiss national standards body).

\(^1\) The International Cooperation on Education about Standardization (ICES) is an informal network of individuals and organizations interested in education about standardization which, since 2006, organizes an annual workshop on the theme.
Economic and social benefits of standards

The last day was dedicated to presenting and discussing research, studies, methodologies and projects covering the theme, with particular attention to the cooperation between international standardization organizations and national standards bodies with academic institutions (several speakers of this session contributed to the June 2010 issue of ISO Focus+ issue).

All the presentations and recordings of the various sessions, along with a summary of the conference outcome, are available on the conference Website: www.iso.org/sites/WSCAW2010/index.html.

Feedback and future steps

Feedback from participants indicated a high level of satisfaction with the WSC initiative, which was considered both timely and appropriate. The quality and comprehensiveness of the programme was appreciated, along with the opportunity of sharing experiences with colleagues from national standards bodies and academia.

Participants recognized that knowledge of standardization and its benefits for business, government and society is increasingly considered an essential toolbox for future professionals and managers in both public and private sectors.

As employers of graduate students increasingly require professional skills in standardization, there is a growing need to strengthen education programmes to address topics such as the economic benefits of standards, “soft skills” required to participate effectively in standards development, and the distinction and relation between voluntary standards and public policy (including technical regulations). The relations between standards and intellectual property, and standards and innovation were also indicated as priority fields to be addressed, although it was felt that existing education programmes cover these needs, at least up to a degree.

Participants agreed that a coordinated effort is needed to build an international inventory, and eventually a repository, of the variety of education materials developed or under development by academic institutions in many countries. The idea behind this is to promote the exchange of information with a view to enabling all interested parties to take advantage of what is already available and to better orient future efforts.

Case studies and simulations were also considered an essential instrument to complement lectures and provide concrete and effective knowledge on a variety of high priority subject matters.

Though several organizations are currently making efforts to develop case studies – among them ICES which organizes a case studies competition – participants suggested that mechanisms of coordination should be established to ensure the best use of resources.

There was all around agreement that participation of standards professionals in the provision of lectures is very valuable. Their participation, for example, should be considered more often in the design and organization of university courses. What’s more, cooperation between universities and standards professionals (from NSBs, SDOs, companies and other types of organizations – e.g. government, NGOs, etc.) should be effectively promoted.

Food for thought

The first WSC Academic Week has shown that significant progress has been made in the recent past in the development and promotion of education about standardization. However, much more needs to be done to strengthen cooperation on education matters between WSC partners and national standards bodies on the one hand, and with educational institutions, including universities, on the other.

Research and studies on the economic benefits of standards are being pursued by universities, standards bodies and private companies. The consolidation of knowledge from these studies will provide stakeholders with more objective evaluations of the impact of standards, and raise awareness amongst policy makers and business leaders as to the importance of standardization.

ISO Secretary-General Rob Steele commented: “It was clear that the WSC Academic Week created greater awareness of the need for standardization education. It also served to enhance links between the standards and academic community, which are beneficial to both parties and to other stakeholders, as a way to assist in tackling the issues of sustainability in an economic, environmental and societal context. This was good, but it was also clear that there is a need to build on the outcomes agreed at the Academic Week to achieve measurable improvement!”

Dr. Daniele Gerundino is Strategic Advisor to the ISO Secretary-General.
Heating up
Testing resistance to jet fires

by Paul Mather

It is among the most significant fire test standards released in decades, and perhaps the most important since the introduction of the standard furnace fire test. ISO 22899-1:2007, Determination of the resistance to jet fires of passive fire protection materials – Part 1: General requirements, is a radical departure from normal furnace testing. For example, the introduction of a rapid-rise time and temperature regime that represents the thermal shock of hydrocarbon fires. Nonetheless, the test arrangements are essentially the same today as they were at the introduction of the standard.

Rapid rise time and temperature

More than 100 years have passed since the introduction of the standard time/temperature test regime. There have been numerous modifications to the standard’s criteria over the years, and in the time/temperature profile itself. For example, the introduction of a rapid-rise time and temperature regime that represents the thermal shock of hydrocarbon fires. Nonetheless, the test arrangements are essentially the same today as they were at the introduction of the standard.

The standard replicates the heat flux and erosive forces.

The fire characteristics are idealized conditions that allow comparative testing. This means that the fire tests cannot represent all of the many conditions experienced in real fires. This topic has been revisited by fire engineers and academics following the 2001 World Trade Center fires. This re-examination will continue as part of the work group proceedings for ISO 834, published in several parts under the general title, Fire-resistance tests – Elements of building construction. Even as these discussions proceed, ISO 22899-1 (resistance to jet fires of passive fire protection materials) is the only standard able to represent real world fire conditions.

This may appear to be a contradiction to current practices reflected in many national regulations, where the owner or the appointed engineers are required to identify potential fire hazards as part of the safety case analysis. For jet fires, modelling and real-time fire testing at various scales has identified the characteristics of the release and ignition of hydrocarbon gases stored at high pressure. This enables the most representative and optimized energy release in terms of heat fluxes and the highly erosive velocities of jet fires.

Validation work enables the designer to concentrate on the protection criteria, not the jet itself, and on the item or items to be protected from the fire. Examples of this are the limiting substrate temperature and the actual duration of potential fires.
into the jet flame and the test laboratory. The mass flow rate per second is specified within the standard and remains consistent regardless of the specimen type or materials used.

Consequently, the heat flux values throughout any given fire test, and for any given duration, are always consistent. The tests are not affected by refractory or intumescent materials. In other words, the fire load and erosive velocities are always the same, unlike most other forms of testing.

Validation

The standard is the definitive reference document for actual energy released in hydrocarbon jet fires. There has been extensive work carried out over 20 years to characterize the properties of hydrocarbon gases when released under pressure and ignited. Large, medium and small-scale testing has been conducted under the auspices of a range of studies and organizations. What is consistent is the range of the heat release and the velocities experienced.

These studies basically began with optimizing or simulating the gas release of the risers experienced during the Piper Alpha disaster in 1988 (a North Sea offshore installation that was under the jurisdiction of the United Kingdom). Using this data, the standard replicates the heat flux and erosive forces. Consequently, any fire protection system or material tested to the standard will have been shown to be capable of withstanding real-time hydrocarbon jet fires that are likely to be experienced in an actual offshore or refinery situation.

In action

The initial intent of the standard was to provide a regime that would qualify fire protection systems or materials and their constituent construction for use on offshore installations and in petrochemical refineries. This meets the objective of developing a test that is representative of fires experienced in the real world environment of exploration, extraction, processing and transportation of hydrocarbons. It also meets an important recommendation of Lord Cullens’ report 1).

Jet fire test arrangement

The test apparatus consists of a storage vessel for the test fuel liquid propane gas (LPG), and a flexible pipe from the storage tank to a release nozzle.

The specimen arrangement may consist of:

- A panel that is representative of walls and floors
- A structural “I” or “H” section (the web and flange)
- A pipe or tubular
- A penetration system for cables or tubes.

The standard describes specific test setups. Figure 3 shows a test specimen for a structural member test (web and backplate) before exposure and the placement of the fuel nozzle. Figure 4 shows a general view of structural steelwork web-only test specimen.

The test specimens themselves are provided with extensive thermocouple placement. It should be noted that there are no thermocouples required to monitor the energy exposure onto the test specimen or within the impingement of the jet because there is no furnace; tests are carried out either in the open or in large test halls (see Figures 1 and 2) where the walls and ceilings of the hall may be cooled by deluge systems that run throughout the test.

Unlike standard furnace testing the fuel supply is specified, and is therefore consistent and representative of large-scale pressurized hydrocarbon gas fires. Figure 5 demonstrates the ferocity of the jet fire testing as debris from the test specimen is thrown into the jet flame and the test laboratory.

Figure 2: Fully developed indoor jet fire test after ignition.

Figure 3: Fuel nozzle and structural steelwork test specimen.

Figure 4: General view of structural steelweb test specimen.

ISO Focus+ October 2010 © ISO Focus+, www.iso.org/isofocus+ 51

However, the world moves on, and there have been further disasters including LPG explosions, refinery fires, and of course the World Trade Center and, more recently, the Deepwater Horizon installation in the Gulf of Mexico. At the outset the prime requisite was to produce a standard that was principally for use in the oil and gas industry. The World Trade Center has changed that restriction.

In the subsequent investigation the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) report (National Institute of Standards and Technology – NCSTAR1, Collapse of the World Trade Center Towers, 2005) made 30 recommendations. Numbers two and three related to fire resistance, calling for “enhanced fire resistance of structures” and “new methods for fire resistance design of structure”. Of particular importance was the need “to eliminate technical and standard barriers to the introduction of new materials and technologies” and to “improve fire resistance testing methods”.

The report goes on to say that there is a need to develop and test more robust fire protection materials. The jet fire standard goes a long way to comply with the report’s recommendations. Because of the fuel flow rates in the standard, the resulting jet fire clearly more closely resembles real-time fires. In modern (especially iconic) buildings there may well be a potential for exposure to a jet type fire either within the building itself or externally. The erosive forces of the jet ensure that any fire protection material is robust enough to withstand a blast or explosion either deliberately initiated or accidentally produced.

Future development

Publication is imminent for Part 2 of ISO 22899, Classification and implementation methods, which covers in some detail the applicability and validation of the jet fire standard. There will be additional information addressing the testing of pipe penetration seals. Finally, Part 2 will give definitive methodology for the classification of passive fire protection materials.

ISO 22899-1 has already become the de facto standard of many of the world’s oil and gas companies, having been incorporated into their corporate specifications. It is hoped that this adoption will extend to inclusion in national rules and regulations around the world. This is a major standard that will go a long way to ensuring that the determination of the resistance to jet fires of passive fire protection materials are tested and selected correctly.

About the author

Paul Mather has recently set up a fire and insulation engineering consultancy, Paul Mather Consultancy LLP (Limited Liability Partnership). He has also been appointed the Chief Technology Officer of a Singapore based engineering company Thermal Limitec Pte Ltd. Activities of both companies includes specialization in the engineering and technology development of all aspects of fire protection and insulation. Mr. Mather is actively involved with the development of fire testing standards at British Standards, Underwriters Laboratories Inc., and ISO as the Convenor of the jet fire working group.
As human knowledge grows, we are witnessing a rapid and diverse development of new technologies. But for such innovations to take hold, International Standards are necessary.

Scientists and researchers often have diverse backgrounds and are interested in different applications. Without standards, each would have to develop new understandings and assumptions for emerging concepts. The result would be poor communication, lack of interoperability among systems, and duplication of efforts. International standardization builds and disseminates consensus amongst the foremost experts and stakeholders in the field.

ISO standards for classification, definitions and testing are powerful tools for communicating new knowledge amongst scientists, industry, consumers, governments and regulatory bodies in both developed and developing countries alike. In this way, they help open up markets for innovative technologies. They also protect consumers by ensuring safety, quality and environmental principles.

The November issue of ISO Focus+ highlights some of the most exciting new areas where ISO is developing standards. A diverse portfolio of articles covers topics such as smart charging of electric vehicles, or friction techniques that weld without melting to preserve the original metal characteristics (useful in, for example, space shuttles or automobile parts).

The issue looks at innovative developments on space debris and disposal of crippled satellites. And at state-of-the-art laser sintering technology. Standards for oil collection and oil skimmers are particularly timely given the most recent oil spills. Articles also look at how International Standards are opening up markets for hydrogen energy, and at the latest developments on nanotechnologies, IT and biometrics.

An exclusive interview with Prof. Øystein Fischer, recipient of the Tage Erlander professorship for his groundbreaking work in superconductivity reveals some of the most recent discoveries in the area, and explains the importance of standards, “The adoption of International Standards is key in large collaborative projects, where the exchange and integration of information from different laboratories is indispensable.”

The November issue of ISO Focus+ will open up a world of new technologies and innovative developments.
What begins as a twitter...

...can change the world.

Because you care about our world, read ISO Focus+ magazine.

Many an ISO International Standard begins life as a shared idea. Something needs to be done to ensure values such as health, safety, security, quality, ecology, efficiency and effectiveness. With the support of the national standards institutes that make up ISO and the international input of experts from business, government and society, that something emerges as state-of-the-art ISO International Standards.

Practical tools for solving problems and achieving objectives in economic and social life. And for helping to tackle global challenges such as sustainable development, climate change, energy management, food safety and water supply. Because you care, follow ISO’s global solutions in ISO Focus+ magazine.