Consultation for the
ISO Strategic Plan 2011-2015

International Standards:
Solutions to address global challenges

- Global challenges for a changing world

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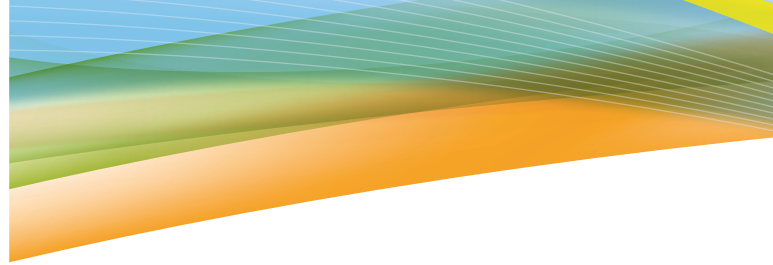
ISO in brief

ISO is the International Organization for Standardization. It has a membership of 160 national standards institutes from countries large and small, industrialized, developing and in transition, in all regions of the world. ISO's portfolio of more than 17 800 standards provides practical tools for all three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, environmental and societal.

ISO standards make a positive contribution to the world we live in. They ensure vital features such as quality, ecology, safety, economy, reliability, compatibility, interoperability, efficiency and effectiveness. They facilitate trade, spread knowledge, and share technological advances and good management practices.

ISO develops only those standards that are required by the market. This work is carried out by experts from the industrial, technical and business sectors which have asked for the standards, and which subsequently put them to use. These experts may be joined by others with relevant knowledge, such as representatives of government agencies, testing laboratories, consumer associations and academia, and by nongovernmental organizations that have a specific interest in the issues addressed in the standards.

Published under the designation of International Standards, ISO standards represent an international consensus on the state of the art in the technology or good practice concerned.

Global challenges for a changing world

Since the current *ISO Strategic Plan 2005-2010* was conceived, the world has entered into a new era characterized by an increasing interdependence of nations, the spectre of recession following a period of growth and new challenges concerning the access to, and use of, natural resources. This calls for even more global action and responses on the three fronts of sustainable development : economic growth, environmental integrity and societal equity.

International Standards of the type developed by ISO, based on a double level of consensus – amongst stakeholders and across countries – are needed to respond to the following challenges :

– the facilitation of global trade in products and services in a way that does not compromise the level of safety and quality of life to which the citizens of the global village aspire, in the context of an overall increasing but also, in some regions, ageing world population ;

– the financial crisis which started in 2008, and which affects financial markets and impacts on economies at large, has shown the need to restore confidence, to promote good business and governance practice and better anticipate and manage risk and business continuity ;

– the interrelated challenges of responding to climate change, ensuring a sustainable energy future, optimizing the use of, and access to, water and providing the world's growing population with adequate food supplies in a safe and sustainable way ;

– the pervasiveness and rapid growth of information and communication technologies, which revolutionize daily life as well as production processes and business practice ;

– the UN Millennium Goals of eradicating poverty and hunger and granting access to education and better health conditions to all the people of the world.

The "geopolitics" of the planet has also evolved in recent years, with major economies emerging from the developing world, impacting global trade and the use of natural resources, while aspiring to take more responsibility for global issues. At the same time, the gap with least developed economies is growing. A response that involves determination and resources is needed to raise their capacity to access world markets and achieve social and environmental progress.

Disseminating new technologies and promoting best business and conformity assessment practices at the world level are key to addressing these challenges: we believe that International Standards of the type produced by ISO are an essential component to foster the world market and society infrastructure.

ISO's history and particularly its achievements under the current Strategic Plan, give ISO a solid foundation to address these global challenges. However, in order to continue its successful development, ISO needs to innovate and to identify the best ways to add value in the evolving world framework.

A unique opportunity to contribute to shaping ISO's future

Capitalizing on the process used to develop the current *ISO Strategic Plan 2005-2010*, and on its successful implementation, the preparation of the next Strategic Plan will be based on a broad consultation of the ISO members and their stakeholders, as well as of key international and regional partners. The "ISO system", constituted by its members, Central Secretariat, experts and network of partnerships and liaisons, is increasingly called upon as a leading multi-stakeholder and multi-sector platform for the production of consensus-based International Standards. This consultation is therefore a unique opportunity to contribute to shaping ISO's future.

A key step in ISO's strategic and financial planning

The strategic and financial planning for ISO as an organization relies on a five-year strategic plan and associated medium-term financial perspectives, from which yearly implementations and business plans are derived, monitored through Key Performance Indicators. The process for the *ISO Strategic Plan 2011-2015* was launched by the ISO General Assembly in October 2008 in Dubai. It calls for a broad consultation to be conducted from March to September 2009, the subsequent development of the Plan and associated financial perspectives by the ISO Council, to be submitted for approval at the General Assembly in Oslo (Norway) in September 2010.

A solid foundation

The execution of the current *ISO Strategic Plan 2005-2010* lays a solid foundation:

– the current membership of 160 national standards bodies represents 98 % of the world economy and 97 % of the world population;

– together with this membership, which enables outreach to stakeholders at the national level, the more than 700 liaisons and partnerships with regional and international governmental and nongovernmental organizations ensure that ISO standards are based on a high level of consensus and benefit from a broad input and take-up. The global relevance of ISO standards is sought both at the development stage and by the monitoring of systematic reviews;

– the ISO platform is increasingly called upon to cover new areas, as was the case recently with emerging issues such as nanotechnologies, the response to climate change, energy efficiency, confidence in food, security, health informatics, intelligent transport systems, sustainable building design and operation and the growing area of services;

– the partnership with IEC and ITU under the World Standards Cooperation (WSC) has been strengthened and complemented by the development of cooperation with other international organizations and standards developing organizations with sectorial focus and global reach, allowing to better address standardization in fields characterized by converging technologies and to optimize expert input;

– the level of production of ISO publications and the stock of work items in progress are consequently high, while delays in development and dissemination are reduced, supported by continual improvement in procedures and advanced IT tools and e-services;

– the 2005-2010 Action Plan to support developing country participation has enabled a significant increase in effective participation of emerging economies;

– key policy decisions have been taken to adjust ISO to the global economy and context of the 21st century, such as the *ISO Code of Ethics*, increasing partnerships, liaisons and regional outreach, adjusting patent and copyright policies, and increasing communication towards users and stakeholders at large;

– the financial sustainability of the Central Secretariat has been restored, enabling a reduction of the financial subscription unit, the reconstitution of the General Fund, the grouping of operations in modern premises in Geneva and the financing of ISO development and promotion projects.

As a result, the next Strategic Plan will build on this solid foundation and consider how ISO can best meet the expectations of the world community in the 2011-2015 period.

The need for cooperation within the ISO system

Increasingly, the activities of the ISO members are related to regional and international levels of standardization; they are the gateway for access by their stakeholders and promoters for the development and implementation of ISO standards. The "ISO brand" has achieved worldwide exposure and is recognized as a valuable and shared asset of its members. Its promotion and protection must be ensured, as well as the sustainability of the business model which supports the development and dissemination of ISO publications, and which may be adjusted as appropriate to take stock of the expansion of ISO's scope and corresponding stakeholder and user base, and to the increasingly electronic distribution of standards. Mutual support and cooperation are needed between the three components of the ISO system – the ISO members at large, whose activities often go beyond standardization; the actors in the standards development process; and the ISO Central Secretariat – so that a comprehensive and effective collection of ISO standards is developed and maintained. It is important that the overall process should not be influenced by any dominating interests or inappropriate pressure from commercial considerations in setting priorities for the work programme and in the content of ISO deliverables. This requires maintaining and enhancing the ISO business model and clearly communicating the benefits the model provides for all the parties involved, whether as contributors to the standards development process and content, as users of standards or as beneficiaries of their implementation.

The consultation for developing the *ISO Strategic Plan 2011-2015*

The consultation of ISO's stakeholders, through ISO's national members and key international and regional partners, will take place between March and September 2009 and will be based on this questionnaire. The material resulting from this consultation will be used by the Secretary-General to prepare the draft *ISO Strategic Plan 2011-2015* for consideration by the ISO Council. The final result of the process will be presented for approval by the ISO General Assembly at its meeting in September 2010.

In order to structure the consultation and facilitate the consolidation of its outcome, this document identifies 10 key areas where views and contributions are sought via the following questionnaire to be used by the ISO members and key partners who are invited to provide consolidated answers and suggestions, with a summary of the input by the various groups of stakeholders when appropriate.

The questionnaire has been prepared with a view to guiding a structured input. However, input is not limited to the specific questions indicated. Respondents are encouraged to provide their views on global trends and challenges in the years ahead, how these will affect the world of standardization and ISO, and what ISO should do in order to assist stakeholders to cope with these trends successfully.

Key issues and related questionnaire

Consolidating and expanding these capabilities is a key factor for the future of ISO, especially considering that, along with new technologies and domains where ISO could successfully expand (e.g. the broad field of services), many sectors already covered by ISO (such as mechanical engineering, building construction, energy, transportation, health care, ….) are experiencing profound transformations to adapt to new conditions and requirements, such as sustainability, convergence of technologies and increasing systems/components interdependence.

1 Technical scope

According to its statutes, ISO may address any area where consensus-based International Standards might be useful, provided that, based on its standards development *Directives*, there is sufficient and documented agreement from its membership. This has resulted in a current collection of more than 17 800 ISO publications, constantly maintained and complemented, with approximately 100 new or revised standards being published each month. The current stock of work items in progress is in the order of 3 900, each of which will lead to at least one ISO publication. Liaisons are maintained with more than 700 international and regional organizations, thus ensuring technical coordination and consistency and avoidance of unnecessary overlaps. Some 40 new technical committees have been created during the current Strategic Plan and new areas have been addressed, such as information and societal security, the response to climate change, energy efficiency and renewable sources, sustainable building design and operation, water services, nanotechnologies, intelligent transport systems, food safety management, health informatics and social responsibility.

To meet market and society needs, ISO has recognized the importance of addressing in a timely and effective way innovative fields of work, and has taken measures to be more proactive in evaluating the need for and promotion of international standardization.

- *What actions would you suggest for strengthening ISO's value proposition and its responsiveness to global challenges?*

- *What are your views on the current scope and extent of ISO's technical work?*

- *Are there new fields and work areas that you suggest ISO should consider?*

- *Do you see redundancies or marginal areas that ISO should no longer pursue?*

- *ISO has recently expanded its scope to cover societal issues reflecting global needs, such as social responsibility or societal security. What is your view on this trend?*

- *What measures, in addition to those introduced in recent years (such as the concepts of targeted portfolio/gap analysis, sectoral workshops, Strategic Advisory Groups and Project Committees) would you suggest for optimizing the processes for:*
  - *identifying, validating and initiating new work;*
  - *addressing the convergence of technical fields;*
  - *ensuring the global relevance of ISO standards?*

- *Should ISO become more involved in providing guidance to users on the actual implementation of ISO standards? If so, how?*

2 Management system standards

One of the successes of ISO over the past two decades, and also a major source of its global recognition and exposure, has been in the area of management system standards (MSS). For this reason and considering the particular nature and wide applicability of MSS, a specific key issue on MSS has been included in this questionnaire.

Initiated with the development of the ISO 9000 series on quality management, the collection of ISO MSS has significantly diversified, through development at the industry sector level and on thematic issues, such as for environmental, risk or security management. In this way, ISO has enabled best practice to be embedded in a versatile tool box of standards and guidelines from which companies and organizations can choose in order to improve their operations and build confidence with their customers, users and stakeholders at large. The periodic review of these standards enables updating to the evolution of best practices and the rigorous process put in place to justify the needs for and the development of new MSS (specified in the ISO Guide 72, *Guidelines for the justification and development of management system standards*) aims at ensuring their responsiveness to market needs.

- *What would you suggest concerning the content, collection and coordination of ISO MSS, as well as to facilitate the consistency of their implementation ?*

- *What do you think about diversification and expansion of ISO MSS ? If you think that further expansion is needed, what are the main subject matters to be addressed ?*

- *What are the issues to be tackled in order to enhance the confidence and effectiveness of ISO MSS ?*

- *Should ISO get more involved in monitoring how the assessment of compliance to ISO MSS is performed and communicated, and the associated use of ISO's name ? If so, how ?*

3 Confidence in compliance to standards of products and services

In the current Strategic Plan, ISO decided that it would not become directly involved in services or procedures related to assessing compliance to its standards. In this way, ISO does not indicate any preference towards first, second or third party intervention and therefore cannot be seen as developing standards for the purpose of feeding conformity assessment activities. Given this neutrality policy, and also the growing need to support the international acceptance of test results and claims of conformity to build confidence and avoid duplications of tests and certificates, has meant that CASCO, the ISO Committee on Conformity Assessment, is increasingly recognized as the focal point for the development of International Standards and Guides, for the promotion of good conformity assessment practice and for supporting their international recognition and monitoring.

- *Do you have suggestions in order to make the collection of International Standards and Guides related to conformity assessment more comprehensive and consistent?*

- *How do you view ISO's current neutrality policy in relation to conformity assessment?*

- *How do you view ISO CASCO's involvement with key stakeholders in conformity assessment, beyond the providers of conformity assessment services, e.g. industry, regulators and societal interests?*

- *Should ISO get involved in the operation, evaluation or promotion of mutual recognition agreements relating to conformity assessment services and compliance to its standards, in particular those operated at a sector level? If so, why? If not, why not?*

- *Should ISO become more involved in providing information, guidance and tools for market surveillance, in particular to better monitor how ISO's name is associated with conformity assessment and claims? If so, why? If not, why not?*

- *In recent years the link between standards and related conformity assessment practices has been increasing. What is your view on this trend? And what are the possible further implications for ISO?*

4 Partnerships

ISO has built a strategic alliance with IEC (International Electrotechnical Commission) and ITU (International Telecommunication Union), through the World Standards Cooperation and the coordination of policies (e.g. patent policy), work programmes and publications, and joint communication (e.g. World Standards Day, WSC Management Course).

ISO has also built a network of collaboration with international intergovernmental organizations, in particular with the United Nations system, the World Trade Organization, the World Customs Organization and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. More than 700 liaisons are maintained by ISO technical committees with international and regional intergovernmental and stakeholder organizations, many of which contribute to the development of ISO publications. A number of Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) have been signed to consolidate and facilitate the involvement in ISO of governmental and non-governmental international organizations, and vice-versa, and coordination of work, communication and intellectual property issues. The concept of the "Partner Standards Development Organization" Cooperation Agreement has been developed and implemented to promote joint publications and developments with standards organizations having a multinational input and a global reach.

ISO has become an institutional member of the World Economic Forum and collaborates directly with other key stakeholder organizations on strategy and policy issues.

5   Involvement of stakeholders

The quality and representativeness of the consensus underlying ISO standards is key to their market relevance. The actual involvement in the ISO standards development process by the various categories of stakeholders is achieved through national participation (based on national mirror committees and public enquiries), inter alia, as a commitment under the *ISO Code of Ethics*, and through the partnerships and liaisons with international and regional stakeholders' organizations. The expansion of the scope of ISO, in particular in the area of services, and the societal aspects which ISO standards increasingly address – such as impact on the environment and energy consumption, consumer and worker protection, health, food safety and ethics – require that the representatives of the corresponding interested stakeholders be involved. As an example of current developments, the scope and membership of COPOLCO, the ISO Committee on consumer policy, are currently being reviewed to consider broader participation of the interests concerned by the impact of consumer products and services on these societal aspects and the possible contribution of International Standards to provide metrics and clarify the corresponding claims. In a similar way, additional measures have been recently approved to further promote participation and involvement of industry in ISO's technical work and strategic planning.

Formal collaborations have been reinforced with seven regional standards organizations to promote the regional contribution to and adoption of ISO standards and to optimize technical assistance to its members (ACCSQ for the ASEAN region, AIDMO for the Arab countries, ARSO for Africa, CEN for the European Economic Area, COPANT for the Americas, EASC for the Community of Independent States, PASC for the APEC region).

- *Is the current level of collaboration with IEC and ITU satisfactory? What further evolutions might be considered?*

- *Increasing convergence of technical fields requires cooperation with a broad variety of organizations. Are further refinements in the various existing options for developing partnerships needed?*

- *Is the current status and role of organizations in liaison with ISO's technical work satisfactory, in particular in relation to their rights and obligations?*

- *Are there important international partners and fora with which ISO should enhance its current collaboration or others beyond its current network to which ISO should reach out?*

- *What are your views on ISO's current regional networking and partnerships?*

- *Should ISO consider greater involvement in promoting the regional adoption, endorsement or use of its standards?*

- *Are the current mechanisms in place to provide competent, sustainable and balanced stakeholder input and consolidated views in the development of ISO standards satisfactory? If so, why? If not, why not?*

- *Should ISO and its members monitor more systematically the actual involvement of the interested stakeholders in its technical work? If so, why? If not, why not?*

- *Should ISO provide more guidance and information to assist ISO members in their efforts to engage stakeholders to recognize their contribution and to ensure the effectiveness and transparency of national representation in ISO? If so, why? If not, why not?*

- *Should ISO expand its network of relations with international organizations of stakeholders beyond its current network and, if so, towards which organizations in particular?*

6 Tools in support of public policies

The globalization of trade and of many other issues such as security, environment, energy, water and health has resulted in an increasingly recognized complementarity between consensus-based international standards and public policies at large, as an element of good public governance. Because of the commitments taken in the context of the WTO and the need to consider public policies when taking into account regional or international cooperation and commitments, public authorities increasingly call upon consensus-based International Standards to provide tools for measurement, organizational practices, interoperability, data processing and exchange, technical characterization or organizational aspects needed to support public policies. International Standards may be considered not only as tools associated with the implementation of technical regulations, but also in the context of Research & Development (R&D) and innovation policies, incentives, public procurement, quality of public services and good public governance at large. ISO has published with IEC an informative document on *Using and referencing ISO and IEC standards for technical regulations*. MoUs with a number of international intergovernmental organizations collaborating on public policies or harmonizing technical regulations have also been developed in recent years to ensure this complementarity and the use and referencing of ISO standards in their contexts.

- *How do you view ISO's current communication activities on the contribution its standards can make to public policies, in the broad sense, and how might these activities be improved ?*

- *How do you view ISO's current policy and promotion of its standards as possible tools for use in the context of technical regulations, in particular to international intergovernmental organizations and fora ?*

7 Developing countries

In the context of the current Strategic Plan, a specific action plan relating to the involvement of developing countries in ISO was developed and implemented. It revolves around five key objectives: raising awareness; building capacity; encouraging bilateral and regional cooperation; providing assistance on IT tools necessary to work in ISO and access its products and services; and enhancing the participation of developing countries in ISO's governance and technical work. This action plan is close to completion and has even gone beyond the original objectives. Partnerships with the WTO, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the International Trade Centre and other governmental agencies involved in technical assistance have also been developed, resulting in additional resources to support training and technical assistance provided by the ISO Central Secretariat and increased focus has been given by national and international technical assistance programmes to support national and regional quality infrastructures. DEVCO, the ISO Committee on developing country matters, will review the outcome and lessons learned from the current action plan in 2009, thus enabling input into the consultation process through the national members or the relevant international partners.

- *What is your evaluation of the activities undertaken and of the results achieved in the framework of the current* Action Plan for developing countries? *Should it continue to be used as the basis for a new action plan to be deployed as part of the* ISO Strategic Plan 2011-2015 ? *Have you specific recommendations, based on your direct experience, on how to improve the effectiveness and scope of these activities ?*

- *More generally, what suggestions would you have to improve awareness raising, capacity building and actual involvement of developing countries in ISO's technical work and in making a greater use of ISO standards to accompany their sustainable development ?*

- *What role do you see for regional economic communities to assist developing countries in relation to access to, and use of, the ISO system ? If you think they can have a useful role, can you indicate which regional economic communities ISO should partner with ?*

8 Education and communication

Standards are tools used in many professions, whether in relation to technology and production, or in relation to management, legal matters, marketing and trade. It is therefore important that standardization be introduced in the curricula of universities and educational institutions at large. ISO supports such initiatives, for example, through the ISO Award for Higher Education in Standardization, presented for the first time in 2007. Academia should also be encouraged to develop surveys to quantify and qualify the benefits of standards for organizations, sectors and at the national level, and use case studies as pedagogical tools. This is an area where ISO has developed a database of existing publications and is currently conducting a study on methodologies to develop such surveys.

Meeting the challenges associated with the development, production and implementation of International Standards requires a significant level of knowledge and continual update by the experts participating in standardization, the staff of standards bodies and the users of standards. ISO and its members support the development of human resources through comprehensive training activities focused on the transfer of knowledge, refinement of specific skills and associated training services.

Beyond education and training, ISO's communication towards all categories of stakeholders, in support of its members and through its Web sites, information services, publications, and networking initiatives, has significantly increased the exposure and recognition of its brand and its activities.

- *How should ISO get more involved in raising the interest of academia towards standardization and in promoting its inclusion in the curricula of educational institutions ?*

- *Should ISO strengthen its training activities and, in particular, expand the development and dissemination of training materials to its members, both for actors in the standards development process and for users of standards ?*

- *Are ISO's current overall promotion and communication policy and actions sufficient and, if not, what suggestions would you make to enhance them ?*

- *What actions can be taken to further promote and protect the ISO brand ?*

9 Procedures, processes and deliverables

The ISO *Directives* supporting the standards development and publication procedures are, to a large extent common with IEC, and are regularly maintained. Significant progress has been made in terms of processing times for standards, with a reduction from 43 months on average in 2003 to 33,5 months in 2008. Progress has also been made in relation to taking up new work items and new areas (e.g. through the creation of the concept of "Project Committee"). Comprehensive IT tools and e-services have been put in place to support the standards development and publication processes, as well as information and training assistance to the experts and TC secretariats and membership. A simplification of the types of ISO deliverables is underway, in collaboration with IEC. The progressive production of ISO publications in XML format should allow a diversification of information products and services derived from them.

- *Are you satisfied with the current level of quality and content of ISO publications?*

- *Are you satisfied with the current level of accessibility to ISO technical work?*

- *Are the current* Directives *designed to ensure the integrity of the technical and consensus building processes sufficiently clear and rigorous?*

- *Are you satisfied with the current maintenance of ISO standards and monitoring of the activities of its technical committees?*

- *Do you have suggestions on how to reduce processing times further?*

- *How can ISO further optimize its committee working procedures to make best use of resources available?*

- *Do you have suggestions concerning the types of ISO deliverables and their usability?*

- *Should ISO and its members develop more value adding products and services based on ISO standards (e.g. handbooks, guidance documents, pedagogical implementation tools…)?*

- *How can ISO contribute to a better understanding of whether and how International Standards are implemented at the national level?*

10 Support provided by the ISO Central Secretariat

The ISO Central Secretariat (ISO/CS) is in charge of supporting the ISO governance and technical infrastructure, assisting ISO members to make the best of their membership, promoting the ISO System at the global level, processing and disseminating the ISO publications and, more generally, of implementing the collective actions decided by the ISO General Assembly and Council. It also provides global communication on the ISO system and its achievements. Its headquarters and staff of approximately 150 are based in Geneva.

- *What are your views on the level and quality of the services provided by the ISO/CS?*

- *Do you have suggestions as to expanding such services?*

- *What are the measures you would apply to determine the success of ISO/CS support services? Why?*

- *What are you views on ISO's IT and e-services for standards development and dissemination, and suggestions on how they might evolve?*

- *Are the mechanisms in place to ensure the efficiency and financial sustainability of the ISO/CS adequate?*

Schedule for the *ISO Strategic Plan 2011-2015*

The current *ISO Strategic Plan 2005-2010* was adopted by the General Assembly at its meeting in September 2004. The implementation of this Plan is well underway and most of the objectives and actions will be realized by 2010.

The ISO Council has approved the following schedule for the development and adoption of the *ISO Strategic Plan 2011-2015* :

Between March and September 2009	December 2009	March 2010	July 2010	September 2010
Consultations	*Preparation of a first draft of the Strategic Plan by the Secretary-General, associated with actions, financial assumptions and KPIs, to be circulated to Council members for comments, and reviewed by CSC/STRAT (Strategic Plan and KPIs) at its meeting in January 2010 and by CSC/FIN (financial assumptions) at a special meeting in February 2010.*	*Special one-day session of Council to brainstorm on the Strategic Plan, and associated actions, financial assumptions and KPIs, to be subsequently finalized by correspondence before May 2010.*	*Submission of the Strategic Plan to the ISO members for approval at the General Assembly in Norway in September 2010.*	*Approval of the Strategic Plan 2011-2015 at the ISO General Assembly in Norway.*