

Standards for Sustainable Development



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1. Introduction

1.1. Sustainable development: the role of standards

This publication makes the case for enhancing the use of voluntary standards – including but not limited to voluntary sustainability standards – in support of sustainable development. It is loosely based on the background work, proceedings and outcomes of the International conference on ‘Standards for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)’, which took place at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, from 28 to 29 November 2017.

The Conference called on UN Member States and standards setting organizations to work more closely together in support of the [2030 Agenda for sustainable development](#) and other landmark agreements of the United Nations – including the [Paris Agreement](#), the [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction](#), and the [New Urban Agenda](#).

1.2. Why do voluntary standards matter for the SDGs?

Voluntary national and international standards support the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in different ways. Some standards – like ISO 26000 – are cross cutting and “provide guidance to all types of organizations, regardless of their size or location, on (..) integrating, implementing and promoting socially responsible behaviour throughout the organization and, through its policies and practices, within its sphere of influence”.



A number of standards have – instead - target-specific and goal-specific relevance. For example, standards developed by the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) are indispensable for the attainment of Goal 7, as they ensure the safety and dependability of core infrastructure projects such as wind farms and smart grids, promote energy efficiency and the transition to modern energy services.

Standards support all three dimensions of sustainability. Standards support companies and communities in conceiving and bringing to the market cleaner and more energy-efficient products, helping protect and conserve environmental resources.

Additionally, standards play a key role in supporting a distributed governance model that empowers all collectives and communities in taking action in their respective fields of influence and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status (Goal 10.2 and 10.3). Relying on standards developed in consultation with the industry affords policy-makers, confronted with shrinking public budgets, the possibility of lowering the costs of developing and enforcing regulations, without compromising on

the safe management of their country's resources and the well-being of their populations (Goal 16). This helps advance several elements of Agenda 2030 social dimension.

Finally, and as regards the economic dimension of the 2030 Agenda, standards implementation increases access to international markets, as large multinational corporations base their contracts to first and second tier suppliers on product standards, and often, also on their adherence to common process standards. International standards contribute to reduce technical and procedural barriers to trade and minimizing transaction costs by helping the transition from country-specific specifications to globally applicable ones. Standards – as a key foundation of international trade - play a key role in supporting targets 17.10 “promote a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system” and 17.11 “increase the exports of developing countries, in particular with a view to doubling the least developed countries’ share of global exports by 2020”. They also contribute to the transfer of technology supporting the achievement of targets 17.6 and 17.7.

1.3. The UNECE Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardisation Policies (WP6)

The UNECE acts as a convening platform to support partnerships among standards agencies, and between standards bodies and decision-makers in business, administrations, donor agencies and local communities.

The UNECE Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation & Standardization Policies works to lower costs, facilitate trade and improve access to critical technologies, while protecting the health, safety of consumers, workers, and preserving our natural environment. It has a mandate to support regulatory cooperation in specific sectors that have a critical impact on sustainability and on resilience to natural and man-made hazards. It also contributes:

- To promote the use of standards by policy-makers and business as a tool for reducing technical barriers to trade, promote increased resilience to disasters, foster innovation and good governance.
- To promote the use of standards in the implementation of UN-wide goals, including the implementation of the Agenda 2030 and the Sendai framework for action.

The Working Party meets annually and throughout the year activities take place through its subsidiary bodies. These work to:

- To develop guidance and best practice for an improved management of hazards that have the potential to affect the quality of products and services, and/or cause harm or damage to people, the environment, property and immaterial assets”

(the Group of Experts on Risk Management in Regulatory Systems ([UNECE GRM](#))).

- To share best practice on risk-based market surveillance, inspections and regulatory enforcement (The Group of Experts on Market Surveillance or MARS Group);
- To develop - and promote the uptake by national authorities - of common regulatory frameworks in specific sectors, such as, for example, workplaces where explosions may occur ([SIEE initiative](#));
- To develop training materials on standards and standards-related issues, and promote education on standards and standards related issues ([Initiative on Education on Standards and Standards Related Issues](#))
- To enhance the contribution of standards to Gender Equality and to the achievement of SDG Goal 5 on Empowering Women & Girls ([Initiative on Gender-Responsive Standards](#)).

2. Background: WP6, Standards & the SDGs

2.1. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Agenda 2030 and the UN landmark agreements adopted in 2015 and 2016 are the defining agenda of the international community. The 2030 Agenda sets forth a “bold and transformative” plan of action to shift the world towards sustainable development. It is a universal commitment to renew action in all three dimensions of sustainability, namely social, environmental and economic.

Agenda 2030 is part of a broader development paradigm that builds around a set of landmark agreements adopted in 2015-16, including: the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Paris Agreement and the UN/HABITAT New Urban Agenda. Agenda 2030 consists of 17 goals and 169 targets for which a set of 232 indicators of achievement has been agreed to.



Source: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>

2.2. The Contribution of WP. 6 to the SDGs

Historically, the Working Party has played an important advocacy role, promoting the use of standards by policy-makers and businesses, as tools for reducing technical barriers to trade, furthering innovation and competitiveness, promoting increased resilience to disasters, and fostering innovation and good governance.

After the adoption of Agenda 2030, the WP.6 *becomes then naturally a platform* for the promotion of standards as a tool for the implementation of UN-wide agendas, in particular the SDGs but also other key landmark UN Agreements. The Working Party has a key role to play in three large action areas:




- **To contribute to enhance the use of voluntary standards as tools for achieving the Goals of the 2030 Development Agenda:** The Working Party will continue its advocacy efforts including through awareness raising and training activities leading to:
 - Greater use of standards by business;
 - Enhanced reference to standards in regulatory work and policymaking;
 - Greater participation by standardization bodies in the discussions in the development and implementation of UN global and regional mandates;
 - Identification of standards that can play a key role in the implementation of Agenda 2030 and of areas where new standards are needed (e.g. standards for the circular economy).




- **To develop coherent regulatory frameworks that address risk and hazards and support the achievement of the SDGs:** The Working Party will continue its regulatory cooperation activities leading to:
 - Common standards-based and risk-based regulatory frameworks in specific sectors (based on [Recommendation L](#)) These common regulatory frameworks will enable producers to move their products freely within the markets of participating countries, without additional controls by the country's designated authorities, contributing to increase participation of SMEs, developing countries and countries with economies in transition in international trade.
 - Development of best practice for regulatory frameworks based on a consistent risk management process allowing countries to protect lives, livelihoods and the environment, without unnecessary obstacles to international trade and unwanted impact on the industry's competitiveness.

- **To develop recommendations for best practice in quality infrastructure, especially in the area of market surveillance and enforcement:**
 - Provide a platform for cooperation among market surveillance authorities,
 - Develop guidance and good practice aimed at supporting market surveillance authorities in all phases of their operations, from the planning of inspections to the recall of products, supporting the enforcement of technical regulations;

- Advocate for the recognition of the important role of quality infrastructure for sustainable development

Table 2. Examples of how currently the WP. 6 contributes to the implementation of Agenda 2030

Goal	Target	WP. 6 initiatives
<p>5 GENDER EQUALITY</p> 	<p>5.5 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life</p>	<p><u>WP. 6 Gender-responsive standards initiative</u></p> <p>This initiative aims at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening the participation of women in standardization to give women a voice in economic governance nationally and internationally. • Ensuring that biological and cultural differences between genders are fully taken into account in standards development and implementation so as to contribute to the participation of women in all sectors of the economy
<p>8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH</p> 	<p>8.a Increase Aid for Trade support for developing countries</p>	<p><u>WP. 6 initiative on Education on Standards and Standards-Related Issues</u></p> <p>WP. 6 advocates for increased assistance to developing countries in standards development and implementation specifically as part of the Aid for Trade envelope. In particular, it works to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that standardization is included in education programmes and academic curricula and to increase public knowledge about standardization • Develop training materials on standards and standards-receptive regulatory frameworks, including risk management in regulatory frameworks, conformity assessment and market surveillance.
<p>9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE</p> 	<p>9.1 Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure</p>	<p><u>WP. 6 . Group of Experts on Market Surveillance (MARS)</u></p> <p>Develops best practice for market surveillance authorities, with the aim of guiding their operations, from the planning of inspections to the recall of products, supporting the enforcement of technical regulations.</p> <p>In particular, the Group has developed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A recommendation on how to plan and carry out market surveillance

		<p>activities, so as to ensure that products meet legal requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A recommendation on how to fight the proliferation of fake and non-compliant products • A recommendation on how to use risk management tools to maximize the effectiveness of enforcement. • a template for exchanging information among MSAs • a simple, broad system of information on market surveillance authorities and a list of Global and regional market surveillance networks so as to facilitate the exchange of information among enforcement authorities
<p>11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES</p>  <p>12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION</p> 	<p>11.5 By 2030, significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses relative to global gross domestic product caused by disasters</p> <p>12.a Support developing countries to strengthen their scientific and technological capacity to move towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production</p>	<p><u>Group of Experts on Risk Management in Regulatory Frameworks</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the design of regulatory frameworks that are based on a consistent risk management process allowing countries to protect their citizens, without unnecessary obstacles to international trade and unwanted impact on the industry's competitiveness. • Research and advocacy on the role of standards in the prevention and management of disaster risks with contributions by IEC, ISO, ITU and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) • Support governments in the design and implementation of crisis management functions as part of the regulatory frameworks in all key economic sectors
<p>17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS</p> 	<p>17.11 Significantly increase the exports of developing countries, in particular with a view to doubling the least developed countries' share of global exports by 2020</p> <p>Working towards common regulatory frameworks to minimize technical barriers to trade.</p>	<p><u>Creating common regulatory frameworks in specific sectors</u> (based on Recommendation L)</p> <p>WP. 6 works towards jointly defined common regulatory frameworks in specific sectors, based on international standards and internally recognized conformity assessment mechanisms.</p> <p>These common regulatory frameworks enable producers to move their products freely within the markets of participating countries, without additional controls by the country's designated authorities. This contributes to increase the participation of SMEs, developing countries and countries</p>

		<p>with economies in transition in international trade</p> <p>Activities have been particularly successful in the fields of equipment for explosive environments and earth-moving machinery</p> <p>Given sufficient resources, this experience could usefully be replicated in other sectors that are of key importance to addressing sustainable development issues.</p>
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In summary, the UNECE WP.6 provides:

- An effective platform bringing together local authorities, central governments, civil society representatives as well as standardization bodies. It can play an important role as advocate and facilitator to promote the uptake of standards for sustainable development.
- A go to source for best practice on the quality of regulatory intervention and regulatory cooperation. The Working Party has developed and adopted as Recommendations important guidelines for risk-based, standards-based regulatory systems. It can work to ensure an optimal interface between standards – which are in their very nature voluntary – and technical regulations and by-laws. Experience has shown that while in many cases, the industry’s spontaneous adoption of voluntary standards will help bring about desired policy outcomes, in others, instead, regulatory or non-regulatory actions by public authorities are needed.
- Support for structured cooperation among enforcement institutions and in particular market surveillance authorities.

Effective enforcement depends upon a complex system called “national quality infrastructure”, which includes an array of private and public-sector bodies, i.e. metrology institutions, accreditation and conformity assessment bodies, as well as test houses and laboratories. These institutions are essential in ensuring transition towards a sustainable pattern of development. Taking the case of environmental emissions, without the ability to perform adequate tests, no country can enforce its regulations and monitor over time the progress towards the achievement of relevant targets under goals 13, 14 and 15.

Currently, even in some of the most advanced countries in the UNECE region, enforcement authorities and the whole quality infrastructure system is severely underfunded. Markets across the UNECE are flooded with products that do not comply with regulations in force, and that are not responsibly produced. In these circumstances, investing in a better and more sustainable future becomes an impossible task for those businesses that care, but that are unable to compete against those that do not respect the same rules and do not take the same engagements.

While standards are important, their value for sustainable development ultimately depends on their being embedded into regulatory and policy frameworks that define public objectives, identify risks that may prevent their achievement, and devise appropriate solutions for their achievement

3. International Conference on Standards for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

3.1. Background

The Conference was organized to discuss the role that voluntary standards can play in enabling inclusive, transparent, and consensual solutions to the unprecedented challenges from extreme poverty and exclusion, climate change and extreme weather events, and rising inequalities within and across countries.

Speakers and participants agreed that standards unlock opportunities for policy-makers and businesses to work together and bring disruptive innovations into mainstream development strategies.

The one and a half day event showcased examples of how standards of all kinds have been used in support of the seventeen goals of Agenda 2030.

After a high-level panel, three SDSs were looked into more closely:

- Standards for SDG 5 - gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls,
- Standards for SDG 12 - sustainable consumption and production patterns, and
- Standards for SDG 14 – the sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources.

The Conference resulted in two practical outcomes:

- The adoption of Recommendation T by the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies. The Recommendation sets out best practice for regulatory agencies engaging in regulatory processes needed for the implementation of the SDGs. It encourages them to develop risk-based regulatory systems proportionate to the risks that can impact upon the SDG achievement, especially as regards to regulatory requirements, conformity assessment and surveillance procedures (reproduced in Paragraph 4.2 of the current document)
- Review and progress towards the adoption of the “Pledge for Action on Gender Responsive Standards” developed by the initiative “Mainstreaming a gender perspective in standards and technical regulations”. (Reproduced in Paragraph 4.3 of the present document).

The Conference was attended by the main international standards setting organizations and representatives of national standardization offices, along with representatives of Member States authorities and United Nations bodies and specialized agencies. Observers present at the invitation of the secretariat included representatives of private-sector companies, associations, universities and civil-society organizations from various regions (the complete list of Attendees is available as an Annex of the present document).

3.2. Statement by Mr Michael Møller, Director General, UNOG

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the Palais des Nations and to this International Conference on Standards for the SDGs. The Executive Secretary of UNECE, Ms. Olga Algayerova, is travelling and sends her regards and best wishes for your meeting. I have the pleasure of opening this meeting on her behalf. Decisions made in International Geneva directly affect every person on our planet. Many of these decisions are norms and standards, developed by top technical and policy experts, meeting under the umbrella of the organizations represented at the highest level here today. Governmental entities at all governance levels, international organizations, NGOs and companies, to name some, use standards to make their operations more sustainable - for example, to monitor and report their consumption of natural resources, their energy use and their emissions; to minimize the carbon footprint of their products; and to understand and improve their impact on local communities. The contribution of standards to societal challenges is now widely acknowledged. For example, this year's G7 and G20 Summits concluded with a commitment to continue to promote the development and use of internationally recognized social and environmental standards. However, the contribution of standards to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is still not fully understood by all stakeholders. Together we can do much more to fully realize the potential of these standards. The UN Community in Geneva is committed to doing its part to support you, in particular in three key areas.



The first key area: Standards as a common language.

Companies, governments and NGOs are working with increased commitment to be transparent and to reduce the impact of their operations on the environment. More and more private and public partners disclose and report on their progress using

internationally agreed standards. That makes results achieved by different organizations immediately comparable. They can be more easily matched against specific SDGs and targets, and aggregated across countries and sectors.

This is why standards are sometime called the world's "common language". We are ready to support you in promoting standards as a means for reporting. However, much too often, competing standards setting organizations set conflicting and overlapping standards. This leaves consumers confused and unable to choose responsibly manufactured products and services. At the other end of the supply chain, it leaves firms struggling with the costs of multiple certifications and auditing. UNECE can help overcome this problem. It can act as a convening platform to support partnerships among standards bodies, decision-makers in businesses and administrations, donor agencies and local communities. I encourage you to make full use of this platform.

The second key point: Standards provide assurance that commitments are honoured.

One important characteristic of standards is that commitments and adherence to agreed parameters can readily be assessed and measured. I am thinking, for example of the logos and eco-labels on organic and sustainably produced coffee, cotton or wood, on children's toys and car seats, to name a few examples. They tell us that the safety features and environmental records of these products have undergone expert verification. These assessments depend upon a vast array of technical institutions – testing houses, laboratories, certification and accreditation bodies. Unfortunately, even in some of the most developed economies in the UNECE region, this quality assurance system is severely underfunded. Markets are flooded with products that do not comply with regulations, or are not responsibly produced. I encourage you to discuss new solutions – including regional cooperation and PPPs – to ensure adequate resourcing for this priority.

The last point: Standards are about scaling up technological solutions.

In many sectors, technological solutions to the challenge before us already exist--if not fully, then often in part. Achieving the SDGs requires scaling up these solutions so that they can reach every household. To facilitate scaling up, we need to integrate standards even more effectively into regulatory systems. This can offer many benefits. In the past 30 years, the adoption of the single standard model has reduced the number of national standards across the EU from 160,000 to around 20,000 today. As a result, we find lower barriers to trade, enhanced business opportunities and products of better quality for end users and consumers. In the context of sustainability, UN agencies, standards bodies and quality assurance institutions provide integrated regulatory solutions that build on standards, and also include ways to measure conformity and address non-compliance.

UNECE has a dedicated platform to discuss how standards developed by UN agencies and independent organizations can inform policies and business strategies. This platform is of course known as the “Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies”. I encourage you to use the Working Party as a platform to strengthen the contribution of standards to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This can include:

- Establishing and reinforcing partnerships among standards bodies and between standards bodies and policymakers to avoid fragmentation;
- Promoting an effective integration between standards and regulations, to ensure that technological solutions are effectively brought to scale;
- Providing a neutral platform to discuss novel solutions to the priority goal of resourcing quality assurance institutions, including as a means to fight the proliferation of noncompliant goods.

As I mentioned, standards can be a cornerstone of sustainability. We will not reach the Paris Agreement goals if we cannot measure greenhouse gas emissions, or if products in our markets are not checked to ensure compliance with stringent environmental standards.

To do that, we need more effective ways of working in partnership. One method could be to set up an Advisory Board comprised of representatives of standards bodies and civil society. This Board would work hand in hand with member States in the Working Party Bureau, and help realize our ambitions.

I wish you every success in your deliberations.

Thank you.

3.3. High level panel on: “Standards for the SDGs”

Global Reporting Initiative (GRI)

The Director Standards of the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) introduced ‘sustainability reporting’ which is an organization’s practice of reporting publicly on its economic, environmental, and/or social impacts, and hence its contributions – positive or negative – towards the goal of sustainable development. By covering topics such as externalities, depletion of natural resources, and societal participation in financial value creation, GRI standards help corporates understand policymakers’ expectations, and articulate their contribution; also resulting in increased uptake of SDG focused practice on capital markets.



PowerPoint Presentation: [A Global Common Language for Sustainability Reporting](#)

ISEAL Alliance



The Executive Director of the ISEAL Alliance commented that multi-stakeholder standards and roundtables play an important role as platforms and tools to implement sustainable practices within a given sector or industry, providing guidelines and metrics for environmental and social issues. Their positive contribution goes beyond certification and includes their ability to convene and create partnerships, provide support and channel resources to producers, and influence broader sector dynamics. Sustainability standards are only part of the solution; governments in particular can play a more direct role by recognizing, leveraging and partnering with sustainability standards.

PowerPoint Presentation: [Role of Sustainability Standards in taking forward the 2030 Agenda](#)

World Wildlife Fund (WWF)

The Director General of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) said that voluntary sustainability standards pioneer better practices while Governments and policy-makers make it common practice. Governments can, in particular, create an enabling environment for better production and consumption, including by providing financial support or capacity building to supply-chain actors, by referencing credibly certified goods in public procurement policies, and by aligning trade policies, subsidies and overseas development aid to support sustainable production giving preference to credible certified goods. It is important to reach beyond industrial production and include artisanal and small-scale producers. To do so, landscape level certification supported by enabling legislation is a promising tool that WWF has used successfully in its project work.



PowerPoint Presentation: [We Know: A Turning Point for the Planet?](#)

International Standards Organisation

The Secretary-General of ISO recalled that ISO has developed over 21,000 standards that enable organizations, governments, communities and stakeholder groups to embrace sustainable practices in a strategic and effective way. This large toolbox - developed with worldwide input and expertise and based on consensus, openness and transparency - could be mapped to each and every one of the 17 SDGs (e.g. water and sanitation, social responsibility, sustainable communities, climate change, etc.). While voluntary standards do not seek to establish, drive or motivate public policy, regulations, or social or political agendas, they can provide valuable support in public policy implementation, as they guarantee buy-in of a wide range of stakeholders. Two recent cases of standards supporting sustainable development are a 4-year project on the uptake and use of ISO 26000 on Social Responsibility within the MENA region, and the work of TC 305 on non-sewered sanitation systems.



PowerPoint Presentation: [ISO Standards for Policy Makers](#)

International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC)

The General Secretary of IEC focused on the 12 SDGs that are directly impacted by IEC work in standardization and testing and certification. He said that electricity demand by developing nations is estimated to double over the next decade and observed that energy is the golden thread that runs through all sustainable development goals (SDGs). IEC standards representing global consensus solutions to particular issues provided the technical foundation for energy generation and all devices that use electricity or contain electronics. By referring to IEC Standards in laws or regulations, regulators are able to specify the technical details and how to meet requirements and verify compliance. This helps avoid unnecessary technical barriers to trade and keeps regulations up to date. International standards could help achieve greater efficiency, improve the safety of devices, workers and populations, and increase the resilience and long-term viability of infrastructure while reducing cost.



PowerPoint Presentation: [The Global Goals for Sustainable Development](#)

Discussion Session

During the questions and answers session, the speakers addressed the issue of the proliferation of private or voluntary standards. The speakers agreed that the standards development should avoid fragmentation, and instead of developing their own standards, organization or standards bodies should work together. The representative of WWF expressed the concern that standards may lose the trust of consumers due to confusion; there is a need to “standardize the standards”. ISEAL Alliance encourages its members to review existing merge their standards and carefully consider the need for new ones before they submit their standards. A harmonized approach is indispensable to avoid complicating the market or suffocating the desire for changes towards sustainable development.

The speakers also reflected on the need for cooperation between different international organizations. The representative of IEC used the “Smart City Forum” (Singapore, 2016) as an example to illustrate that none of the organizations could address this kind of multidimensional issue in isolation. He further pointed out that, in addition to the collaboration of international organizations, cooperation at the national level should be strengthened.

Addressing a question from the floor, speakers commented on ways to increase the budgets of and support to national standardization bodies. The representative of ISO explained that one way is to try to encourage the governments to invest in standardization bodies so that they can be standards makers instead of standards takers. The representative of IEC further commented that when countries are co-creators of standards, there is a greater willingness to adopt the standards nationally in their country.

The speakers also discussed how international and national standardization bodies can be more active in using standards to support the achievement of the SDGs. The representative of ISEAL Alliance suggested reaching out to disadvantaged stakeholders who lack resources to participate in the standards setting process. For example, when formulating standards on sustainable agriculture, the farmers could be reached out proactively to assist their participation

The representative of GRI said that education about SDGs could play a role. The idea of sustainable development has drawn the attention of younger generations and if they receive relevant education, they could apply such knowledge into their daily work. The representative of WWF mentioned that even though the achievement of SDGs is difficult to measure, efforts could be taken to develop indicators for assessing the impact of standards that are connected to the SDGs.

One participant asked whether international standardization bodies can make their standards available to the public free of charge to increase social control by consumers and the industry. The representatives of IEC and ISO responded that given the fact that the funding of their organizations is partially based on the royalties, this model of financing is a sustainable model to ensure the development of high quality standards. It is hoped that other funding mechanisms could be conceived. For example, the representative of IEC introduced a pilot project of the World Bank where it sponsors SMEs to have access to international standards

3.4. Panel 2: Gender Informed Standards & Technical Regulations



Background

The discussion built on the work of the UNECE initiative on “Gender-Responsive Standards”.

The initiative aims at promoting the integration of a gender dimension into standards and regulations. This implies the use of both sex and gender-based analysis in all stages

of the standards cycle and related areas, so as to ensure that standards and regulations represent the interests, needs, experiences and expectations of both men and women.

The Gender-Responsive Standards initiative has two interlocking goals: to ensure a more balanced participation of men and women in the development of standards and to develop ways to identify standards that are gender-biased, and correct that bias if present.

Gender-responsive standards are one way to reduce gender inequalities in access to and control over resources, innovations, and more generally the benefits of development. By advancing women's equal participation with men as innovators and decision-makers, this initiative helps correct a historic imbalance in standard-setting and enhance the contribution of standards in reaching the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal #5 on Empowering Women and Girls.

The initiative's concrete actions include:

- Promoting women's participation in standard-setting and processes for the development and implementation of technical regulations;
- Developing and sharing best-practices for taking biological and cultural differences into account in standards development and implementation;
- Developing gender indicators and criteria that can be used in standards development; and
- Identifying and undertaking actions to ensure that standards contribute to gender equality.

Suggested entry points for gender mainstreaming in the standards development process

Before the development of the standard:

- Gender-responsive selection of subject matter
- Analysis of the possible gender implications of the standards
- Gender representative in the composition of the standards development committee
- Gender-responsive design of the consultation process

During the development of the standard

- Using the findings of the gender analysis to inform the standard draft
- Engaging women's organizations and / or gender experts during the development and consultations
- Highlighting gender in discussions with stakeholders

In the standard (i.e. the physical document)

- Integrating solutions to address gender differences / eliminate gender bias
- In the implementation of the standard
- Gender-informed educational activities
 - Measuring the impact of the standards on women and men
 - Ensuring that conformity assessment processes are gender-informed.

Working Party 6 (WP.6)

The Secretary of the Working Group described the important role of standards and technical regulations play as instruments in the realization of SDG Goal 5.5, and advocated for increased gender responsiveness and inclusiveness throughout their development, use and review. She cited several examples, and recognized the role of standards in easing the time burden of domestic tasks, bringing greater workplace equity and facilitating the implementation of government policies for women empowerment.



She described the results of the UNECE gender-responsive standards initiative in the past year and plans for further activities going forward.

PowerPoint Presentation: [Standards & UNSDG Goal 5: Empower Women and Girls](#)

British Standards Institution (BSI)

The representative of the British Standards Institution (BSI) Group shared her experience working on gender responsive initiatives, and presented the draft of the UNECE Gender Responsive Standards Pledge/Charter. The Pledge/Charter aims to assist national standards bodies and standards developing organizations in identifying actions they can take to support the creation of gender responsive standards.



These included: improving the gender balance of those participating in standards development, ensuring that the content of standards is gender responsive, and monitoring standards implementation to achieve gender balance.

PowerPoint Presentation: [Encouraging Gender Responsive Standards](#)

Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining



The representative of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining described the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) and explained why gender awareness and assessment helps identify distinct roles, responsibilities and needs within a community. The speaker presented examples of assessment recommendations and explained the process of integrating gender considerations into IMAS. She discussed the range of challenges faced when incorporating gender considerations, and the positive effects (e.g. stakeholder buy-in, donor support and increased quality) gender awareness and inclusivity has had on IMAS.

PowerPoint Presentation: [International Mine Action Standards \(IMAS\) & Gender: A Success Story](#)

Patir Consultants



The CEO of the Patir Consultants showed examples highlighting the effect of gender stereotypes in culture and innovative technologies on women empowerment. The lack of gender awareness in standards development was underpinned by a continued failure to address persistent gender-biased language. Gender-biased language may compound female exclusion. Standards organizations need to become more

gender aware, challenge prejudice and foster inclusivity. Concrete actions to be considered included: promoting reference to women in media communiqués, case studies and competitions, as well as increased measuring and reporting.

PowerPoint Presentation: [Gender Mainstreaming in Standards](#)

Concrete actions to consider in order to develop Gender Responsive Standards

- ❖ Contribute to the development of a tool to review and analyse standards entering into any form of active development (new or revision) to identify which ones may have gender implications in their content or implementation;
- ❖ Contribute to the development of tools for gender-based analysis suitable for applying to standards and provide training in using the tools;
- ❖ Use existing frameworks (e.g. ISO, CEN-CENELEC etc.) to work collaboratively and share resources / expertise;
- ❖ Ensure committees have relevant expertise, tools and resources to strive to develop gender responsive standards where applicable;
- ❖ Provide committees with any necessary training to develop their gender expertise;
- ❖ Ensure committees include a gender expert or have access to gender expertise (e.g. via a network of gender experts);
- ❖ Strive to institutionalize successful and effective practices, procedures and policies to ensure the gender inclusive environment is maintained and that future standards will also be gender responsive.

3.5. Panel 3: Sustainable Production & Consumption (Goal 12)



Background

The panel on “Standards for Sustainable Production and Consumption” built on previous work by the WP. 6 in support of an increased contribution by standards to industry competitiveness, sustained economic growth, and higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation.

In particular, the discussions at the Conference built on two previous UNECE events:

- A “Brainstorming Session” titled “[The Emperor’s New Clothes](#)” took place as part of the European Development Days (Brussels, 8/6/2017) and raised awareness of the role of trusted, harmonized industry standards, related labels, and certification schemes for progressing and measuring sustainability in the textile industry
- A panel session during the [2016 Session of the Working Party](#) had discussed “Industry initiatives for SDG Goal 12”

Standardisation Administration of China (SAC)

The Director of the Standardization Administration of China (SAC) said that China has incorporated the idea of sustainable development into the new version of Standardization Law of China. In addition to mandatory standards, SAC also optimized the interplay between voluntary national standards, sector standards and local standards. While pursuing sustainable development, it is also necessary to mitigate the risks of creating barriers to trade and of unduly influencing global value chains. In this regard, the Chinese National Platform of Voluntary Sustainability Standards was established to manage and coordinate nongovernmental standards related to sustainable development.



PowerPoint Presentation: [Chinese Standards for SDGs](#)

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

The representative of the UNCTAD described their role as a focal point in the United Nations systems on issues of enterprise accounting and reporting. She presented the Intergovernmental Working Group of Experts on International Standards of Accounting and Reporting (UNCTAD-ISAR) and UNCTAD's co-custodial role for indicator 12.6. She called for collaboration in the harmonization of enterprise reporting on sustainability.



PowerPoint Presentation: [Enterprise Reporting and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)

TÜV Rheinland Group

The representative of the TÜV Rheinland Group observed that the apparel, clothing and footwear industry creates a significant burden on the environment. Several countries have established a voluntary framework for brands to operate with, and industry-wide standards and tools have also been established. Organizations including UNECE, UNEP and UNIDO have offered platforms for multi-stakeholder co-operation. He called for further action, including supporting firms technically and financially in standards implementation, strengthening capacity for certification processes and enhancing policy coherence.



PowerPoint Presentation: [Sustainable Production and Consumption \(SDG 12\)](#)

Research Institute of Global Value Chains

The representative of Research Institute of Global Value Chains presented the case study of a training on sustainable trade and global value chains in Jiangsu Province of China. This training targeted local textile producers and exporters, retailers as well as policymakers. Based on this experience, significant achievements in energy conservation and emissions reduction could be achieved by utilizing the ISO environmental system certification and European certification of green environmental protection. She also stressed the importance of increasing investments in technical reform and equipment, and using eco-environmental raw materials in production.

PowerPoint Presentation: [Sustainable Trade & Global Value Chains for Textile Products](#)

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

The representative of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) highlighted the need for a more comprehensive and sector-wide approach to supply chain due diligence in the garment and footwear sector. OECD had launched the Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains in the Garment and Footwear Sector, in line with the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. The due diligence model addresses risks across the supply chain including those related to sub-contracting, indirect sourcing and purchasing practices. In order to see transformation in the sector, a shift away from individual projects and towards sector-wide collaboration is likely necessary; government, business, trade unions and civil society all have important roles to play.



PowerPoint Presentation: [Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains in the Garment & Footwear Sector](#)

Discussion Session

During the questions and answers session, the representative of UN/CEFACT noted that UN/CEFACT has many activities in the area of sustainable production and consumption, such as sustainable textile and agriculture, from the perspective of trade facilitation. The representative of the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) noted that they have also developed a large number of standards in this area. He called attention to the proliferation of standards, and invited the participants to provide proposals to unify various standards.

The representative of the UNCTAD commented on the governance of matters related to seas at the UN. He noticed that there are many unsolved problems such as the management of high seas, and suggested that reforms are needed to update regulatory methods. He also emphasized the importance of science for policy makers, and the fact that sound political decisions have to be based on science.

A representative of UNCTAD speaking from the audience asked about ways to encourage the active participation of companies. Using an initiative by Greenpeace as an example, the representative of the TÜV Rheinland Group illustrated how they incentivize companies by making public the risks of companies' practice, such as water

pollution, to consumers. Another way is demonstrated by the practice of ILO in Germany where they encourage the companies by making them realize the benefits of adopting good practice, such as saving of costs. The panellist from UNCTAD shared her organization's experience of collaborating with standard setting bodies at the country level to engage companies where SDG focal points are set at country level to gather information and facilitate communication.

3.6. Panel 4: Managing Risks for Sustainable Fisheries (Goal 14)



Background

This session built on previous work by the GRM on the Fisheries sector, and, in particular:

- A [workshop](#) that applied the UNECE Risk Management methodology to the specific challenges of SDG 14 on “Life below water”: see [report](#)
- Two national projects, undertaken with support by the European Commission in [Namibia](#) and [Uganda](#) see [presentation](#)

UNCTAD

The representative of UNCTAD introduced the goals and targets of SDG14 against the worrying trends of increasingly fully fished and overfished species and the rise of aquaculture production. He discussed the role of regulations and standards for the advancement of SDG 14. Certified seafood had increased 40-fold between 2003 and 2015, while fish-related SPS/TBT measures had grown by 11.2 % since 2010.



There was an urgent need to increase transparency, understanding, harmonization, capacity building and mutual recognition. He concluded by presenting key expectations and concerns regarding standards by developing country users.

PowerPoint Presentation: [Trends in Non-Tariff Measures & Standards for SDG 14](#)

Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)

The practice of the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) illustrated the role of standards in promoting sustainable fisheries. MSC maintains a Fishery Standard, which determines the sustainability of a fishery against 28 indicators. Certified fish can be traded only through companies certified against the MSC's Chain of Custody Standard. MSC has mobilized consumers, retailers and fisheries in support of a theory of change that uses the market to reward improvements and sustainable performance in fisheries. The programme has generated thousands of positive environmental improvements; moreover, communities and businesses have seen significant economic and social benefits.



PowerPoint Presentation: [How Standards Help Promote Sustainability](#)

HCL Consultants

The representative of the HCL Consultants talked about his experience implementing the UNECE Risk Management for Regulatory Frameworks Model in the sector of fisheries in two African countries, Uganda and Namibia, thanks to funding provided by the ACP EU TBT Programme. The project supported a shift from rules-based to risk-based regulations, and a sustainable model of consumption and production. He described the activities and results of his missions, and explained that, after a short training, local stakeholders had shown extensive capacity to assess, evaluate, plan and enforce risk management within regulatory frameworks and would only need modest funding for a communication platform in order to sustain change.



PowerPoint Presentation: [Fishery Risk Management in Regulatory Framework; Practical Outcome from the Field: Uganda & Namibia Experiences 2016](#)

Institute for Coastal Research

A speaker from the private sector, also speaking on behalf of the representative of the Institute for Coastal Research, said that the achievement of the SDGs depended on risk management being central to policies and strategies. He presented the results of the meeting of the GRM that had discussed the use of risk management tools in regulatory frameworks in support of SDG14. He also announced that a symposium would be held in October 2018 in Iceland, in collaboration with the International Council for the Exploration of Sea, to further identify governance, scientific and technical needs in support of SDG 14.



PowerPoint Presentation: [Life Below Water](#)

UN/CEFACT

The representative of UN/CEFACT explained that overfishing and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing accounted for an estimated 25% of annual ocean harvest, and was valued at up to \$23 billion, which threatened biodiversity and food security in many countries. UN/CEFACT had developed the Fisheries Language for Universal Exchange (FLUX) to facilitate timely acquisition of information on vessels, stocks and catches and information exchange among stakeholders to address the challenge. A Team of Specialists for the implementation of FLUX and other sustainable fisheries standards on a global scale had been established and would meet in Geneva on 29-30 January 2018.

PowerPoint Presentation: [UN/CEFACT for SDG 14.4: FLUX Sustainable Fisheries Standard](#)

Discussion Session

Answering a question about potential duplication between Aquaculture Stewardship Council, the representative of the MSC said the two organizations have a close relationship. For example, they have recently developed the joint MSC-ASC Seaweed Standard. The representative of the EEC supported international cooperation in this area, and highlighted the need to integrate different standards, such as different designations of the same species of fish, to reduce confusion and disputes.

Answering a question from the floor, the representative of the HCL Consultants reflected that one driving force to incentive the uptake of standards that can contribute to the SDGs is to convenience the companies that these standards can provide benefits,

such as economic gains and meeting consumers' demands. This is especially the case for SDG 14 since activities on the sea is difficult to regulate.

The Minister on Technical Regulation of EEC highlighted the need for cooperation in the area of fisheries and especially with regards to potential conflicts in denominations and avoiding fragmentation.

4.1. Recommendation T on 'Standards and Regulations for Sustainable Development'

The Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies,

Taking special note of how Agenda 2030 now represents a cornerstone for the United Nations in all sectors of its activity

Wishing to enhance the contribution of voluntary standards to realization of Agenda 2030

Wishing to further strengthen cooperation between governmental regulatory authorities of the Member States and standards development bodies and the United Nations in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda

Affirms that:

A systematic management of the risks inherent to of the 2030 Agenda is a pre-requisite for achieving the SDG Goals

A standards-based approach constitutes a solid basis for regulating in view of the realization of the Agenda

The Rationale for the Recommendation

- The social, economic and environmental dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets are currently covered by a very broad range of legislative and regulatory systems and jurisdictions.
- In order to contribute to the achievement of SDGs and targets, a broad range of risks shall be effectively and efficiently managed within regulatory frameworks, as described in Recommendation R.
- Many standards, UN agreements and conventions, as well as other regulatory frameworks that are already in use are relevant to achieving SDGs.
- Implementation of the SDGs requires developing regulatory processes and building risk-based regulatory systems that would be proportionate to risks that are relevant to SDG targets in terms of regulatory requirements, conformity assessment and surveillance processes.
- Standards and guidelines remains a challenge given the divergent use of definitions and methods. There is a lack of coherence and consistency in conceptual frameworks and

methodologies with respect to management of risks in regulatory systems of the sectors linked to the SDGs, and the implementation of risk management practices through regulatory regimes, standards and guidelines remains a challenge given the divergent use of definitions, methods.

- The use of standards by policy-makers and business would not only help integrate standards into regulatory systems, but also enhance the design of regulatory systems while providing clarity for institutions in the development of their programs in a more systematic and coherent manner.

Recommends:

General Recommendation

A. Regulatory authorities should use risk management tools – including voluntary standards to build the regulatory frameworks that are needed to operationalize the SDGs.

B. Regulatory authorities should use the risk management approaches that are based on standardized risk management processes and harmonized definitions.

C. Considering the SDG targets as objectives of a regulatory system the risk management frameworks defined in Recommendations P and R of the Working Party in combination with other tools and methodologies should be applied to design processes required for economic operators, consumers, communities, regulators and legislators, and other societal stakeholders to be involved in managing the risks related to the achievement of the SDG targets.

Regulatory authorities are encouraged to base the regulatory frameworks aimed at the implementation of the Agenda 2030 on the Annexed Checklist

Checklist for Risk Based Regulatory Systems for the Implementation of Agenda 2030

A. Setting regulatory objectives

When setting regulatory objectives, the SDG targets should be analyzed within the given national and international contexts to identify clear regulatory objectives and develop a sound implementation strategy from a regulatory and operational perspective.

The SDG and their targets should be reviewed regularly to identify intersections and interdependencies, For example, the goal of any given SDG may depend on another SDG being reached. Some of the SDG targets may be relevant for the achievement of other targets. Some interdependencies may – instead - complicate the simultaneous achievement of different goals and targets.. Results of such analysis should be considered when establishing cooperation among regulatory authorities.

B. Risk identification and assessment in regulatory frameworks linked to SDGs

Regulatory authorities should use data-driven approaches in risk identification and assessment. Data and modelling play an important role in risk analysis to characterize the risks in terms of causes, events and consequences. Tolerance criteria must be established to evaluate the risks of regulatory options within the national policy context.

Proactive stakeholder involvement is key in risk identification.

Regulatory authorities should avoid applying the approach of “looking at risk in isolation from the bodies that make decisions”. This means avoiding focusing on smaller risks that we know how to control, but focus instead on the big risks that threaten several SDG outcomes.

Risk management and assessment activities including key indicators should be underpinned by current scientific knowledge through formalized and independent advisory processes. Such an approach will ensure that the risks perceived by stakeholders and regulators are examined against existing scientific and technical evidence providing transparency while fostering support from stakeholders. This will enhance the science- informing policy and policy- informing science paradigms and approaches but will require exchange of best practice.

C. Regulation development within regulatory frameworks linked to SDGs

In case the implementation of an SDG requires regulatory intervention, regulations, standards and guidelines should be developed from the premise that “people want to comply”. The mechanisms of implementation and awareness raising must be efficiently integrated within the operations of a given sector to be effective at reaching a given objective, including through the adoption of guidelines and relevant enforcing jurisdiction.

D. Market surveillance and enforcement

Enforcement is a necessary component of any regulatory system. Sufficient resources should be allocated to its planning and its execution. To prevent regulatory failures, including high levels of non-compliance, instead of introducing new regulations, policy-makers would be well advised to analyze the regulatory system in its entirety: including the need for employee training, the difficulty of implementing regulations within daily operations, the capacity of the sector to implement the regulation, as well as the extent of intentional violations.

Local market surveillance authorities and enforcement bodies play a vital role in the implementation of the SDGs, since they are responsible for enforcing all regulations, no matter by which authority and at which level it was set (e.g. including international regulations).

When possible, approaches described in Recommendation S should be used **to support the existing qualitative methods** as a prioritization tool that would allow enforcement authorities and regulators to focus their attention on products/businesses/activities that are (1) most threaten the implementation of the SDGs when non-compliant and (2) most likely to be non-compliant (with the highest probability of non-compliance).

4.2. Pledge for Action on Gender Responsive Standards

Pledge for Action on Gender Responsive Standards

All standards bodies and standards development organizations are invited to develop a gender action plan for their organization to become a gender responsive standards organization.

The UNECE invites organizations to join the Gender Responsive Standards Initiative and share data and experiences of the implementation of the gender action plans so as facilitate an exchange of best practice and peer learning.

Actions below are suggested best practices for the standards bodies to include in their action plans.

Also mindful of the important ways how standards are used in policy making The key goals listed (❖) are supported by suggested tactics / activities (➤) to achieve them. These suggestions are not exhaustive and may not be appropriate or applicable to all contexts and so organizations need to consider what will be successful in their particular circumstances.

[insert organization name] pledges to be a gender inclusive national standards body / standards development organization by taking any or all of the actions below.

Working towards gender balanced / representative *and* inclusive standards development environments

- ❖ Strive for a representative number of women in all phases of standards development
 - always assess the gender balance of your committees and if there is an opportunity to improve it
 - connect with organizations and informal (networks) within industries / professions which could help you improve the gender balance
 - collect sex-disaggregated data on participants in standards development (overall and by industry) and compare this with employment statistics
 - awareness raising
 - education for committee chairs/secretaries inclusivity training
- ❖ Strive to create a standards development environment which enables gender inclusivity and equality
 - Ensure the leadership supports striving for a gender inclusive environment and for gender responsive standards
 - conduct yearly research with committee members to learn about any differences in experiences in standards development based on gender
 - develop / implement policies and procedures which support gender inclusivity
 - review the gender balance of the chairs / senior roles within standards making and seek to improve it where it is imbalanced

- ❖ Strive to develop a gender experts network as a resource to support standards development committees in their work
- ❖ Support individuals who want to be gender advocates by encouraging and enabling them to take action within their areas of standards development
 - encourage programme managers to promote gender inclusivity on their standards development committees and provide them with tools and resources to do so
 - give individuals the opportunity to pledge to take actions themselves and / or get involved in actions being taken by the organization
 - record the number of individuals taking action and involved in collaborative work on internal and external gender inclusivity projects and ask them to report on their results / work
- ❖ Strive for gender representative participation in other phases of the standards development process such as making proposals, commenting on proposals and commenting on drafts
- ❖ If individuals or the organization choose to take action, ensure personal and organizational plans include relevant objectives and that progress is being monitored and tactics are being reviewed and revised accordingly

Creating gender responsive standards

- ❖ Contribute to the development of a tool to
 - Identify what gender implications these may have review and analyse standards entering into any form of active development (new or revision) to identify which ones may have gender implications in their content or implementation
 - Contribute to the development of tools for gender-based analysis suitable for applying to standards and
 - Provide training in using the tools
 - Use existing frameworks (e.g. ISO, CEN-CENELEC etc.) to work collaboratively and share resources / expertise
 - Such as GBA+
- ❖ Ensure committees have relevant expertise, tools and resources to strive to develop gender responsive standards where applicable
 - provide committees with any necessary training to develop their gender expertise
 - ensure committees include a gender expert or have access to gender expertise (e.g. via a network of gender experts)
- ❖ Strive to institutionalize successful and effective practices, procedures and policies to ensure the gender inclusive environment is maintained and that future standards will also be gender responsive

Annex: List of Participants

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