



# Strategy

# ISO Action Plan

## for developing countries

2016-2020







Great things happen when the world agrees

## ISO strategic direction 2016-2020

ISO is an independent, non-governmental international organization with a membership of 165 national standards bodies. Through its members, it brings together experts to share knowledge and develop voluntary, consensus-based, market-relevant International Standards that support innovation and provide solutions to global challenges.

The *ISO Strategy 2016-2020* underlines that ISO's most important resource is its member organizations and their networks of experts. ISO will therefore invest in building the capacity of all its members, both at the human and the organizational level, through learning, research and development solutions. This includes supporting the transfer of knowledge to a younger generation of experts.

## Developing countries

ISO recognizes that increased and effective participation of developing countries in international standardization is of fundamental importance and that its developing country members need specific assistance to fully exploit the value of standards in support of their countries' development.

**The ISO Action Plan for developing countries is the general framework describing ISO's commitment in this area.**



## ISO and developing countries

In the last two decades, the number of developing country members in ISO has significantly increased and, today, over three-quarters of ISO members are from developing countries.

This is an important achievement, yet significant gaps still have to be addressed. ISO members from developing countries need assistance to build their capacity, increase their participation in international standardization and fully exploit the value of standards.

Participation of developing countries in international standardization is also essential to ensure the global relevance of ISO standards and contribute to the access of developing countries to world markets, technical progress and sustainable development.



## The ISO Action Plan for developing countries

The *ISO Action Plan for developing countries 2016-2020*, which complements the *ISO Strategy 2016-2020*, describes the overall framework of technical assistance that ISO expects to deliver over this five-year period. It builds on the solid foundation of the two previous editions of the Plan (2005-2010 and 2011-2015), the results achieved in the past ten years and the lessons learned.

Developing country members play a major role in directing the process of ISO's technical assistance by:

- Actively contributing to the development of the Plan
- Providing specific input linked to its implementation (in particular through the annual needs assessment process)
- Making a commitment to the success of the Plan at the level of the national standards body (NSB) and contributing resources for the implementation of the Plan
- Monitoring progress and evaluating results

Members participating in the ISO Committee on developing country matters (DEVCO) also have a collective responsibility to monitor the overall implementation of the Action Plan through the annual meeting of DEVCO.

While ISO, with support from donors, can assist developing country members in making the best use of their membership, the objectives of the Action Plan can only be achieved if members take full ownership of the activities carried out under the Plan. In particular, ISO members should make every effort to promote standardization in their countries in order to secure engagement and support from stakeholders and relevant organizations for the implementation of the Plan.

The *ISO Action Plan for developing countries 2016-2020* is administered at the ISO Central Secretariat (ISO/CS), in consultation with the Chair's Advisory Group of DEVCO.

# ISO Action Plan for developing countries

2016-2020

## STRUCTURE & TERMINOLOGY

### IMPACT

Contribute to economic development, social progress and the protection of the environment in developing countries

**DEFINITION** – Improvements of a situation in terms of social and economic benefits which respond to identified development needs of the target population under a long-term vision

### KEY OUTCOME

Support the development or strengthening of the national quality infrastructure

**DEFINITION** – The overall changes and/or benefits that result from the whole programme

### OUTCOMES

Standardization has a recognized, effective role in support of public policies

**DEFINITION** – The changes or benefits that result from the various components of the programme – intended situation at the end of, or soon after, the programme's lifespan

NSBs' strategic capabilities strengthened

NSBs' capacity strengthened at operational and technical levels

Increased involvement of developing country members in international standardization

Coordination and synergies with other organizations and among projects implemented

### OUTPUTS

**DEFINITION** – Products and services produced or competences and capacities established directly as a result of the programme's activities

### ACTIVITIES

**DEFINITION** – Specific tasks performed using resources and methods in order to achieve the outputs

## **IMPACT**

### **Contribute to economic development, social progress and the protection of the environment in developing countries**

This high-level, long-term goal is aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which set the scene for the Post-2015 Development Agenda – the global framework involving the international community and all major players active in this domain (governments, international organizations, development agencies and many private-sector entities).

## **KEY OUTCOME**

### **Support the development and/or strengthening of the national quality infrastructure (NQI) of developing countries, with a specific focus on the standardization pillar**

ISO intends to contribute to the **impact** through its specific competencies and strategic assets, primarily by helping to strengthen the national quality infrastructure (NQI) of developing countries. In addition, ISO will contribute by launching new International Standards projects that address sustainable development issues of particular importance for developing countries, and by supporting their participation in existing projects of a similar nature.

### **The role and importance of NQIs**

The national quality infrastructure (NQI) is a country's institutional framework that establishes and implements the practice of standardization, conformity assessment services, metrology and accreditation. It includes public and private institutions and the regulatory framework within which they operate.

ISO recognizes that the NQI is a critical enabler for social progress and economic development, including the participation of developing countries in international trade.

A solid and effective NQI is essential to:

- Contribute to the development of national industry and a strong export market
- Foster consumer protection and the establishment and application of health and safety and quality assurance measures
- Support environmental protection

Many developing countries suffer from a weak NQI, which can be a major impediment to their integration into regional and global markets, limiting the opportunities offered by trade and hindering the ability to improve public welfare in vital areas such as health, safety and environmental protection.

ISO can help the development of solid and effective NQIs by strengthening its members in developing countries in many ways. While many national standards bodies (NSBs) have specific responsibilities in matters pertaining to conformity assessment, and in some cases metrology, the *ISO Action Plan for developing countries 2016-2020* focuses mainly on supporting the standardization pillar of NQIs. Although conformity assessment is only partially addressed by ISO, standards are fundamental in this area, and collaboration as well as synergies are actively sought with organizations having specific interests and competencies in conformity assessment.



## OUTCOMES

Five main areas of improvement for ISO members in developing countries have been identified and are presented as the **outcomes** of the Action Plan.

- **Outcome 1: Standardization has a recognized, effective role in support of public policies**
- **Outcome 2 : National standards bodies' strategic capabilities strengthened**
- **Outcome 3 : National standards bodies' capacity strengthened at the operational and technical levels**
- **Outcome 4 : Increased involvement of developing country members in international standardization**
- **Outcome 5 : Coordination and synergies with other organizations and among projects implemented**

Under each **outcome** are listed the expected results of the activities to be undertaken, i.e. the **outputs** of the Plan. These were initially selected by consulting the DEVCO members, whose input was channelled through the DEVCO Chair's Advisory Group, then validated at the DEVCO meeting in Seoul, Republic of Korea, in September 2015.

The **activities** to be performed to achieve the outputs of the Plan, and the target groups addressed by them, are described in separate documents that are accessible through the ISO Website. The approach used to measure the effectiveness of the projects delivered under the Plan is described under the section “Monitoring and evaluation”.



## **OUTCOME 1: Standardization has a recognized, effective role in support of public policies**

Recognizing that standardization can have an effective role in supporting public policies is an essential condition for the development and operation of a solid NQI. However, in many developing countries, regulators and, more generally, policy makers, lack detailed understanding of the role of standards in this context. Leveraging on the experience acquired so far, ISO intends to contribute to strengthening the link between standardization and public policies by disseminating knowledge, promoting awareness and supporting the application of good practices.

### **Outputs**

- 1.** Guidance materials developed, and support provided, to strengthen the relationship between standardization and public policies (tailored to the country's specific needs)
- 2.** Awareness raised among policy makers and public officers on general aspects and domain-specific aspects covering priority areas for the country (e.g. industry sectors or horizontal themes of public interest)
- 3.** Improvements in the application of the WTO/TBT Code of Good Practice ("Code of Good Practice for the Preparation, Adoption and Application of Standards", Annex 3, *WTO Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade*)

## **OUTCOME 2: National standards bodies' strategic capabilities strengthened**

This outcome relates to the improvement of the NSBs' capacity in areas that are vital for the organization and its functioning in the long term. It concerns notably the ability to identify and contribute to national priorities, secure the financial sustainability of the organization, demonstrate the value of standards to different stakeholder groups, engage national stakeholders in standardization, and promote education about standardization in order to build awareness, especially among younger generations, of the importance of standards for markets and society.

### **Outputs**

- 1.** National standardization strategy published and updated (based on economic, social and environmental priorities of the country and considering the strategies of international and regional standards organizations)
- 2.** Benefits of standards (economic, social, environmental) in priority areas for the country analysed, demonstrated and promoted
- 3.** Long-term financial sustainability of the organization addressed, in compliance with national regulations and with the ISO Code of Ethics
- 4.** Effective stakeholder engagement mechanisms implemented in national, regional and international standards development
- 5.** Improved relationships with educational institutions, with education about standardization introduced or strengthened in school programmes and, particularly, in university curricula



## **OUTCOME 3: National standards bodies' capacity strengthened at operational and technical levels**

This outcome concerns the improvement of the NSBs' capacity to perform their mission effectively and efficiently. It includes the application of the fundamental principles of standards development, the application of project management to the standards development process, the provision of good-quality services to standards developers and standards users, the dissemination of standards in the country, and the optimal use of supporting functions with a focus on information and communication technologies.

### **Outputs**

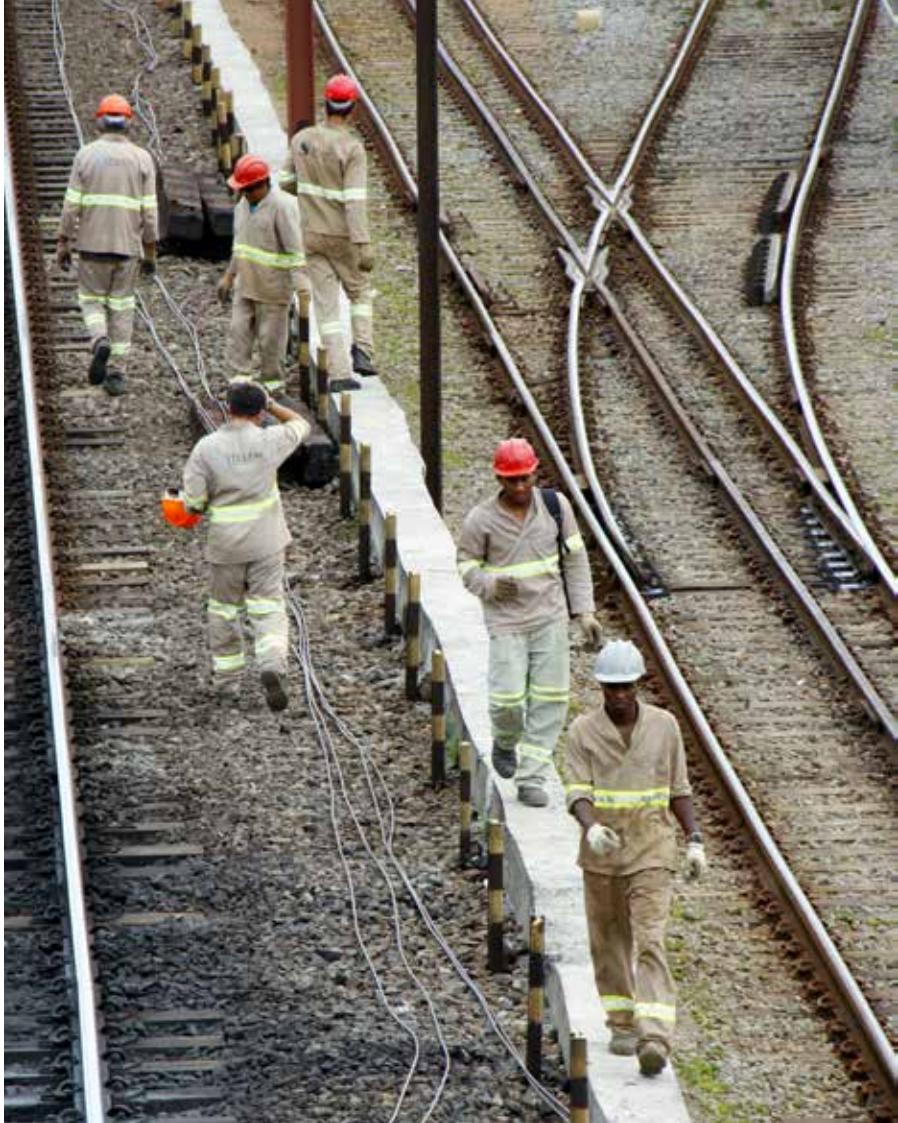
- 1.** Fundamental principles and good practices for governance of technical work established and applied
- 2.** Project management implemented for standards development and efficient and effective services provided to standards developers
- 3.** Improved dissemination, use of, and compliance with, standards, and effective and efficient services provided to standards users (information, consultancy, training)
- 4.** Enhanced use of information and communication technologies in support of standards development and dissemination
- 5.** Improved management of operations and increased knowledge and skills of NSB staff



## **OUTCOME 4: Increased involvement of developing country members in international standardization**

Increased participation in international standardization in areas of national priority is a significant enabler for a country's integration in the global market and for the development and implementation of measures of public utility. In addition, international standardization is an important and effective instrument to establish and promote good practices and health, safety and environmental protection measures, which are especially relevant for developing countries.

ISO intends to address this area of improvement by supporting participation of developing countries in technical work and promoting projects for new standards of specific interest for developing countries.



### **Outputs**

- 1.** Increased participation in ISO technical committees addressing national priority areas – as identified in the national standardization strategy
- 2.** Increased quality of participation, which comprises effective representation of national stakeholders, the relevance of their contribution, and the ability to introduce and support national positions at the various stages of standards development
- 3.** New standards projects of particular interest to developing countries identified and promoted, in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2016-2030
- 4.** Increased ability to use mechanisms and services available within ISO to support participation in standards development (e.g. twinning and mentoring arrangements, partnerships, cooperation agreements with NSBs, etc.)

## **OUTCOME 5 : Coordination and synergies with other organizations and among projects implemented**

Coordination between the different players engaged in development projects, such as donors, international organizations, regional standards organizations and ISO members with skills and resources in development aid, is important in order to avoid duplication of efforts and obtain multiplying effects.

### **Outputs**

- 1.** Strong cooperation mechanisms with regional standards organizations implemented (with respect to the identification of needs, including issues of particular relevance for the region, coordination of initiatives and non-duplication of efforts)
- 2.** Partnerships developed or strengthened with a plurality of development aid organizations
- 3.** Partnerships significantly extended with ISO members providing development aid services
- 4.** Collaboration strengthened among developed and developing country members, increasing resource sharing, exchange of information and adoption of best practices





## Activities and execution of the Action Plan

The outputs identified in this Plan will be achieved through projects and activities organized at the global, regional and country levels.

- Global activities target the whole ISO membership and include the dissemination of materials, tools and information services covering subject areas of general interest to ISO members and their stakeholders.
- Regional-based projects include capacity-building and awareness-raising work focusing on issues of regional concern, or issues of global concern that can be more efficiently managed at the regional level.
- Country-based programmes include training and technical assistance to build the capacity of national standards bodies to support specific outcomes of the Plan.

These activities are complemented by:

- The ISO sponsorship programme supporting participation in the work of technical committees
- New initiatives (based on research and consultation with ISO members and partners) aimed at launching new standards projects of particular interest to developing countries
- IT platforms and tools to support the sharing of information and decision making among ISO members

Projects and activities are designed by ISO/CS in consultation with the DEVCO Chair's Advisory Group following annual needs assessments of developing country members in ISO. The execution of the Plan is coordinated by ISO/CS, making use of internal resources, ISO members with training and technical assistance capabilities and external suppliers. Full details and up-to-date information on the annual work programme can be found on the ISO Website.



## Beneficiary countries and allocation of support

The *ISO Action Plan for developing countries 2016-2020* targets developing countries whose national standards body is a member of ISO.

In developing the Plan, ISO recognizes that its members have different needs and levels of capacity. When deciding how to distribute technical assistance, priority is given to the least developed countries and efforts are made to ensure geographical balance. These principles are complemented by criteria related to interests and participation in international standards work of beneficiary countries and to their level of competence and/or performance in specific areas. The definition of these criteria will be undertaken by ISO/CS in consultation with DEVCO through its Chair's Advisory Group.

Developing country members are also requested to contribute to the initiatives from which they benefit. In many cases, this will require a formal commitment of resources as a condition for participating in specific projects carried out under the Action Plan. In addition, to ensure good coordination and effective use of resources, beneficiary countries are expected to disclose to ISO/CS information regarding technical assistance programmes executed by other organizations in their country, covering matters similar or related to those addressed by ISO in the framework of the Action Plan 2016-2020.

## Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring the implementation of the Action Plan 2016-2020 and the evaluation of results is fundamental to ensure the success of ISO's work with developing countries. Each level of the Plan (impact, key outcome, outcomes and outputs) is associated with a set of relevant indicators that will be refined over time within the Plan's logical framework – a tool for the planning, implementation, management, monitoring and evaluation of projects.

Beneficiary countries, ISO members and ISO/CS all have an important role to play in evaluating the success of the Plan. ISO/CS has primary responsibility for:

- Monitoring the execution of the activities included in the Plan
- Providing methods, tools and guidance to support the collection of data from beneficiary countries
- Monitoring the overall progress of the Plan, and evaluating results at least twice during the Action Plan cycle (mid-term and final evaluations)
- Organizing independent reviews of projects, based on ISO's requirements and the requirements of donors contributing to the Plan

ISO members that benefit from activities delivered under the Action Plan are responsible for collecting relevant data on a regular basis and monitoring, for their respective countries, the outputs and the outcomes of the Plan.

Members will be required, in many cases, to commit to producing specific deliverables or to report on the assessment of results, as a condition for benefitting from assistance projects.

**International Organization  
for Standardization**

ISO Central Secretariat  
Chemin de Blandonnet 8  
Case Postale 401  
CH – 1214 Vernier, Geneva  
Switzerland

**iso.org**

© ISO, 2016  
All rights reserved  
ISBN 978-92-67-10642-7

