



# liaisons

## **ISO and the UN**

Working together for  
international standardization

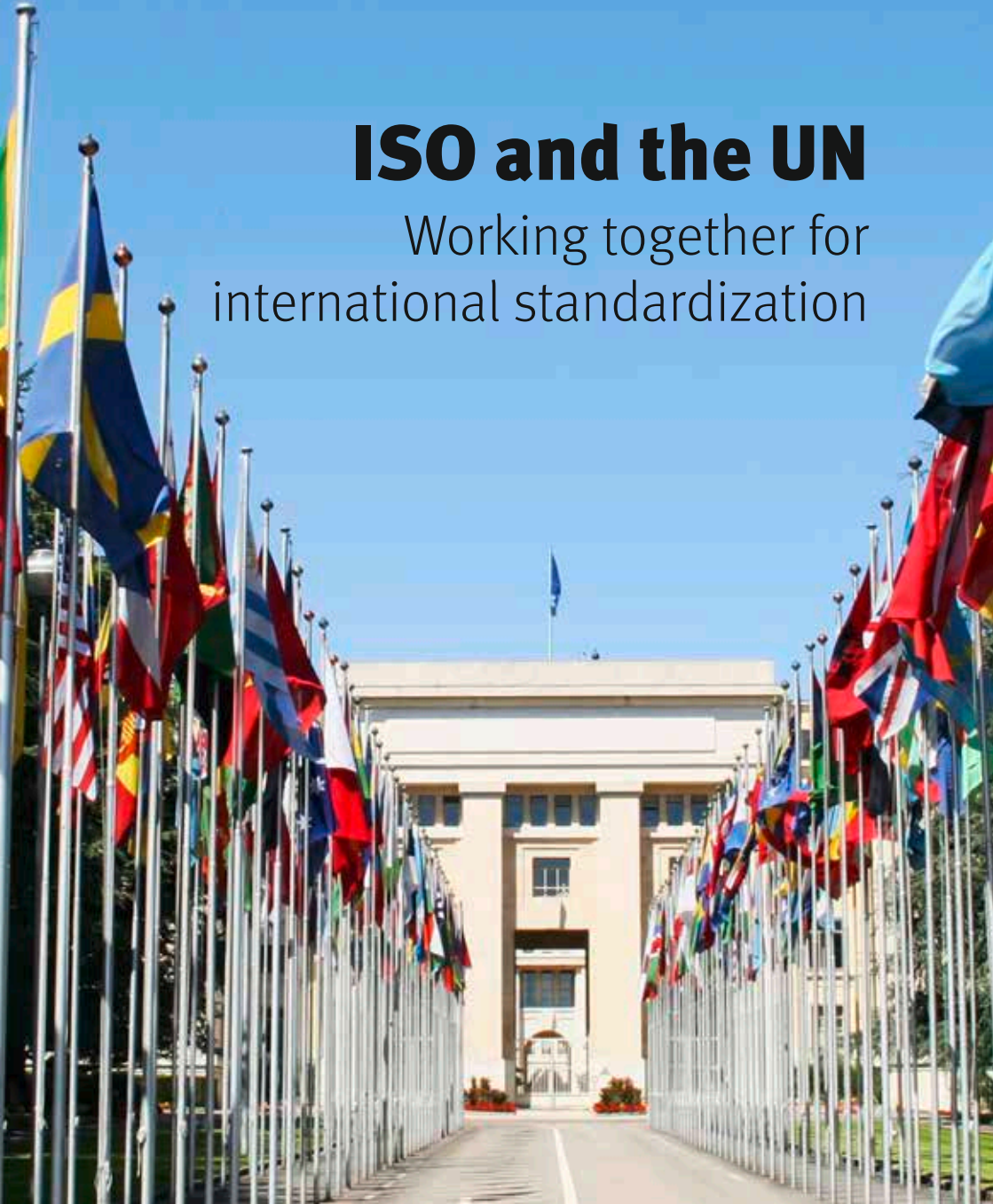




Photo: UN – François Vroind

**Standard:**

Document, established by consensus and approved by a recognized body, that provides, for common and repeated use, rules, guidelines or characteristics for activities or their results, aimed at the achievement of the optimum degree of order in a given context.

Source: **ISO/IEC Guide 2:2004**, *Standardization and related activities – General vocabulary*

ISO has been actively engaged with the United Nations (UN) since 1947. The long-established history of collaboration between the two organizations has been essential to tackling global challenges and will continue to be a transformative force in the future, as we pursue the implementation of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals.

ISO is proud of the close relationship its technical committees enjoy with the United Nations. UN organizations participate in many ISO committees over a wide range of sectors (refer to **page 8**).

The active involvement of UN experts shaping ISO standards and supporting their implementation is central to achieving worldwide success. ISO hopes to extend this cooperation in years to come.





Photo: UN

*“Closer cooperation with ISO is essential [...] to be aligned and correctly interlinked for the benefit of governments, businesses and traders around the world.”*

**Michael Møller**, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva

To this end, this brochure is aimed at UN organizations that want to know how ISO works, what are the benefits of international standardization, and how to get involved.

### **What makes ISO so special?**

The need for truly global standards has expanded as new markets, new actors and new powerful economies emerge. ISO provides tailored mechanisms to establish international consensus that result in globally and market-relevant standards. Organized as a worldwide network of more than **160 national standards bodies** (with one member per country), ISO invests considerable efforts to ensure that all members can effectively participate in international standardization, for example by providing extensive training and technical assistance programmes for developing countries.

In addition, ISO works with more than **700 international and regional organizations** to develop and publish international standards and other deliverables for products, services, processes, conformity assessment, managerial and organizational practice. With a collection of more than 22 000 standards spanning practically every sector, ISO is the leading producer of international standards.

Because ISO standards are developed in a multi-stakeholder environment, this ensures that a wide range of technical views are represented, including those relating to social and economic interests.



The international standards developed by ISO are voluntary. And while they do not seek to establish, drive or motivate public policy, regulations, or social or political agendas, they can certainly provide valuable support to the implementation of public policy.

Source : *Using and referencing ISO and IEC standards to support public policy*



Different perspectives come from the national level, through a network of liaisons and cooperation with international governmental and non-governmental organizations. Thanks to this robust process, ISO standards reflect a double layer of consensus – among experts from market players at the drafting stages of the standards, and among countries at the formal commenting and voting stages of the standards.

### **How can ISO standards contribute to advancing the 2030 Agenda ?**

Society today faces many challenges that cut across national borders, and which cannot be solved by one company, individual or government alone. Many of these challenges appear in the Sustainable Development Goals as part of the 2030 Agenda.

ISO standards  
are key tools that  
can be used to  
tackle challenges.



ISO standards are key tools that can be used to tackle these challenges, because they promote the development and deployment of innovative technologies and support the three pillars of sustainable development : **economic sustainability** by facilitating international trade, improving a country’s national quality infrastructure and supporting sustainable business practices ; **social sustainability** by helping countries and communities to improve the health and well-being of their citizens ; and **environmental sustainability** by helping businesses and countries manage their environmental impact.



*“An integrated global economy, with a strong and dynamic multilateral trading system, supported by international standards, is a better world for everyone.”*

**Alan Wolff**, Deputy Director General,  
World Trade Organization

Policy makers can  
have confidence using  
ISO standards.

The World Trade Organization’s (WTO) Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) recognizes the key role that international standards can play in regulatory harmonization and trade facilitation and instructs its members to use them as a basis for their national technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures. This means that policy makers can have confidence when using ISO standards to support their policy initiatives that they are fulfilling their WTO obligations and not creating any technical barriers to trade.

## How to get involved

ISO standards are developed in specialized technical committees, in which partner organizations can participate as liaisons free of charge. Liaison status comes with a range of benefits from simply monitoring a committee’s activity, to proposing new projects, participating in the drafting of standards or even leading the work. For details on the different categories of liaison in ISO, the eligibility criteria, rights and obligations of each, and the approval process, see Clause 1.17 of the **ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1**.







UN agencies already participating in the development of ISO standards include :

- **FAO** Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
- **ICAO** International Civil Aviation Organization
- **ILO** International Labour Organization
- **IMO** International Maritime Organization
- **ITU** International Telecommunication Union
- **UN Habitat** United Nations Centre for Human Settlements
- **UNCTAD** United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
- **UNDP** United Nations Development Programme
- **UNECA** United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
- **UNECE** United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
- **UNEP** United Nations Environment Programme
- **UNESCAP** United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
- **UNESCO** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
- **UNESCWA** United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

**Need more information or assistance ?**

Further details on ISO's technical committees, their scopes and membership are available on the ISO Website

at [www.iso.org/technical-committees.html](http://www.iso.org/technical-committees.html)

If you have any questions, ISO's external relations team will be happy to help.

Please contact the team at [externalrelations@iso.org](mailto:externalrelations@iso.org).



- **UNFCCC** United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
- **UNFPA** United Nations Population Fund
- **UNGEGN** United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names
- **UNGIWG** United Nations Geographic Information Working Group
- **UNICEF** United Nations Children's Fund
- **UNIDO** United Nations Industrial Development Organization
- **UNISDR** United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
- **UNWTO** World Tourism Organization
- **UPU** Universal Postal Union
- **WHO** World Health Organization
- **WIPO** World Intellectual Property Organization
- **WMO** World Meteorological Organization

For the full list of organizations in cooperation with ISO, see [www.iso.org/organizations-in-cooperation-with-iso.html](http://www.iso.org/organizations-in-cooperation-with-iso.html)

## About **ISO**

ISO (International Organization for Standardization) is an independent, non-governmental international organization with a membership of 161\* 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.

ISO has published more than 22 000\* International Standards and related documents covering almost every industry, from technology to food safety, to agriculture and healthcare.

For more information, please visit [www.iso.org](http://www.iso.org).

\*August 2018

### **International Organization for Standardization**

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

# **iso.org**

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ISBN 978-92-67-10820-9

