REPORT ON THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON STANDARDIZATION AND INNOVATION

Geneva (Switzerland), 13-14 November 2014

RATIONALE

Innovation is widely recognized as one of the essential drivers of successful business and a key contributor to a nation's productivity and economic and social development. Finding ways of fostering innovation is a central concern for both forward-thinking companies and governments. In many countries there is a strong focus on public funding of research and development and on intellectual property rights (IPR) as instruments of innovation policy and business strategy.

Whilst it is clear that economic and societal benefits from research can only be achieved through their successful transfer into innovative products and processes, this critical aspect – which is the one to which standardization contributes most – is often neglected.

The conference was designed precisely to address this subject, promoting the dialogue between researchers and standards experts from companies, government and academia. The overall objective was to help discover the multi-faced relations between standardization and innovation, learning from success and failures, identifying and promoting optimal forms of collaboration between research and standards development.

THE EVENT

The conference was organized by ISO in partnership with CERN (Organisation Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire), the world's largest Laboratory for Particle Physics, and took place at the CERN premises in Geneva on **13-14 November 2014**. Designed as an invitation only event, it attracted around **100 participants, from 26 countries**, including senior managers from national standards bodies, ISO committee chairs and secretaries, researchers and senior representatives from industry, government and academia.

The conference was organized to shed light on the essence of the relationship between standardization and innovation. It addressed a number of core issues regarding the role of standardization in relation to:

 – creating and disseminating technologies and opening new markets (session 1)
 – supporting the business strategy of innovative companies (session 2)
 – defining and implementing successful innovation policies (session 3)

It also gave the opportunity to analyze the relationship between research and development and standardization in a specific field (Green Buildings, session 4) and to discover the role of standardization in CERN's knowledge transfer processes, through a number of specific examples (session 5).

A Web site, developed for the conference, includes all the presentations given during the sessions, along with the video-recording of all presentations and panel discussions (details given below).

OUTCOME OF THE EVENT

All participants found the event timely, interesting and engaging. There was wide-spread agreement that the themes covered by the conference are very important and should be part of the priority agenda of standards bodies.

Participants fully concurred with the opinions proposed by the speakers of the various sessions that standards are enablers of innovation and that there is a synergistic relation between standardization and research. However, it was noted several times that this is not always part of "conventional wisdom" and standards organizations, along with standards experts, have a lot more to do to communicate this message to researchers, academics and decisions-makers from the private and public sectors, and to improve standards development practices to better fit with the needs and expectations of researchers, companies and institutions concerned with innovation.

Participants were able to exchange on the topics of the conference, primarily through panel discussions open to the contribution of the audience, and to come forward with ideas and proposals.Feed-back and recommendations concerning specific action items were summarized in the final session and are outlined below.

Recommendation 1. Participants underlined the high-quality of contributions given by the exceptional group of speakers involved in the conference. They suggested to capitalize this content by making it available on the web – allowing all interested parties to have access to it, share and refer to it to disseminate knowledge on the subject.
[NOTE 1: An action item re: this point has already been completed. All the presentations and speakers' biographies have been posted on the conference web site, along with the video-recording of the various sessions]

Recommendation 2. It was also suggested to develop a new, specific publication based on the content presented at the conference and on the outcome of the discussions.
This specific publication would cover the theme "Standardization and Innovation", highlightingsome general points and providing, as case studies, the great examples described during the conference.
[NOTE 2: ISO is ready to follow-up on this recommendation. The development of a publication of this kind – with precise format and structure to be determined – will be undertaken by ISO in the coming months.]

Recommendation 3. The conference allowed to identify examples of excellence in the relationship between standardization and innovation – i.e. specific technical committees or other bodies having developed smart and effective ways of interaction.
The idea is to organize a specific activity (based on workshops, focus groups or other mechanisms) aiming to identify best practices in linking standards work with research and development – learning from and confronting the experience of some of the most successful standards groups (specific ISO committees or working groups, consortia, initiatives led by national standards bodies, etc.).
[NOTE 3: This is an activity that ISO is considering and that, following consultation with ISO members and other entities, could be undertaken in 2015.]

Recommendation 4. Consideration of new research projects investigating the relationship between standards and innovation in other sectors, and the possibility of developing modern mechanisms of information sharing and of dialogue promotion among the concerned parties (e.g. through social media).

Recommendation 5. Follow-up to the conference in relation to strengthening the dialogue between ISO and CERN, and expanding the engagement of CERN in standardization activities (within ISO and other bodies) – a number of interesting and important areas were identified at the conference: The idea would be to effectively use CERN's expert knowledge in highly-specialized areas as a catalyst for aggregating expert knowledge from other organizations moving into the forefront of research, with a view to linking them to existing standards groups (or to create new ones), to create standards that cater for the specific needs of advanced users.

Recommendation 6. Consideration of the possibility to run a second edition of the conference in a reasonable timeframe – with a view to maintain focus on the issue, assess progress made over time and possibly describe new developments triggered by the conference itself or its follow-up.

Conference website: http://www.iso.org/sites/standardsinnovationconference/index.html
Presentations and Outcome:
http://www.iso.org/sites/standardsinnovationconference/presentations.html

Videos: http://www.iso.org/sites/standardsinnovationconference/videos.html