

**United States Standardization Strategies and
Their Relationship to ISO's Long-term Strategy**

Remarks by Dr. Mark Hurwitz, CAE - ANSI President and CEO

Slide 1 – Title

Thank you. *Acknowledge person making introduction (unclear from the agenda whether this will be Hiroo WAKAI or Professor Masami Tanaka).*

Miscellaneous introductory remarks:

- This is my second trip to Japan. In 1999 I attended the IEC conference in Kyoto but this is the very first time that I have been in Tokyo. I've long wanted to visit your beautiful city and am so pleased to now have that opportunity. It is a great honor to be here in Tokyo today to represent the American National Standards Institute at this International Standardization Forum.
- Acknowledgement of Hiroo Wakai – Japanese representative to the ISO/TMB. Thanks for the invitation to participate.
- Acknowledgement of Sadao Takeda – my counterpart on the ISO Council
- Acknowledgement of Professor Masami Tanaka, ISO President-Elect; I look forward to working with you.
- Brief introduction to ANSI:
 - ANSI is JSA's counterpart in ISO activities.
 - ANSI is responsible for the coordination of the U.S. standards and conformity assessment system.

(pause)

Globally recognized standards for products, processes, services, systems and personnel are being developed, promulgated and implemented on a global scale.

The impact of globally relevant standards on free and fair trade is pervasive. And so are the systems that assess conformance to these standards.

It is my intent today to address standardization from a broad and strategic perspective. I will highlight similarities between the strategic view of standards-setting that has been taken by the United States and the recently approved long-range strategy of the International Organization for Standardization.

First, I would like to “set the stage” by explaining that the U.S. standardization model closely resembles the nation’s political and economic structure. Our system is sector-based, driven by market needs, and relies strongly on diversity, flexibility and decentralization.

Modern circumstances require that all segments of our global society work together more closely for mutual benefit. The standardization community brings together in an open forum professional representatives of industry, government regulators and legislators, consumer groups, academics trade and professional societies and others. Together, we conduct a careful examination of the issues facing the marketplace and society and we work together in an efficient, effective, and expeditious manner for the development of standards-based solutions to meet these critical needs.

But today, the cultural, economic and regulatory factors that have helped to shape the traditional standards system are being tested:

- First, the trend towards globalization is drawing increasing attention to standards that are relevant *around the world*, rather than being only regionally or locally relevant.

- Further, the traditional strengths of a voluntary consensus standardization system – such as consensus, openness and transparency – must be married with new requirements, such as speed, relevance, and meeting the needs of public interest constituencies.

The impact of the changing environment is being felt as much in the international arena as it is within the borders of the United States.

ANSI has taken a vocal stance and has worked with JSA and other partners around the work to introduce change into the international standards bodies of ISO and IEC.

Slide 2 – Premise

Why have we done this? Certainly one of the key reasons is because standards impact so many aspects of global trade. Standards have also become an indispensable part of nearly every aspect of daily life for everyone in both modern and emerging economies.

(pause)

The attention being given to standardization from the highest levels of government, industry and trade officials is greater than ever before. And there is a real need for a focused and integrated involvement in standardization policy and strategy-setting activities.

(pause)

Early last year, the U.S. Department of Commerce announced a new standards initiative that was aimed at boosting American exports by reducing technical barriers to trade. Included in the program was an eight-point plan that was aimed at creating a more level playing field around the world.

ANSI was solicited and relied upon for input during the development of the project. We welcomed this initiative and viewed it as a means to help to strengthen a widespread understanding of the important role that developing and using voluntary standards and conformity assessment systems play in the support of U.S. citizens and the competitiveness of our nation's industry in international trade.

In May of this year, U.S. Commerce Secretary Donald Evans announced the results of the year-long initiative undertaken by his Department.

His first line in the report declares that “*The international language of commerce is standards.*”

This statement is a great testament to the increasing awareness and interest that global standardization activities are receiving from the not only the U.S. government but, apparently, also from governments around the world.

ANSI views this activity as the latest demonstration of increasing cooperation and collaboration between U.S. industry and government and we have pledged our support to helping advance the goals that have been outlined.

Slide 3 – How Standards-Setting Has Changed

International standards contribute to making the development, manufacturing and supply of products and services more efficient, safer and cleaner. They make trade between countries easier and fairer. They provide governments with a technical base for health, safety and environmental legislation. They aid in transferring technology to developing countries. In general, international standards serve to safeguard consumers and the users of products and services.

Our premise is simple. A level playing field is required so that participants from all economies – whether representing a developing or a developed nation – can participate as equal partners.

A level playing field can be attained through the implementation of a globally-relevant voluntary consensus standardization process.

(pause)

The traditional strengths of a voluntary system change infrequently. *Consensus*, *openness* and *transparency* are cardinal principles that remain consistent over time.

Yet changing environments and workplace trends have placed additional emphasis on issues such as speed, relevance, and the need to meet public interest constituencies. External factors – as well as the very culture of standardization – have led to an evolution and a maturation of the standards-setting process.

Slide 4 – Focus: One-One-One Model

Many things have changed in the past ten years. Probably foremost amongst these changes is the fact that industry increasingly wants the synthesis of globally relevant solutions: one standard and one test that can be used around the world.

Globally relevant standards and conformity assessment programs can be an *essential element* of an industry's domestic and global competitiveness. While these may not be *stand-alone* solutions, they are certainly vital components in a *comprehensive* solution to trade problems.

Standards are only one dimension of advancing free and fair trade. The other side of this coin addresses conformity assessment and speaks to the goal of “one test, accepted worldwide . . .”. The phrase “One Standard – One Test – One Acceptance” is often referred to as the “1-1-1” Equation.

(pause)

Continuing pressures in the global marketplace to preclude redundant and costly barriers to trade drive the need for acknowledgement of equivalency across boundaries.

If the trend is towards more standards development at the global level, then the follow-on activities must include globally recognized tests and globally accepted marks of conformance.

Slide 4 – The U.S. Standardization Model

The U.S. approach to standardization relies upon the involvement and cooperation of diverse stakeholders that may come to the standards-setting table with very different points of view.

We believe that this diversity is what gives our system its strength. The system itself is highly decentralized and naturally partitioned into industrial sectors that are supported by numerous independent standards developing organizations.

It is estimated that there are more than 95,000 recognized standards in the U.S. alone. Most of these are developed and used on a voluntary basis. The majority are developed by technical committees formed within the private sector.

ANSI's role is to serve as a coordinator of the voluntary consensus standardization aspects of this system. The Institute addresses standardization needs in all fields – industries involved range from nuclear energy to information technology and from material handling to electronics. Alongside traditional engineering committees and design-based standards are new and innovative projects ranging from quality and environmental management, to standards for the service industry and most recently, for personnel certification programs.

The Institute does not itself develop these standards . . . our members do. There are some 200 ANSI-accredited standards developers across the spectrum of industry.

In some industries, we have seen non-traditional groups such as consortia becoming more involved in standards-setting activities. Recent trends also indicate there are an increasing number of collaborative partnerships between consortia groups and traditional standards-setting bodies. This is an ideal scenario because it combines the speed of development that is often associated with consortia groups with the consensus and due process requirements that are typically associated with the more formal, or traditional, standards-development bodies.

In most cases, government and industry representatives participate as “equal partners” in standards-setting committees.

Contrast the U.S. system with those in place in other regions of the world and you will undoubtedly see quite a difference. In fact, we recognize that other regions of the world sometimes perceive that no one in the U.S. — neither the government, nor any central authority — is in charge. I hope to clarify this misconception for you.

Because the launch of a new standards project is driven by market need, we often refer to the U.S. system as a “bottom-up” approach to standardization. The need for a standard or conformity assessment program is driven by the market. The proposal for a new project may arise from any source.

Culturally and systematically, this differs from the “top-down” approach to standards setting that is in place in many other systems around the world. In these systems, either the government or groups closely coupled to government, serve as the standards setters.

Slide 5 – National Standards Strategy

The U.S. believes that a “one-size fits all model” does not work. Effective standardization must be sector-specific and market driven.

In the mid- to late 1990’s, several groups within the U.S. began to dialogue about the value in coming together to develop a structured approach to our standardization strategy.

Over a period of two years and through a collaborative effort that included input from hundreds of diverse U.S. interests, the first-ever National Standards Strategy for the United States, or “NSS,” was developed. The current NSS was approved on August 31, 2000.

This Strategy reaffirms the basic strengths of the U.S. standardization system that we discussed just moments ago. It maintains several traditional principles, including:

- Consensus
- Openness
- Balance
- Transparency
- Due process

It also brings new attention to the implementation of principles such as

- Responsiveness to real world needs (market and societal)
- Performance-based rather than design-based standards that can be too restrictive
- Relevance (value is added)
- Coherence (no apparent duplication or overlap)
- Flexibility
- Timeliness

At the onset, the Strategy’s goal was to help improve U.S. competitiveness in the global marketplace while continuing to provide strong support for domestic markets and key quality-of-life issues such as health, safety and the environment.

Slide 7 – NSS Overview

When applied in the context of international standardization, the principles of the NSS mean we need better involvement by more nations and better operation of many national standardization representatives to ensure that positions taken at the international table truly reflect the national consensus. This may mean recognizing that not all work is done

through ISO and IEC and that all good work can be globally relevant. This may also mean that more leaders in our - and other - countries will perceive the value of voluntary standards work and take leadership positions.

Slide 8 – NSS Principles

We also believe that standards developing organizations must become more responsive to marketplace and societal needs. The path to the future requires a focus on the needs of the end user, on a flexible working model, and a commitment to cooperation and collaboration.

One task for standards professionals is to better inform those wishing to develop documents of the choices and the impact of those choices on the resulting documents.

As standards developing organizations react to market demands, they are providing processes leading to documents that are *not* standards. For example, ISO and IEC have International Workshop Agreements and the Publicly Available Specification processes. The point is that the alternatives to standards are relevant to the needs of the user.

Slide 9 – NSS Strategic Initiatives

The NSS includes a set of strategic and tactical initiatives within a framework that can be used – as appropriate – by diverse interests to meet their own national and individual organizational objectives. These initiatives can be implemented by traditional standards-setting bodies or by non-traditional groups – such as consortia.

The significance of this framework is that each sector is responsible to determine what constitutes successful standardization for its stakeholders.

For example: the level of consensus needed and the speed with which the standards are developed. It is the standards users who determine what standardization initiatives to pursue and who dictate the course and direction of our future activities.

It is also important to recognize that each group and each sector is also responsible for elements of the Strategy's implementation.

We firmly believe that our basic principles are equally relevant to international standardization. U.S. interests from many diverse industries are working with their colleagues around the world to promote the sector-based approach in both regional and international standards development arenas.

If appropriate, continue with a brief summary review of the twelve listed on the slide.

Slide 23 – A Vision for the Future

We must continue fostering positive relationships with our global partners if we are to be successful in our cooperative efforts to establish globally relevant international standards and globally recognized testing programs and marks.

It has become quite clear that the diverse needs of the global standards community cannot be addressed by a single, rigid, top-down system of standardization.

Our ultimate goal is to achieve a level playing field in the international standards arena, and an assurance that the needs of all nations are taken into account when developing standards and conformity assessment programs that support free and fair trade.

ANSI is fully committed to a system in which the market dictates the timing, content requirements, and number of standards that are to be developed under a voluntary, consensus-based, standards process. We believe that the same holds true for conformity assessment requirements.

The key elements of this system – shown here – would also reflect the principles of the WTO/TBT Agreement:

- Decisions must be reached through consensus of all affected interests
- Balance will be maintained among competing interests
- Processes will be transparent, flexible, timely and coherent
- All views will be considered and appeals are possible
- The traditional standards-setting bodies will work cooperatively
- Traditional and nontraditional standards-setting bodies will work well together

I suggest that we work together as advocates for a flexible, sector-based structure and management within the global standardization and conformity assessment community.

I look forward to pursuing this partnership with you.

Slide 30 – For more information

ANSI is ready to partner with JSA and its members in pursuit of these endeavors. We look forward to working with you.

Thank you for your time and attention.

<< END >>