

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND CAPACITY BUILDING IN THE TBT FIELD

Submission by New Zealand

I. INTRODUCTION

1. New Zealand supports the development of programmes of technical assistance and capacity building targeted at the specific needs and priorities of developing country Members. In taking note of the Second Triennial Review's emphasis on enhancing the coordination and cooperation of donor countries and organizations¹, and in view of the responses to the Secretariat's survey of developing country Members' specific needs², New Zealand offers the following observations on its experience in the provision of technical assistance and capacity building on TBT matters.

II. BACKGROUND

2. New Zealand contracts Standards New Zealand (SNZ) as its national TBT enquiry point. Since 1998 SNZ has undertaken formal and informal dialogue with standards and conformance bodies in Latin America and Asia, and provided training and capacity building on the development and management of international standards and technical infrastructures. In 2002, SNZ prepared under contract to APEC a handbook on notification authorities and national enquiry points under the TBT and SPS Agreements, and conducted training seminars on recommended procedures in Peru and Thailand. Further information on SNZ's experience in the provision of technical assistance and capacity building is attached at Annex.

3. In 1999 SNZ visited Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Peru to explain and promote a Co-operation Proposal that it had drafted with the New Zealand Ministry of Commerce (now the Ministry for Economic Development). This fact-finding mission also doubled as a preliminary needs assessment for capacity building in the region. The proposal received comment from Latin national standards and conformance bodies, and their Foreign Affairs and Trade Ministries. The proposal resulted in two specific project areas being established: MERCOSUR-CER Dialogue on Standards and Conformance, and the Training of Senior Management of Latin American Standards Bodies.

4. In 2000, SNZ visited Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia. The visits involved assessing the policy, metrology, standards, certification and accreditation frameworks and identification of potential projects that would build capacity in standards and conformance. Also identified were further development and assessment of training needs in standards and conformance infrastructure.

¹ G/TBT/9.

² G/TBT/W/193.

III. SEQUENCING

5. On the basis of its experience in the provision of technical assistance and capacity building in the TBT context, Standards New Zealand have identified a certain logical sequencing for the implementation of its technical assistance projects as follows:

- Clear articulation of what elements within an economy are needed to support WTO TBT obligations.
- Consideration of the current structures in the developing country that support these TBT obligations.
- Review of the trade and technical infrastructure policies within a developing economy, including consideration of service delivery functions, and the role of government and private sector bodies in delivering on policy outcomes.
- The drafting and passing of necessary legislation.
- Legal and scientific metrology assistance (if required).
- Training on the writing of documentary standards and adoption of international standards (if required).
- Training and development of a government accreditation body (there should be one government accreditor covering both laboratory and other forms of accreditation).
- Training on the use of mutual recognition arrangements and unilateral equivalence by developing economies to short circuit any need to establish and develop an extensive conformity assessment body.
- Training in the involvement of the economy in the international standards development process.

6. The stages outlined above correspond to several of the specific needs identified by developing country Members in their responses to the Secretariat's survey, as set out in G/TBT/W/193. This includes benchmarking the requested needs against an assessment of the elements needed to support TBT obligations; the establishment and development of national infrastructure to assist with the implementation and administration of the TBT Agreement (including standardization and conformity assessment); improving national and regional coordination amongst regulatory authorities and other relevant bodies on TBT matters; and participating in the work of relevant bodies, e.g. international standardizing activities.

7. Of course, a sequenced approach will not be appropriate in all cases. In addition, it may be necessary to revisit earlier stages in the sequence to identify any gaps in the results of earlier projects, to ensure technical assistance is having a sustainable impact. However New Zealand's experience highlights that in addition to identifying the specific needs in developing countries for technical assistance and capacity building, it is important to get the sequence right in the delivery of such assistance. In this context, New Zealand recalls Mexico's statement that a great deal of technical assistance provided to developing Members thus far has tended to focus more on enhancing human resource capability than enhancing the supporting technical infrastructure.³ Mexico's suggestion of the development of a quality assurance system (based on relevant international standards) for government departments in charge of applying TBT provisions needs further reflection, but

³ G/TBT/W/189.

New Zealand's experience parallels Mexico's in pointing to the need to get the proper infrastructural framework in place as the first priority in the provision of technical assistance and capacity building.

8. A sequenced approach should not preclude there being multiple donors working with a single recipient country. However in cases where multiple donors are present, a sequenced approach further highlights the need for coordinated and transparent delivery of assistance. This will help ensure that different stages of a sequence are not unnecessarily duplicated or left out all together. Accordingly, New Zealand supports ideas to improve the coordination and transparency of technical assistance delivery.

IV. CONCLUSION

9. New Zealand welcomes the emphasis placed on extending technical assistance and capacity building on TBT matters to help Members successfully implement and administer the Agreement. It is clear that the provision of technical assistance must be demand-driven, but New Zealand believes it is desirable that such assistance should also be carefully sequenced in order to ensure its long-term success. New Zealand offers these views as a contribution to the 18 March 2003 Workshop on Technical Assistance and the Third Triennial Review of the TBT Agreement, which is due to be completed in 2003.

ANNEX

Training and Capacity Building Provided by SNZ since 1998

Seminar on Issues in International Standardization, 1998

This project was undertaken for ASEAN. The seminar was on key issues in ISO/IEC (International Organization for Standardization & International Electrotechnical Commission) Standards. The Seminar incorporated a workshop on ISO Technical Committee 207 (Environment) developments.

Training in Development and Management of International Standards, 1998

SNZ provided a one-month training programme in New Zealand to two ASEAN members' standards officials in ISO standards and development.

Training in Development and Management of Technical Infrastructures (Standards and Conformance Systems), 1999

SNZ provided a one-month training programme in New Zealand to two ASEAN countries' standards officials in standards and conformity systems. The programme covered the following elements of standards and conformance structures:

- An understanding of the whole technical infrastructure in New Zealand.
- An appreciation of the change management process that Standards New Zealand has undergone in response to operating in a self-funded environment.
- The policy debate surrounding performance based regulation and the use of standards as trade barriers.
- Specific improvements that Standards New Zealand has made to the traditional standards development process and engaging stakeholders in the economy.

Training in Development and Management of Technical Infrastructures (Standards and Conformance Systems), 2000

SNZ provided a one-month training programme to two ASEAN and one Latin American countries' standards officials in standards and conformity systems. The programme was based in New Zealand and covered similar elements of standards and conformance structures to those outlined for the 1999 programme above.

Standards and Conformance Training, 2001

This programme involved bringing four senior Latin American officials from their national standards bodies to New Zealand for a period of one month. During this month, they spent time with SNZ to understand how SNZ operates and meets its WTO/ISO/IEC obligations. In addition, the officials learnt about the full standards and conformance infrastructure (i.e. policy, regulation, legal metrology, physical metrology, standards, accreditation and conformity assessment).

Standards and Conformance Training, 2001

This programme involved bringing two senior ASEAN country officials from their national standards bodies to New Zealand for a period of one month. During this month, they spent time with SNZ to understand how SNZ operates and meets its WTO/ISO/IEC obligations. In addition, the officials learnt about the full standards and conformance infrastructure (i.e. policy, regulation, legal metrology, physical metrology, standards, accreditation and conformity assessment).

2002 APEC Handbook on Notification Authorities and National Enquiry Points under the Technical Barriers to Trade and Sanitary and Phytosanitary Agreements of the World Trade Organization.

This handbook was intended to facilitate the establishment and effective operation of Enquiry Points and Notification Authorities required by the WTO Agreements on TBT and SPS. The project had two components: (1) Preparation of the Handbook, and (2) Presentation of 2 training symposiums - one in Lima, Peru and the other in Bangkok, Thailand to ensure that Americas/Latin America and Asia/Australasia economies fully understand the WTO requirements. Sixty-seven representatives from 12 countries attended the Lima symposium, while 75 representatives from 16 countries attended the Bangkok symposium.
