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INTERNATIONAL STANDARDIZATION 1/

by

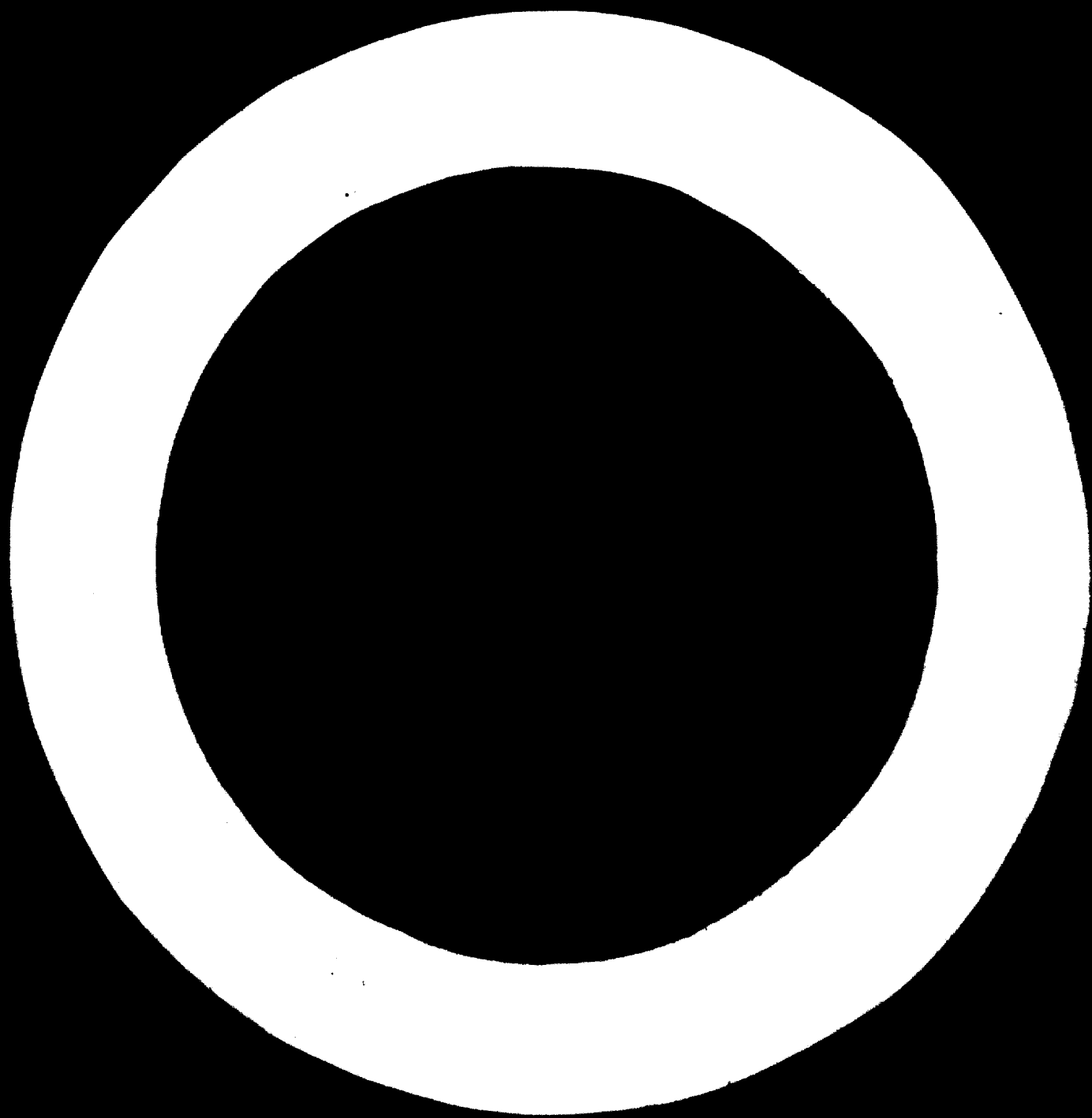
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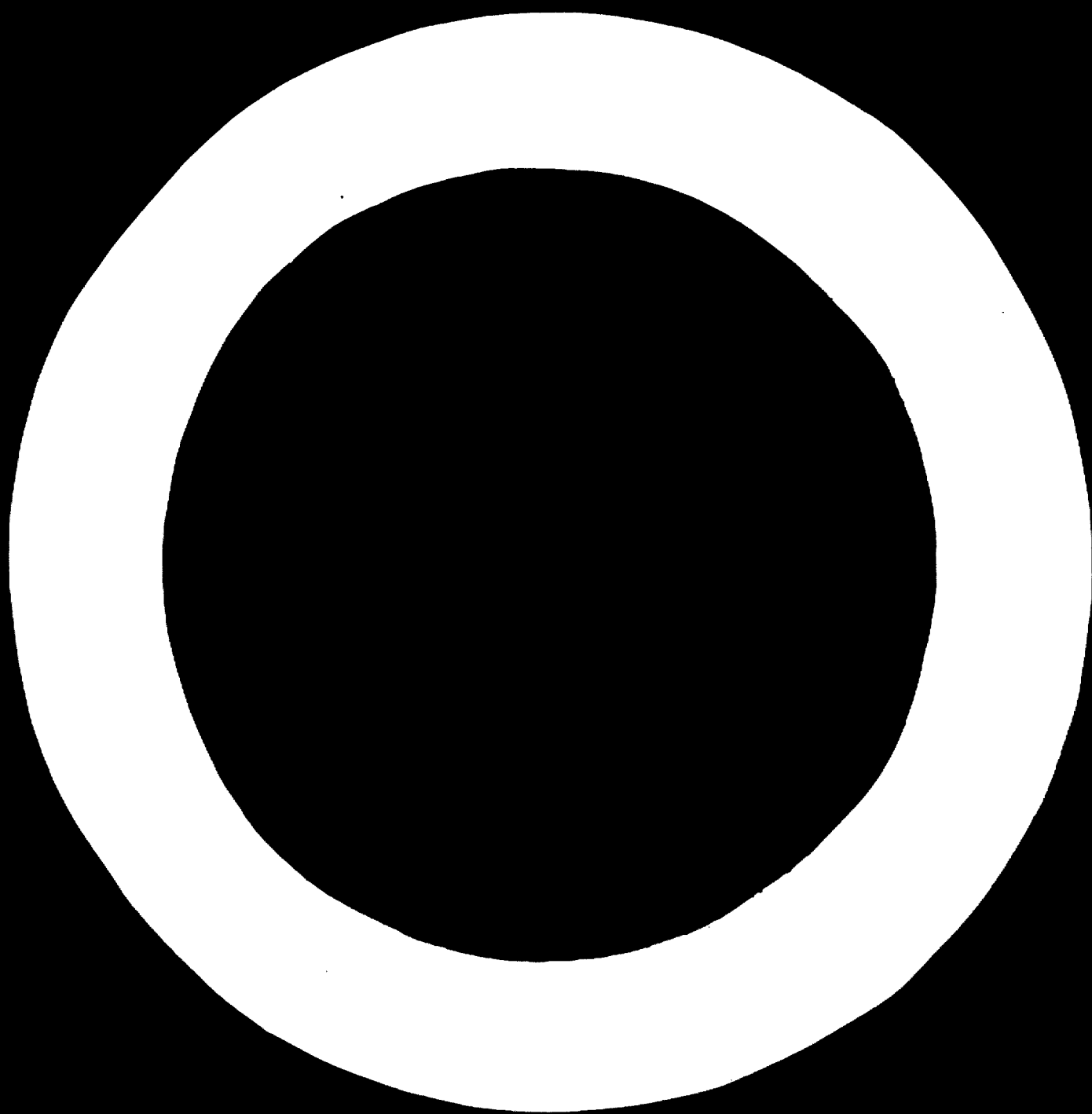
Central Secretariat
International Organization
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Geneva

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INTERNATIONAL STANDARDIZATION

With the interpenetration of national economics and the development of international exchange of industrial and agricultural goods and services, international standardization has become indispensable to world economy. The role of international standards is recognized today all over the world in both developed and developing countries. Bearing this in mind we shall consider the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) whose main task is to promote the development of standards in the world with a view to facilitating international exchange of goods and services and to develop mutual co-operation in the spheres of intellectual, scientific, technological and economic activity.

ISO exists officially since 1947. Naturally, the scale of the organization and the volume of its work have grown considerably since then. ISO has developed particularly quickly during the last three to four years, covering new fields of economy, industry and agriculture. Today ISO includes more than 140 Technical Committees, 330 Subcommittees and 600 Working Groups. Sixty-five countries take part in ISO activities (including 11 Correspondent Members). Since its creation, ISO has prepared and published about 2000 ISO Recommendations on standards. It now publishes more than 300 ISO Recommendations per year.

ISO activities cover very different fields, ranging from agriculture to nuclear energy and they are based on the democratic principle of participation of all interested countries and organizations and on large participation in discussions on documents in course of preparation. ISO in its work takes into consideration the interests of producers as well as consumers, of developed as well as developing countries. A large number of scientists, qualified experts and standardizers from all over the world participate in the technical work of ISO. They invest their knowledge and experience in ISO technical documents, thus acting for the benefit of all.

We can say with confidence that putting ISO Recommendations into national practice will help countries to meet modern technical requirements and to obtain high quality of their products and goods. Participation in ISO activities is an excellent opportunity to achieve mutual understanding among the different countries and organizations, as well as an education in acceptance of standard conceptions and putting them into practical use.

The time now has come to publish International Standards instead of Recommendations. Starting 1 January 1972, the technical agreements reached within ISO will therefore become available as International Standards.

ISO is on the way to further improvement and consolidation. Recently four Technical Divisions grouping together related ISO Technical Committees were established. These Technical Divisions will assess the needs and requirements for International Standards to be developed, will co-ordinate and advise on the programming, planning and utilization of the work of the Technical Committees, etc. The first meetings of the Technical Divisions have shown the positive results of such a method of work, and additional divisions are being considered.

An increasing interest in standardization is taken by Governments. A large number of governmental international organizations are paying great attention to standards activities on both international and regional levels. Regional standardization is practiced by groups of countries with common economic problems and interests in world trade as an intermediate step towards international standardization. A few examples of such groupings are, European Standards Co-ordinating Committee (CEN); Commission on Standardization of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) of the Socialist Countries, Asian Standards Advisory Committee (ASAC), Arab Organisation for Standardization and Metrology (ASMO), Maghreb Centre of Industrial Research, Pan American Standards Committee (COPANT). An important role of the regional organizations is to promote the application of International Standards and their implementation in the countries of the region. By harmonizing the national standards within a region, the countries of the region facilitate their mutual trade. On the other hand, any regional standard should only be an intermediate solution for the preparation of truly International Standards.

With regard to governmental international organizations, they are particularly interested in standards dealing with transportation, environment, safety and health, but also in overall trade promotion by removal of non-tariff barriers to trade.

Standardization today is considered as an instrument in economical development and it is linked with quality problems. In developed and developing countries alike, the National Standards Institutes are supported by the Authorities, are given new premises, laboratories and equipment. In many countries, the Standard Institute acts in close collaboration with governmental institutions for common national benefits. Therefore, this is the right moment for developing countries to be involved actively in the international standards movement. One may ask - what does this mean?

- by active participation of developing countries in the work of ISO Technical Committees and Technical Divisions, it is possible to take into consideration in international standardization the needs and requirements of developing countries.
- developing countries knowledgeable in quality control can contribute experience they have gained with their own products, at an early stage in the process of drafting standards affecting these products.

- developing countries may submit to ISO for preparation as an International Standard:

- a) regional standards dealing with specific export products and goods of the region
- b) joint technical specifications on the products imported into this region from other countries, bearing in mind the climatic conditions, raw materials, etc.

- by taking advantage of the experience of international standardisation, by attending plenary meetings of ISO Technical Committees and international standard forums, it becomes easier to organise national standard services

As to participation of developing countries in the international standard activities and assistance to these countries from ISO, we can mention the following:

A few years ago a category of Correspondent Membership of ISO was created. This Membership has been considered in the wider realm of technical assistance to developing countries and is intended to cater to the needs of countries at the first steps of their industrial development which are in the stage of either planning or already organizing national standardisation movement. The intention is to progressively acquaint them with standardization work so that when their national standardization machinery is formally created and begins to function, they stand a good chance of doing so in a way which draws maximum advantage from the work already done in the international field. Eleven developing countries benefit now from this kind of ISO Membership.

Correspondent Members receive all documentation about ISO, including both general information about meetings of Technical Committees, copies of Draft Recommendations and Recommendations when published. In addition a Correspondent Member has the right to register as an observer member of such Technical Committees which may be of interest to the economy of the country. The Observer Members of an ISO/TC may assist at Technical Committee meetings and receive from the Central Secretariat all documents of a general, technical and informative nature. A special ISO Developing Committee (DEVCO) was organised in 1961 in order to deal with developing countries' problems and needs in the area of standardization. A conference on standardisation for the developing countries was organised jointly by UNIDO and ISO in Moscow in 1967. At the ISO General Assembly in Ankara in 1970, one of the main subjects for discussion was standardization and developing countries. As a result of these activities a series of recommendations have been drawn up dealing with specific steps for helping countries to create and develop their National Standards Institutes. The Governments of developing countries have been invited to present to the United Nations Specialised Agencies reasonable requests for experts in standardization, for financial assistance in order to obtain the training facilities, testing equipment, technical documentation comprising standards and allied documents etc.

ISO Member Bodies have been asked to provide on a bilateral basis experts on standardization and testing facilities; provide copies of their national standards and to help developing countries in problems of documentation, translation, etc.

Since its creation DEVCO has made some important contributions for a programme of assistance to developing countries:

In order to define the needs of developing countries in the field of standardization, a first draft of a questionnaire on this subject was drawn up and discussed. The second draft is now being prepared.

The DEVCO Secretariat, which is with the ISO Central Secretariat, has carried out an enquiry intended to determine the subjects of international standardization which ISO Member Bodies from developing countries consider should be given priority. Upon the first request six countries have contributed information. DEVCO recently repeated its request to remaining Member Bodies and Correspondent Members in developing countries to contribute towards widening the scope of this enquiry.

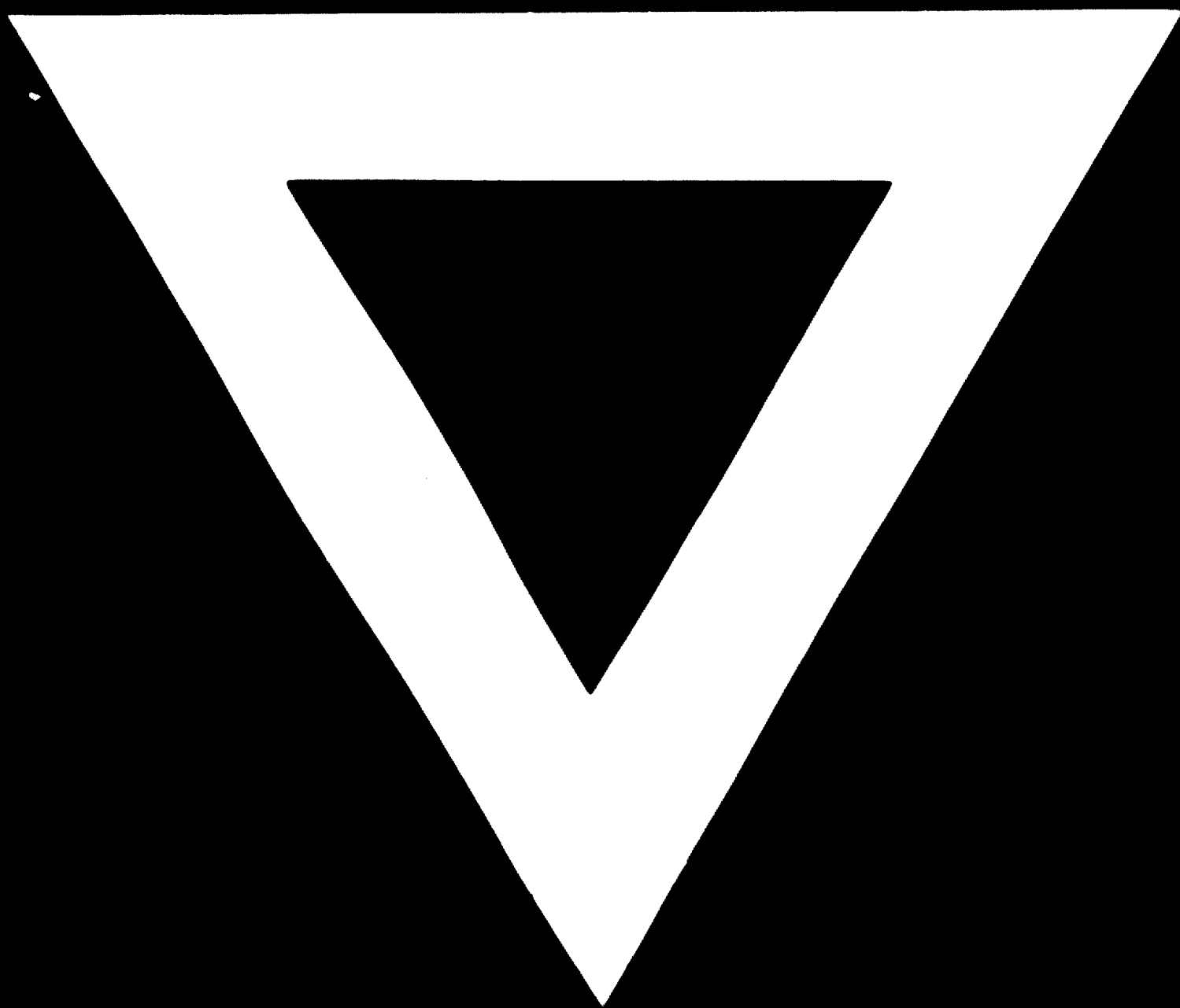
A draft on typical profiles of experts in standardization and typical training programme has been prepared and discussed. The documents are now being redrafted in order to take into account the comments and results of discussions on these papers.

DEVCO has also established a list of ISO Recommendations which all developing countries should adopt as national standards. Such a list would help countries starting standardization activities at a national level to draw up a programme of work of immediate urgency. It comprises the basic ISO Recommendations and forms a minimum set required in assisting national standardization in a country.

Bearing in mind that DEVCO serves a useful purpose as a forum for general questions, for study and information, etc., but cannot take any action, the advantage of establishing a restricted "executive" body was gradually recognized in recent years. Therefore, in 1969 DEVCO put forward a proposal to create a standing executive office for the promotion of standardization in developing countries. The Council endorsed DEVCO's proposal for the creation of the Standing Co-ordinating Bureau for the Promotion of Standardization in the Developing Countries (DEVPRO). This proposal was accepted by UNIDO and UNESCO, both participating in DEVPRO. The proposed functions of DEVPRO include the dissemination of information, consultation and close liaison between ISO and the UN Specialized Agencies to assist the developing countries to draw up programmes and training courses.

Any interested government or organization would be given general advice on the organisational structure, and assistance would be provided for collecting items for International Standards needed for the developing countries. Thus ISO, together with other international organizations, has designed and implemented various means to assist the developing countries in this difficult area of technical activity called standardization. But the final success depends largely on the developing countries themselves, on their systematic and tedious work in this direction. ISO will of course do its best in order to help these countries in reaching a high level of development in standardization, corresponding to the needs of the economies of these countries.





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