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**General terms and their definitions
concerning standardization and
certification**

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards institutes (ISO member bodies). The work of developing International Standards is carried out through ISO technical committees. Every member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been set up has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work.

ISO Guides are intended essentially for internal use in ISO committees or in some cases for the guidance of member bodies when dealing with matters which would not normally be the subject of an International Standard.

ISO Guide 2 was drawn up by ISO/STACO. The first edition, containing a "first series" of terms and definitions (marked with an asterisk in this edition), was circulated to the member bodies for comment in June 1975. The document secured the necessary support of the member bodies, and was subsequently accepted by the ISO Council.

A "second series" of terms and definitions was circulated to the member bodies for comment in January 1977 and, in a revised form, in April 1977. The document secured the necessary support of the member bodies and was subsequently accepted by the ISO Council for publication together with the "first series", in the form of the second edition of ISO Guide 2.

The "third series" was circulated to the member bodies for comment in July 1977 and, in a revised form in May 1978. It was then discussed at the STACO meeting in May 1978 and in CERTICO in July 1978. A revised text was circulated in January 1979 to STACO and CERTICO for approval by correspondence and to all ISO member bodies. It secured general support of the member bodies and was subsequently accepted by the ISO Council for publication together with the first two series, in the form of the third edition of ISO Guide 2.



General terms and their definitions concerning standardization and certification

0 Introduction

This guide is the third edition of a guide published in 1976. It contains a comprehensive set of general terms concerning standardization and certification. These definitions have been prepared in three steps. As a first step, definitions for some terms were prepared in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe in close co-operation with ISO, primarily to facilitate the work of the Economic Commission for Europe aimed at the removal of barriers to international trade arising from lack of harmonization of standards or inadequate international application of standards. The terms and definitions from this first series, adopted by ECE and ISO, are marked with an asterisk in the present edition.

The second series of terms and definitions had a general character and was also intended, *inter alia*, to contribute towards mutual understanding between standards bodies and governmental authorities.

As a third step, a series of terms and definitions related to the different types of standards and some aspects of certification were prepared in ISO/STACO and ISO/CERTICO respectively.

The different types of standards defined in this Guide are primarily those for which widely used terms exist and for which definitions are necessary because of evidence of divergent interpretations (for example product standard, performance standard). In some cases, a choice had to be made among several terms which are almost equivalent (see the notes to the definition of the term "basic standard"). In other cases, some concepts were well known, but no generally accepted term was available. It was therefore necessary to find some terms in order to make a distinction, whenever necessary, between such types of standards (for example variety control standard).

The terms commonly in use lay emphasis on elements associated with a variety of approaches, which means that these types do not belong to a single hierarchy of standards. This emphasis is arbitrary in that a standard may often be categorized as being of more than one type. For example, a product standard may simultaneously be a performance standard or a descriptive standard; or it may also be a variety control standard and an interface standard; a basic standard may also be a terminology standard; or an interface standard a safety standard.

1 Standardization

1.1 General terms

1.1.1 standardization : An activity giving solutions for repetitive application, to problems essentially in the spheres of science, technology and economics, aimed at the achievement of the optimum degree of order in a given context. Generally, the activity consists of the processes of formulating, issuing and implementing standards.

NOTE — An important benefit of standardization is improvement of the suitability of goods and services for their intended purposes.

1.1.2 consensus : General acceptance implying the absence of strong opposition by an important part of the interests concerned to substantial issues.

1.1.3 variety control : The selection of the optimum number of sizes, other characteristics or types of a product, required to meet prevailing needs.

1.1.4 fitness for purpose : The ability of a product, a process or a service to fulfil a defined purpose under specific conditions.

1.1.5 performance characteristic : A characteristic of fitness for purpose in direct relation to the behaviour of the product in use, without stating features related to manufacture.