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Strengthening The Contribution of Sustainability Standards to the Implementation of SDGs

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Sustainability Standards

- ▶ **Extent of Contribution to SDGs Depends On:**
 - ▶ **Content** of Standard and **Coverage** of Products
 - ▶ Whether They Promote **Inclusive** participation and systems
 - ▶ Whether They Are **Non- Discriminatory** and **Impose No Undue Burden**
 - ▶ Whether the Standard Helps **Improve / Achieve**
 - ▶ income and **development** opportunities,
 - ▶ **environmental and social** objectives
 - ▶ Whether They **Avoid Ad-hoc** or arbitrary actions

Sustainability Standards Disciplines

- ▶ **Disciplines on:**
- ▶ **Technical Regulations**
 - ▶ WTO; Other Plurilateral Trade Agreements
- ▶ **Voluntary Sustainable Standards:**
 - ▶ Government and Other Agencies Developing Principles and Disciplines
- ▶ **Private Sustainable Standards:**
 - ▶ Disciplines As for VSS, plus more aspects need to be addressed

Focus of Most Principles Encompassed in Disciplines Is On:

- ▶ Process for Determining Standards (e.g. in WTO/ISO)
 - ▶ transparency
 - ▶ openness
 - ▶ impartiality and consensus
 - ▶ coherence
 - ▶ development dimension

Focus: Relevance and Effectiveness (e.g., in WTO)

- ▶ International standardizing bodies should:
 - ▶ Take account of relevant regulatory or market needs
 - ▶ Scientific and technological developments
 - ▶ Have procedures to improve communication with the WTO (or any central entity where information is collected and disseminated)
 - ▶ Establish procedures to identify and review standards that are:
 - ▶ Obsolete, inappropriate or ineffective for various reasons

Focus: Coherence Amongst International Standardizing Bodies (e.g., in WTO)

- ▶ Avoid development of **conflicting international standards**
- ▶ Avoid **duplication/ overlap** of work
- ▶ **Co-operate and coordinate** with others:
 - ▶ **Harmonize** standards on as wide a scale as possible

Recent Additional Focus: Part of ISEAL's Ten Credibility Principles

- ▶ Truthfulness
- ▶ Efficiency

- ▶ Improvement ???
- ▶ Rigour ???

- ▶ How will these be defined? Will the requirements add to the burden, i.e will they go beyond reasonable performance criteria?

Recent Additional Focus: Part of ITC's Core Values of Sustainable Trade

▶ Sustainable Development Goals:

- ▶ Act in alignment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals to address
- ▶ Root causes of poverty and
- ▶ Achieve development that works for all people

Evidence Confirms Concerns:

- ▶ Proliferation and diversity of standards
- ▶ Lack of harmonisation and consistency of standards
- ▶ A Common Framework Helps To Improve Efficiency and Profitability of Producers
- ▶ New Standards-Related Requirements Keep Emerging:
 - ▶ They Increase Cost and Processes Required

Standards-Related Steps That Improve Development and Trade Opportunities

- ▶ Make **information accessible** to firms
- ▶ Support firms **technically and financially to adopt and comply** with standards
- ▶ Strengthen technical infrastructure
- ▶ Improve certification process and quality institutions
- ▶ Improve **governance** at home

Standards-Related Steps To Improve Development and Trade Opportunities, contd.

- ▶ **Leverage** international mechanisms that facilitate trade
- ▶ **Combine** and aggregate:
 - ▶ **Regional Standards** to help spread of voluntary sustainability standards
 - ▶ Allow **group certification** wherever possible

Way Ahead: Emphasize Principles

- ▶ Principles Specified By WTO, ISO and ITC
- ▶ Several Additional Efforts Emphasized By ISEAL
 - ▶ In doing so, need to identify if any new principles cause undue burden

Way Ahead: Combination of Policies and Collaboration Needed

- ▶ **Combination of Policies** Required (standards and others) : Just Focus on Standards Not Enough
- ▶ However, it is Necessary To Focus On:
 - ▶ **VSS For Addressing Concerns**
 - ▶ **Collaboration Amongst Countries**
- ▶ **Sustainable Development Goal 17**
 - ▶ **Strengthen the means of implementation** and revitalize the **global partnership** for sustainable development

Way Ahead: Collaboration Needed

► Details Agreed For SDG 17:

- 17.14 Enhance policy coherence for sustainable development
- 17.16 Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals in all countries, in particular developing countries

Relevant: SDG Follow-Up And Review Principles

- ▶ 74. Follow-up and review processes at all levels will be **guided by the following principles:**
- ▶ c. ... They will help mobilize the **necessary means of implementation and partnerships**, support the **identification of solutions and best practices** and promote **coordination and effectiveness** of the international development system.
- ▶ d. They will be **open, inclusive, participatory and transparent** for all people and will support the reporting by all relevant stakeholders.

Way Ahead: Facilitation

- ▶ Facilitation Must Be Part Of The Approach Through:
 - ▶ Good Governance Regulatory Principles (transparency, inclusiveness, and other WTO principles)
 - ▶ Supportive Efforts (Government, Standard Setting Body, Consumers, Producers)
 - ▶ Collective or Group Participation to Reduce Costs
 - ▶ Move Towards Regional Standards (Concentric Circle Approach)

Way Ahead: Efforts Needed For Improving Disciplines Through:

- ▶ **Formal Agreement** Amongst Nations (e.g. WTO, ISO)
- ▶ **Informal Agreements** Amongst Nations, e.g.
 - ▶ G 20, APEC
- ▶ Processes Established By **Global or Regional Development Bank**
- ▶ Interaction Between **National / Regional / International Platforms** Amongst
 - ▶ **National Focal Points** in the VSS Platforms
 - ▶ **Large Firms** From Different Markets

Way Ahead: Working Together To Use Existing Platforms And To Develop New Ones

- ▶ **Coherence to Achieve Convergence**
 - ▶ Step-wise movement towards a Vision
- ▶ **Establish Mechanism For Collaborative Engagement**, e.g. UNFSS together with Governments and other organisations
- ▶ Develop **Network of Research Institutions** to Support Above Mechanism With Data and Analysis
- ▶ Identify Standards Established By Firms **With Significant Market Influence**
 - ▶ **Competition Policy Criteria** Could be Used For This
- ▶ **Examine These Standards** For Coherence and Consistency

Way Ahead: Simplification of Criteria

- ▶ There is a tendency to specify VSS criteria in more and more detail over time.
- ▶ This likely to result in:
 - ▶ Undue burdensome processes
 - ▶ Highly bureaucratic procedures creating vested interests with high cost and inefficiency
 - ▶ Loss of credibility amongst users about the motivation of the VSS.
- ▶ There is a need to simplify the criteria
- ▶ This requires considering the detail of the requirements and identifying a shortlist of those essential for credibility.

Way Ahead: Coherence and Engagement

- ▶ Identify Which Parts of the Standards Requirements Are ESSENTIAL
- ▶ Seek Solutions
 - ▶ Collect Information For Discussion on Identifying Essential Requirements To Achieve Objectives
 - ▶ Develop Database on Concerns and on Success Cases For Addressing Those Concerns
 - ▶ The concerns could be modelled on the Specific Trade Concerns expressed in WTO's TBT Committee
 - ▶ Use Collaborative Mechanisms To Provide Support With Solutions For Firms

Way Ahead: At This Meeting Itself

- ▶ Participating Countries Here Could **Agree To Link Up Their VSS Platforms To Exchange Information on:**
 - ▶ Major VSS in Their Economies
 - ▶ Concerns Regarding VSS in International Markets
 - ▶ Trade Related Concerns About Each Other's VSS
- ▶ **They Could Develop Website to Seek Solutions** on Issues Each Country is Dealing With
- ▶ Have **meetings periodically** to brainstorm to **co-ordinate approaches to address** selected key issues identified for the meeting

Way Ahead: Content And Focus

- ▶ *Two ways to begin work towards coherence and consistency.*
- ▶ *Begin with identification of some widely used standards.*
- ▶ *One, standards addressing sustainability objectives that are established with multilateral participation but not established by private companies, e.g., ISO standards or CODEX standards.*
- ▶ *Two, consider other VSS which are used widely in international markets.*
- ▶ *This could be based on evidence based criteria for determining standards with large enough impact to be considered for being subject to regulatory control.*

Way Ahead: Content And Focus

- ▶ *The standards in the above two categories could be considered as **models to begin work** to examine consistency and coherence amongst them. In this context, determine:*
 - ▶ *Common points amongst them*
 - ▶ *Points of difference*
 - ▶ *Path towards consistency*
 - ▶ *Mechanisms and Evidence Based Solutions*
 - ▶ *Including a focus on inclusiveness and conditions in low income economies*

Thank You