

Symposium on Recent Developments in Quality Management Systems

Sharjah Chamber of Commerce and Industry

19 May 2003

**His Highness Sheikh Sultan Bin Mohammed Bin Sultan Al-Qassimi, may God bless him, Crown Prince and Deputy Ruler of Sharjah and Chairman of the Sharjah Executive Council.**

**His Highness Sheikh Tariq Bin Faisal Al Qassimi, representative of the Sharjah Economic Development Department, sponsor of the symposium.**

**His Excellency Ahmed Al-Madfa, Chairman of the Sharjah Executive Council**

**Dr. John Davies, Chairman of ISO sub-committee**

Honoured guests,  
Peace be upon you and God's mercy and blessings,

It is indeed an honorable occasion to have the dear Emirate of Sharjah hosting such an elite gathering under the blessed sponsorship of His Highness Sheikh Sultan Bin Mohammed Bin Sultan Al-Qassimi, Crown Prince and Deputy Ruler of Sharjah in the presence of Sheikh Tariq Bin Faisal Al Qassimi. Such an attendance reflects the importance of this symposium and lends seriousness to it, while contributing to the task of achieving the goals upon which this symposium was held – a role which falls completely in line with Sharjah's as a cultural capital.

This symposium was held in light of the recent meetings of two technical committees affiliated with the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), which was hosted by the Sharjah Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Arab Academy for Knowledge Management. This was the second meeting for this major international body in our Arab region, after its first meet in Egypt.

First of all, I would like to give a brief definition of the word 'ISO'. What is the ISO and where did the name come from?

## **What is the ISO?**

The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) is an international union whose membership comprises local institutions from all over the world with each country represented by a single institution.

The organization is a non-governmental institution founded in 1947 for the purpose of directing, activating and promoting the preparation of unified standards that contribute to the facilitation of international exchange of goods and services. It serves as a consultant to the World Trade Organization regarding standards issuance and the product of its work is represented in various international treaties issued as standards.

## **Where did the name (ISO) come from?**

In English, the acronym of the International Organization for Standardization is read as 'ISO'. And although it may seem that the 'I' stands for International, the 'S' for Standardization and the 'O' for Organization, the word 'iso' has never been the short form of the organization's name.

ISO originates from the Greek word 'isos' which means equal. Isos is the root of the prefix "iso" which can be found in several terminologies including Isometric, meaning equal measures, Isothermal, meaning equal thermal characteristics and Isonomy meaning equal laws. It was then that the name ISO was given to the organization, given its main task of issuing equal conventions.

To further confirm the above, if ISO was indeed the acronym of the organization, its short form in French would be OIN, which stands for the "Organization International de Normalization."

## **What are standards?**

Standards are either certified agreements that include technical characteristics, or any specific criteria used continuously as bases or guidelines to define the standards needed to confirm that the materials, products, processes or services conform to the purpose for which they were created. For example, the form of payment cards such as credit cards, phone cards, or smart cards is determined by the ISO standards which stipulate that the thickness of the card should be 0.76 cm so as to be accepted anywhere in the world.

For further knowledge of the organization, the following facts are worth noting:

- Membership includes 138 members and 2,858 technical committees.
- Full-time staff from 19 different countries work in Geneva.
- Operating expenses are 150 million Swiss francs, funded by member states.
- 13,025 standards have been produced up to date.

### **ISO/TC176/SC2 Technical Committee**

This is a technical sub-committee of the TC 176, specialized in quality management systems. The secretariat of this committee is provided by the British Standards Institution (BSI), headed by Dr. John Davies of BSI. The committee's Secretary is Mr. Charles Corrie of BSI. On the other hand, the secretariat of TC 176 is provided by the Standards Council of Canada (SCC).

The main task of the ISO/TC176/SC2 committee is to issue specific standards in the area of quality systems and concepts, including the necessary guidance and instructions for the application of these standards.

The sub-committee comprises 35 active members, with 10 members with observer status and 24 representative members from non-standard-setting institutions, in addition to the Arab Knowledge Management Society (AKMS) which enjoys a category "A" membership in this committee.

Thank you for your participation in this crucial meet. The road to building an Arab knowledge society is a road I have dedicated my entire life to fulfill.

Peace be upon you and God's mercy and blessings.