

Asia-Pacific Industrial Science & Technology and International Standardization (IST2)
Cooperation Program

April 26, 2010

Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry

1. Background

As the economy globalizes, national economies are becoming increasingly interdependent. For Japan, with its population expected to shrink, to achieve sustainable and steady economic growth, it is essential to foster the economic development of the Asia-Pacific region as a close economic partner and ensure that the benefits of this region's development spread to Japan.

Achieving sustainable and steady economic growth calls for, along with economic development, worldwide efforts to combat environmental problems and create a safe and secure society. Since furthering such efforts will contribute to the expansion of the market for superior Japanese products, Japan should play an active role in this endeavor.

An important action Japan should take especially in the Asia-Pacific region, which has strong economic relations with Japan, is to create a virtuous cycle that helps accelerate economic development in consideration of worldwide efforts to address environmental problems and create a safe and secure society and that spreads the benefits of this economic development to the Japanese economy, eventually contributing to the development of the global economy.

In the "New Growth Strategy (Basic Policies)," which was approved by the Cabinet in December 2009, the government defines Asia as one of the two drivers behind "Achieving Growth by Pioneering New Frontiers," and sets forth the policy of actively taking relevant measures. As a key measure in this regard, this policy document stipulates that the government aims to "Promote international adoption, together with other Asian countries, of Japanese safety standards," setting the goal of strengthening partnerships with Asian countries in the field of standards and conformity assessment.

Stronger partnership in standardization and conformity assessment is vital to the creation of the virtuous cycle mentioned above, for the following reasons:

- > Appropriate international standardization in new technology fields (importance of international cooperation on standardization and conformity assessment (1))

New environmentally conscious technologies, such as smart grids and next-generation vehicles, are expected to become commercialized and widely used.

To promote the spread of truly outstanding products and technologies in these fields, appropriate standardization is crucial, including that of methods of measuring and evaluating performance, durability and safety, and that of interfaces.

Development of technologies in these fields is progressing in not only the U.S. but also China, Korea and other Asian countries, and the presence of these countries in international standardization organizations is growing in recent years. If Japan is to lead appropriate standardization in these fields, it is increasingly important to build cooperative relations with these nations, so as to exchange and coordinate views at as early stage as possible before standardization is proposed to international standardization organizations.

- > Appropriate standardization of environmental technology evaluation methods and establishment of conformity assessment systems (importance of international cooperation on standardization and conformity assessment (2))

Improving the energy efficiency of high-energy-consuming appliances, such as air conditioners and refrigerators, is a key measure to combat global warming, for example. However, many Asian countries use energy efficiency evaluation methods that do not fully consider the actual usage of these appliances or are poorly equipped with measuring facilities for such evaluations.

With high-energy-consuming products coming into widespread use in the Asia-Pacific region, driven by economic development, there is a need to promptly disseminate appropriate standards for measurement and evaluation methods, establish systems to assess conformity with these standards, and thereby foster the diffusion of environmentally conscious technologies.

With regard to international cooperation in the standardization and conformity assessment field, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) formulated the “ASEAN Standards and Conformance Cooperation Program” in 2003 to advance cooperation with Asian countries in the field. However, given the much greater significance today of cooperation with the Asia-Pacific region, METI should review this program in light of recent changes in the situation, and radically reinforce it. In strengthening cooperation in the standardization and conformity assessment field, METI should be aware of the effectiveness of building a comprehensive partnership that encompasses every phase from R&D to commercialization. In addition, serving as the chair of APEC¹ in 2010 gives Japan a good opportunity to form a larger regional partnership that includes the Pacific Rim.

This program is the result of METI’s reconsideration of future efforts needed toward stronger partnerships with the Asia-Pacific region in the standardization, conformity assessment and related fields.

2. Basic policies

This program defines the following policies as the three axes on which measures should be developed and implemented through a multilateral approach.

- (1) Axis extending from R&D to commercialization
 - Aim for a comprehensive program that encompasses every phase from R&D to commercialization, and addresses technical and institutional cooperation on international standardization and conformity assessment in an integrated manner under the same policy.
 - Be aware of the goals, such as international standardization and commercialization, from the R&D phase onward, plan field trials as needed, and take necessary actions such as collecting data needed to propose international standards and performing tests for commercialization.
 - As part of efforts to create an environment conducive to commercialization, also pay attention to cooperation to further the establishment of fundamental systems, such as the development and reinforcement of systems to assess conformity with standards.

¹ APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation)
http://www.meti.go.jp/policy/trade_policy/apec2010/overview/description.html

- (2) Axis extending from Japan to the world
- Have the program cover a large part of the Asia-Pacific region, from leading R&D countries that drive technological innovation with Japan to emerging Asian countries with high potential for growth and robust demand for infrastructure.
 - Pay attention to geographical integration of all processes from R&D to commercialization, with accelerating market globalization in mind.
 - Avoid misapplied equality with no strategy and carefully choose projects truly conducive to bilateral development in order to build a dynamic partnership.
 - Aim to build equal partnerships with developed and emerging countries alike and maintain an attitude of mutual guidance and learning.
- (3) Axis extending from the government to the private sector
- Bring together institutions and individuals engaged in industrial technology development, international standardization and conformity assessment to form an organization to operate the program.
 - Aim to enhance the assistance function concerning international standardization and conformity assessment, including assistance for human resource development, and invite other countries' government agencies to participate in the program.
 - Limit the term of the program so that its outcome can be passed to the private sector by such means as a joint-stock company founded to capitalize on the fruits of the program.