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25 February 2004

DOCUMENT
C-M(2004)0009 (INV)
Silence Procedure ends:
4 Mar 2004 18:00

NATO FRAMEWORK FOR CIVIL STANDARDS

Note by the Secretary General

1. I attach the NATO Framework for Civil Standards, as approved by the NATO Committee for Standardization (NCS). The document has been co-ordinated with NATO Senior Committees and is now forwarded by the two NCS Co-Chairmen to the Council for notation.
2. In accordance with the NATO Policy for Standardization, which emphasises the adoption of suitable civil standards for use within NATO, the Framework Document on Civil Standards delimits the Alliance's role with respect to relations with Civil Standards Bodies, in order to make best use of civil standards within the full range of NATO tasks.
3. The document provides that, whenever possible and advantageous from a resources point of view, NATO should use the most appropriate and openly available civil standards, rather than develop military standards, in order to avoid duplication of effort. NATO should only develop its own standards where no suitable civil standards exist.
4. If I do not receive comments to the contrary by **18h00 on Thursday 4 March 2004** I shall assume that the Council has noted the document.

(Signed) Jaap de Hoop Scheffer

NATO FRAMEWORK FOR CIVIL STANDARDS

Introduction

1. The NATO Policy for Standardisation (C-M(2000)54 dated 24th July 2000) approved by the North Atlantic Council (NAC) in summer 2000, emphasises the adoption of suitable civil standards for use within NATO.

2. The NCSREPs, at their meeting of 11th October 2002, agreed to task the NSA to develop a Framework Document on Civil Standards to define the relations of the NATO Standardisation Organisation with Civil Standards Bodies in order to make best use of civilian standards within the full range of NATO tasks.

Aim

3. The aim of the present framework document is:

3.1 to define efficient and effective modalities and options of liaison for co-operation purposes with civil standards bodies working in fields of interest to NATO's standardisation community;

3.2 to improve the flow of information on civilian standards to the NATO Groups involved with standardization;

3.3 to develop a NATO-Civilian Standards Organisation interface to improve the exchange concerning standards under development in both the NATO and civilian areas; and

3.4 to propose a procedural approach for the use of applicable civil standards to a maximum practical extent within NATO's standardisation community in order to further support interoperability of forces and equipment.

Background

4. Today a vast amount of STANAGs are already based on civil standards either by definite reference in the respective STANAGs or by the inputs from technical experts who developed the STANAG and who are well aware of appropriate civil standards - regardless of their origins - and which are relevant in their technical field.

5. In addition, some NATO member nations have already implemented major reforms in their defence standards system in the 1990s. These were aimed at increasing industrial

efficiency and lowering defence procurement costs by replacing wherever feasible military specifications with civil standards on a comprehensive scale.

6. The views and capabilities of industry are important to the development and adoption of practicable equipment design and performance standards. In recognition of this, and to ensure that the most effective synergy is achieved between requirements of users and efforts of industrial research and development, industry takes an active role in the production of civil international, regional and national standards through professional associations, user groups or similar structures.

7. A procedural and organisational mechanism as adopted by industry to influence standardisation is required at all levels of the NATO standardisation process, too in order to enable and encourage industrial participation in individual standardisation groups and thus avoid duplicative work already at this level.

8. Any initiative of NATO to make use of civil standards considered suitable in the development process of NATO STANAGs to the greatest extent possible is already supported by the above-mentioned policy and the Charter of the NATO Standardization Organisation (C-M(2001)57 dated 1st August 2001) , particularly in the field of material standardisation, and is also in line with most national acquisition policies .

NATO Interest

9. Considering that defence producers and customers of NATO member nations and of Partner countries are moving towards using more and more civil standards and becoming involved in civil standardisation activities, NATO's standardisation community too should be present in and benefit from recognised international and regional civilian standards bodies.

10. This would allow NSA and the relevant Tasking Authorities for their specialist areas:

10.1 To keep visibility in a fast changing and constantly evolving field of interest;

10.2 To optimise the work of the NATO Working Groups (WG) and the Custodians;

10.3 To increase the effectiveness and uptake of appropriate civil standards by the Alliance;

10.4 To avoid duplication of efforts through developing close links and good working relationships with Civilian Standards Bodies;

10.5 To co-ordinate a wider and more substantial co-operation between NATO's standardisation community and civilian standards bodies in order to develop standards for basic military assets;

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10.6 To guarantee a harmonisation of approaches by improving the exchange of information between NATO and civilian standards bodies on standardisation requirements in both areas;

10.7 To facilitate NATO member nations to concentrate defence standardization resources;

10.8 To increase the Alliance's effectiveness within the resources allocated to it by Nations; and

10.9 To assist NATO member nations to voice their ideas, suggestions and expertise through NATO as a shareholder in various fora of the civilian standards bodies.

Analysis

11. NSA - within the scope of available resources - for and on behalf of customers, such as the nations' military standards organisations, would greatly profit from establishing durable links with selected recognised international and regional standards bodies. This will allow NATO to establish and further coherent mechanisms for interactions with these bodies when it comes to the production and introduction of specific standards, which could be of importance to the military environment.

12. Harmonised criteria and documentation procedures for military 'versioning' of civil standards based on current examples of best practice in NATO member nations should also be established. Such procedures, which will be defined with the follow-on implementing documentation, will, inter alia, ensure that no member nation's interests are hampered.

13. Today the worldwide public access to civil standards catalogues by electronic means, and via the Internet is good and constantly improving. Online linking and online cross-referencing with NATO Standardisation Agreements (STANAGs) catalogues will add to the transparency for those writing or using standards. Easy accessibility to guidelines and manuals for standards' developers enables the understanding of the working methods and procedures of civilian standards bodies. Mutual understanding of the dynamics of standardisation activities is essential for both military and for the civilian side active in this field. Thus avoiding the duplication of efforts along with the duplication or even multiplication of documents on identical or comparable subjects.

14. To foster such understanding and more fruitful exchanges among the various parties, NATO should be in a position to forward -within the framework of NATO's rules of security- its standardization documents in the appropriate civil standards bodies.

15. Replacing a military standard by commercial standards from the outset means that commercially available technologies can be used in defence procurement.

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Conclusions

16. NATO, by considering and introducing civil standards on a regular and co-ordinated basis will open up interoperability in a much broader sense than before, when it restricted itself to a notion of battlefield interoperability through military standards and specifications.

17. As in many key dynamic technology areas and high value added areas the use of civil standards has become unavoidable, NATO by adopting a guidance on the use of civil standards and by establishing formal links with the international and regional civil standards bodies shows its appreciation for the ongoing implementation of procurement reform programmes within NATO Member Nations' MoDs.

18. Whenever possible, feasible from a resources point of view and advantageous, NATO should replace military standards with the most appropriate civil standards.

19. NATO's prime concern for the evaluation of civil standards for their appropriateness to the NATO standardization requirement should consequently lay with their open availability, accessibility, effectiveness, relevance, market acceptance and technical excellence and not with their region of origin and/or their development process.

20. All eligible NATO standards under way should be compared with potential candidates from the field of civil standards to avoid or diminish duplication of efforts, while at the same time NSA should elaborate a formal process that allows whenever necessary priority to NATO standards.

21. NATO should only develop standards where no suitable civil standard exists.

22. NATO may adopt guidance inviting all its entities engaged in the drafting of standards to first undertake with the support of the NSA a search for an adapted or adaptable civil standard in a field of interest. Only if none can be found, the entity in question should launch itself into the drafting of a specific military STANAG¹.

23. In order to facilitate transparency concerning products that may result in the future from co-operative efforts with civilian standards bodies and to increase NATO's efficiency and effectiveness in this field, NATO member nations have to be informed via the NSA on a regular basis on developments and end products.

¹ It must be nevertheless taken into consideration that if there is a desire to introduce a NATO-wide binding agreement concerning an unmodified civil standard, this civil standard necessitates a cover-STANAG.

Recommendations

24. Taking account of the responsibilities assigned to the NSA in its Terms of Reference (inter alia paragraphs 3.11,3.16 and 5.5 as attached to the Charter of the NATO Standardization Organization) the NCS is invited to:

24.1 agree this Framework Document;

24.2 task the NSA to:

24.2.1 develop, in association with the specialist Tasking Authorities, proposals for a phased implementation project including financial and manpower resources implications, for agreement by the NCS, in order to progress relationship and information collection on civil standards bodies.

24.2.2 promote the liaison between NATO member nation experts and civil standards bodies and vice versa;

24.2.3 act as a co-ordinator for the collection and dissemination of relevant information from civil standards bodies to NATO's standardization community and vice versa;

24.2.4 identify concrete areas of co-operation with civil standards bodies, as far as NATO legal and security agreements and regulations permit, and on the basis of NATO work programmes and standardisation requirements;

24.2.5 establish, as a matter of urgency, the document dissemination procedures provided for in its Terms of Reference (para 5.5) and propose appropriate security rules for the dissemination of NATO documents to civil bodies;

24.2.6 identify existing unclassified NATO STANAGs, APs etc. for distribution to civil standards bodies to allow identification of any spin-off to the non-military area;

24.2.7 establish mechanisms for the sharing of information on civilian standards in NATO HQ to allow NATO Groups, HQ Staff and NATO member nations to have up-to-date information on relevant standards; and

24.2.8 follow the work of civil standards bodies; and

24.2.9 prepare the recommendation mentioned in paragraph 20 above to limit the development of NATO standards to the strict minimum, while defining the formal process provided for in paragraph 18 that allows whenever necessary priority to NATO standards.