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Secretariat: Nederlands Normalisatie-instituut (NNI)
 Kalfjeslaan 2 P.O. box 5059
 2600 GB Delft
 Netherlands
 telephone: + 31 15 690390
 telefax: + 31 15 690190
 telex: 38144 nni nl
 telegrams: Normalisatie Delft

ISO/TC 97/SG-FS
 Title: ISO/TC 97 Special Group on Functional Standardization
 Secretariat: NNI (Netherlands)

TITLE: Summary of results achieved at the second meeting of the ISO/TC 97 Special Group on Functional Standardization, held on 16-18 September 1987 in London

SOURCE: Secretariat ISO/TC 97/SG-FS

The fundamental results of the three days' meeting of the Group (= SG-FS) have been documented in the following papers:

- ISO/TC 97/SG-FS N 16 - Resolutions of the second meeting of ISO/TC 97 Special Group on Functional Standardization, held on 16-18 September 1987 in London
- ISO/TC 97/SG-FS N 18 - Report by the SG-FS convener to the JTC 1 council meeting in Tokyo on 9-13 November 1987
- ISO/TC 97/SG-FS N 19 - Minutes of the 2nd ISO/TC 97/SG-FS meeting (1987-09-16/18, London) with attached list of participants and list of requested actions

Since there may be many parties working within the large TC 97 field (Information processing systems) and related fields interested in a quick evaluation of the SG-FS's activities, the delegates to the SG-FS meeting decided to complement the official documents mentioned with a brief overview of the results and a general idea of the work to be done in the near future.

Starting point of the work done in London

At the start of the meeting, document JTC 1 N 14 (SG-FS N 12) was distributed with the results of the voting of the TC 97 member bodies on the resolutions of the first SG-FS meeting in Eindhoven.

Of the 24 P-members 22 have approved the Eindhoven resolutions and two have abstained. Five members have added comments to their approval. These comments were considered in the course of the meeting and the members concerned will receive replies to them.

Furthermore, during the meeting (unofficial) news was received that the ISO Council also had accepted the establishment of

o a new type of publication "International Standardized Profile"



- o a special type of liaison with OSI User Groups for planning and coordination of such ISPs as proposed in the Eindhoven resolutions.

These were indeed heartening responses to the Group's previous work, which helped to establish a firm foundation.

In the course of the London meeting it turned out that, although there were differences of opinion on various minor and not so minor points, all delegates present were of the opinion that the Eindhoven resolutions provided a firm and fair basis, which of course needed refinement but not revision.

Main items considered in the London meeting

- In retrospect, the main topics of the discussions centred around
- o scope and aim of the ISP taxonomy and registration of ISP proposals by the Taxonomy Group
 - o the procedures for updating and, if necessary, expanding and/or revising the taxonomy
 - o the procedures for publishing the taxonomy
 - o the procedures for the review stage of proposed draft ISPs
 - o content and format of the Explanatory Report that should accompany a (draft) ISP proposal
 - o maintenance of ISPs and the correction of defects encountered in published ISPs and reported (by users)
 - o ways of achieving more CCITT involvement in the Group's work
 - o means of speeding up the publication of ISPs by the ISO Central Secretariat
 - o liaisons and cooperation with OSI User Groups, regional workshops on Open Systems (WOSs), TC 97 subcommittees and ISO/TCs besides TC 97.

Three taxonomy issues

The Special Group's meeting was preceded by a two days' Taxonomy Group meeting, which itself had resulted in the progress reported in document ISO/TC 97/FSTG N 18 and N 19. In the the Taxonomy Group meeting, however, it became clear that differences of opinion existed on the fundamental issues of the scope and aim of this group and the role of the taxonomy-matters that could only be resolved by the "mother body": the Special Group.

Questions such as:

- o should the future collection of ISPs have an internal coherence or is that not a prerequisite?
- o should the taxonomy structure come first or should the ISPs come first?
- o what exactly is the nature of the "joint planning operation" of Special Group and OSI User Groups described in Eindhoven resolution 3.1? (The wording: "This will include a demonstrated need for the ISP..." was amended to "This will include a review of the identified purpose for the ISP...")
- o what does it mean to put something in the taxonomy?
- o what is the procedure for changes in the taxonomy, e.g. when a proposal doesn't "fit" the existing taxonomy?

Underlying the discussion on these subjects were different ideas on the responsibility of the Special Group. One extreme is the idea that the Group is "selling a service" (viz. the ISO endorsement of accepted proposals) and therefore should always accommodate the taxonomy to the proposals. The opposite extreme is the idea that the Group is "buying a service" and that any ISP proposal should fit into a preconceived all-embracing scheme consisting of a large number of "partitions" each of which allows only one "optimal" ISP.

All delegates held opinions somewhere between these extremes, but there was considerable latitude between the various positions to begin with. The general opinion after the exchange of views may be expressed as follows:

- o taxonomy work can and should continue on the lines set out in Washington and London
- o the convenor will, on behalf of the Special Group, submit the taxonomy work done up till now to the recognized OSI User Groups and request them to submit comments before the next (November) meeting of the Taxonomy Group
- o the taxonomy should for the time being be restricted to the OSI field
- o developing a taxonomy is not in itself a restrictive action since frequent amendments and expansions are envisaged if and when the need arises
- o taxonomy is useful for labelling purposes and for providing an insight into interworking and other capabilities. If in future the Special Group deems it necessary, it might conceivably be used for other purposes as well
- o draft procedures for changing the taxonomy have been formulated and are expected to be acceptable to all SG-members
- o more clarification is needed on subjects such as the exact mandate, membership and responsibility of the Taxonomy Group.

Concerning the original idea (Eindhoven resolution 6) that the taxonomy should take the form of an ISO Technical Report type 3 it was pointed out that such reports have to be approved by means of an ISO ballot. Since frequent updating of the taxonomy is foreseen such a procedure seems needlessly complicated and time consuming. The Special Group has therefore requested JTC 1 to be allowed negotiations with the ISO Central Secretariat in order to have the ISP Taxonomy published in a (new) form that requires only a simple majority of the voting members of the Special Group.

The Explanatory Report and the review of ISPs (PDISPs)

The Explanatory Report (Eindhoven resolution 3.2) shall include a questionnaire which at least contains the following information:

- o a declaration of openness of the development process (see Eindhoven resolution 3.1) indicating at least those parties who participated, those who were excluded and the degree of regional and/or international harmonization which has been achieved
- o a statement of the identified purpose of the ISP and required liaisons with committees responsible for base standards called up in the ISP.
- o an indication that sufficient notification has taken place for the ISP development. This aspect should include an indication of the location of the PDISP in the taxonomy and a reference to the joint planning operation between the OSI User Groups and ISO that has taken place

- o a declaration as to how the conformance requirements described in the taxonomy framework have been met (see document FSTG N 11 sections 6.6-6.8 and 8.4)
 - o a similar statement regarding the content and format requirements described in the taxonomy framework (document FSTG N 11 section 6.4)
- The procedure for submission and review of a proposed draft ISP (PDISP), envisaged in the Eindhoven resolution 3.1, has now been elaborated as follows.

A PDISP and its accompanying Explanatory Report received by the SG-FS Secretariat will be distributed among all SG-FS members. In the interest of a rapid response, the PDISP is checked for consistency in the use of international standards, technical quality, openness of development procedures and other requirements described in the Explanatory Report. This check is done by an ad-hoc group of experts, one of which will be appointed rapporteur (formerly called project editor).

The constitution of the group is determined beforehand by the SG-FS (who will be expecting the PDISP because they have already been advised of its coming: "no surprises"/early warning system).

The expert group will produce a review report which makes a recommendation to the SG-FS as to the acceptability of the PDISP on the points checked. If acceptable, the PDISP (accompanied by the Explanatory Note and the Review Report) will be distributed by the SG-FS secretariat for balloting by the P-members of JTC 1.

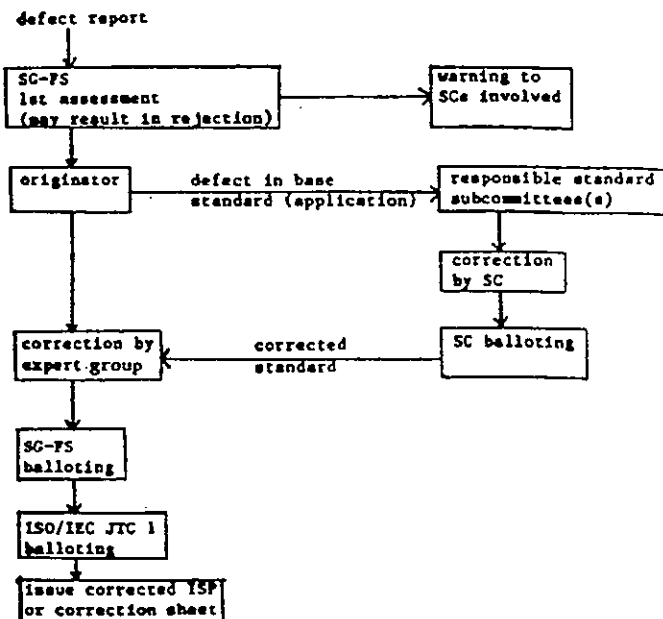
If not acceptable, the PDISP, Explanatory Note and Review Report will be returned to the feeder organization, accompanied by a letter written by the rapporteur stating the reasons for rejection.

The Special Group considered the above procedure sufficiently detailed for practical purposes. The first PDISP is expected in the first quarter of 1988 (subject matter: file transfer).

All SG-FS members have been requested to nominate experts for the group that is to review this PDISP.

Maintenance of ISPs and the correction of defects

The following scheme has been established for the "ideal" handling of defect reports received by the SG-FS:



This scheme will be worked out and its practical implications considered at a future Special Group meeting. A possible alternative is to use the TC 97 SC 21 defect reporting scheme.

For ISPs a review period of 5 years is foreseen; maintenance (defect redress) reports may be necessary with a 2-3 years' interval. Redressing is generally considered the responsibility of the ISP originator. Up to two years after publication the rapporteur of the review group will function as the main liaison in this respect.

Ways of achieving CCITT involvement in the Group's work

The Group regrets the present lack of CCITT involvement in its work. Several ways of improving this situation have been considered. In the end it was decided that the ISO Central Secretariat would take up this matter with the (neighbouring) CCITT Secretariat by means of informal contacts to begin with.

Means of speeding up the (future) publication of ISPs by the ISO Central Secretariat

The Group's goal is to have publication achieved within 2 1/2 months after approval by the ISO members, a time scale which the ISO Central Secretariat representative considered tight but not unfeasible. Prerequisites to at least approximate this goal are:

- o discipline on the part of the national member bodies and ISO Council members: their comments should be presented at an early stage, not in the final stage;
- o the camera ready copy that is presented by the Group to the ISO Council and the national member bodies for voting, should also be acceptable (with minor changes) to the Central Secretariat for printing. This demands discipline on the part of the feeder organization and rapporteur to supply material that is in line with the ISO Central Secretariat instructions on the format etc. of ISO/IEC standards.

If both requirements are satisfied, the Central Secretariat confirms the time schedule laid down in the diagram accompanying the Eindhoven resolutions.

Liaison and cooperation with OSI User Groups, regional workshops, TC 97 (or JTC 1) subcommittees and standard committees besides TC 97

Draft ISP proposals may be submitted by the following originators:

- o JTC 1 member bodies
- o JTC 1 subcommittees
- o other ISO/IEC TCs
- o ISO/IEC liaison organization such as CCITT and ECMA
- o the six OSI User Groups authorized by the ISO Central Secretariat

The regional American, Asian and Oceanian and European workshops on Open Systems may also turn out to be important technical forums in this respect, but their position is at present not fully clear. Their status as (formal) liaisons of the Group was for the moment left open.

Concerning the flow of documents and invitations to future meetings of the Group it was decided to put

- o ISO and IEC Central Secretariats

- o the six OSI User Groups authorized by ISO
- o the JTC 1 secretariat (with or without request for further distribution to JTC 1 Member Bodies)
- o the TC 97 SCs nos. 6, 18 and 21 secretariats
- o the TC 184 and TC 68 secretariat (for information) on the Group's mailing list.

Issues still outstanding

Summarizing the summary, it may be concluded that a number of necessary refinements of the Eindhoven results have been achieved. E.g.

- o important concepts such as openness and harmonization have been defined (in a practical way)
- o important procedures such as the review scheme and maintenance have been defined
- o important practical aspects of publications and taxonomy have been agreed upon.

This, taken together, has brought the Group to the point that it considers itself ready to accept and process the first DISP proposals from OSI User Groups.

However, a number of fundamental issues have not yet been decided. E.g.

- o How exactly should the Group's responsibility versus ISO and versus the originators be defined? Purchasers might be expected to prefer a limited set of ISPs with clear indications of their interworking capabilities, whereas manufacturers may well prefer an unlimited set. How should the Group handle such a dichotomy of interests? And, related to this question: what exactly is understood by the concept of a joint planning operation of the Group (on behalf of ISO/IEC) and the OSI User Groups?
- o It remains to be seen how successful the Group will be in attracting expert rapporteurs and review group members
- o The subject of functional standards (or ISPs) outside the OSI field has been considered briefly. Its importance is recognized; for practical reasons, however, the OSI field is considered the Group's first priority.
- o Status and rules (e.g. membership and voting rights) of the Group have not yet been defined.
- o The taxonomy of the upper OSI layers has not been resolved yet (a very difficult subject!)
- o Liaison and cooperation with CCITT, ISO/IEC partners and the originator field are still in their infancy.

At the next meetings (Taxonomy Group: 9-13 November 1987, Ottawa and 10-13 May 1988, Tokyo; Special Group 16-18 May 1988, Tokyo) there will be no shortage of work to be done.