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September 2024

**INTERNATIONAL ELECTROTECHNICAL COMMISSION SYSTEM FOR
CERTIFICATION TO STANDARDS RELATING TO EQUIPMENT FOR USE IN
EXPLOSIVE ATMOSPHERES (IECEX SYSTEM)**

Circulated to: ExMC Members

GA/219/DV IEC Presidents Report

This document contains document GA/219/DV as the 2024 report from the IEC President and is issued to ExMC Members for information.

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GA/219/DV

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INTERNATIONAL ELECTROTECHNICAL COMMISSION

GENERAL ASSEMBLY (GA)

SUBJECT

Report by the President

Agenda item 6.2

BACKGROUND

The President represents the Commission and is Chair of the General Assembly, the IEC Board and the President's Committee. Mr Jo Cops became IEC President on 1 January 2023, having served as the Treasurer since 1 January 2018 and President-Elect since 1 January 2022.

As per the IEC Statutes and Rules of Procedure, the General Assembly shall approve the report by the President (Article 7, Paragraph 5, entry b).

The report from the IEC President for 2024 is provided in **Annex** for approval by the General Assembly.

ACTION

The General Assembly is invited to approve, at its 25 October 2024 meeting, the report by the President.

ANNEX

1. Report by the President for 2024

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Report to the IEC General Assembly, 2024

Jo Cops, IEC President

Navigating our path to success, outside-in and inside-out

There have been two watershed moments in the history of the IEC. The first was in 1906, when the IEC was founded to standardize electricity, which at the time was reshaping societies and the economy. The second moment is right now, as a host of disruptive technologies – artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, quantum and others – are acting as the catalysts for a profound transformation of the world as we know it.

What links these very different, yet similar times is the importance of the great scientist and engineer, Lord Kelvin. In 1906, he became the first president of the IEC and in 2024 we are celebrating the bicentenary of Kelvin's birth. His pioneering work in thermodynamics, his innovations in submarine cabling and his work on electricity have all had a profound impact. Kelvin was a visionary. He embodied the spirit of scientific inquiry and international cooperation. Kelvin's legacy continues to inspire our work today, as we continue to adapt as an organization to serve the evolving needs of stakeholders.

The IEC was founded to create a standardized system for electrical terminology and to ensure consistency, safety and interoperability across different devices and systems. Those early goals remain essential. What has changed is that we now recognize that not all the challenges we face are purely technical.

We do not exist in isolation. The world is undergoing a profound transformation, driven by digital, social, economic, and demographic shifts. And this profound transformation creates new challenges for organizations. New solutions, new services and new business models are emerging, demanding a corresponding evolution from us in order to achieve our Vision and Mission. The IEC Strategic Plan tells us what we must do to get there.

Guided by this Strategic Plan, we are responding to the challenges we face and innovating to stay relevant. The past year has been a period of extraordinary evolution for our organization. The IEC is becoming more interconnected, transparent and agile. We are developing Smart standards and Smart conformity assessment solutions. For the first time, standards have been produced entirely on a single collaborative space: the Online Standards Development (OSD) platform. It is already being used in more than 50 committees for over 100 projects. It has been viewed by over 8 000 experts in 74 countries.

IEC Strategic Plan

Our Vision statement says: IEC everywhere for a safer and more efficient world. Our Mission is to achieve worldwide use of IEC International Standards and IEC Conformity Assessment Systems to ensure the safety, efficiency, reliability and interoperability of electrical, electronic and information technologies, to enhance international trade, facilitate broad electricity access and enable a more sustainable world. The three themes and nine goals of our Strategic Plan tell us how to get there.



The first theme, **Enabling a digital and all-electric society**, is about shaping the future of technology. We are ensuring that the digital world is safe, secure, and reliable by developing standards and conformity assessment solutions that address the concerns of society. This theme also paves the way for a future powered by renewable energy sources, where smart technologies and interconnected systems play a crucial role.



The second theme, **Fostering a sustainable world**, is our commitment to a greener future. We are helping to create a world where resources are used responsibly and environmental impact is minimized by promoting efficient, safe and sustainable practices through IEC Standards and conformity assessment. This theme aligns with global efforts to combat climate change and achieve a more sustainable future.

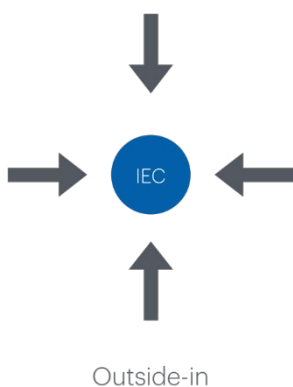


The third theme, **Leading on trust, inclusion, and collaboration**, is about building a stronger organization and fostering partnerships. By working more closely with our stakeholders and promoting good governance, we are strengthening our position as a trusted leader in the electrotechnical industry.

Our digital journey, however, is far more profound than just an overhaul of technology. The IEC is at a critical juncture, compelled to evolve from a traditional standards body into a dynamic, global catalyst for sustainable progress. The IEC is undergoing a metamorphosis. We are redefining and refining the core of our activities and services. We are reimagining our business model to align with the evolving behaviours and expectations of our stakeholders. To thrive in this new reality, we must adopt a dual-pronged approach: outside-in and inside-out transformation.

Outside-in transformation

Outside-in transformation requires a deep understanding of the evolving landscape. We must transform to serve shifting stakeholder expectations, emerging values and a rapidly changing world. Our stakeholders are demanding faster and more agile processes, enhanced collaboration and inclusivity, as well as a focus on interoperability and integration across technologies. They also expect IEC Standards to address sustainability and ethical considerations, ensure greater transparency and accessibility, in addition to supporting continuous learning and adaptation to new technological trends. That is why digitalization alone is insufficient. We must anticipate trends, identify opportunities and position the IEC as a trusted partner in shaping the future of electrotechnology.



Examples of the outside-in approach include the IEC Board Task Force 7 (**IB TF 7**) on Long-Term Sustainability, or LTS, IB Task Force 8 (**IB TF 8**) the “President’s dream” and the work by Standardization Management Board (**SMB**), Market Strategy Board (**MSB**) and Conformity Assessment Board (**CAB**) on the Smart standards and certification programme, in close cooperation with **ISO**.

IB TF 7 was created because the digital age is straining our resources and is tasked with developing strategies to assure the future of the IEC. It has identified both short-term measures to stabilize our financial position and long-term initiatives to build a sustainable business model. While we may not be progressing as quickly as I would have liked, building consensus for action takes time in an organization with nearly 170 countries. As an organization, we need to have the courage to give up the status quo, moving away from what we know so well. We cannot hold onto the past. We must dare to change.

The interactions between IEC Members and the Secretariat are too slow, which affects our decision-making processes. This would be worrying at the best of times, but during a period of rapid technological change and market evolution, delayed responses can lead to loss of competitive edge, decreased innovation, customer dissatisfaction and operational inefficiencies. Failing to adapt means struggling to keep up with more agile newcomers and losing customers to more responsive standards development and certification organizations. Outdated methods may lead to higher operational costs and ultimately, the risk of becoming obsolete as industry and society move forward at a faster pace.

This was the *raison d'être* behind IB TF 8. It was set up to help the IEC innovate and to find ways of accelerating the delivery of integrated services, with standards and conformity assessment developed in parallel and not in the sequential way that happens today. Although IB TF 8 encountered challenges in its pilot project, the lessons learned will inform future initiatives. We remain determined in our commitment to deliver more value to our stakeholders.

The Smart standards programme aims to ensure that IEC and ISO products and services remain the most attractive and relevant to markets and societies. It will enable the IEC to evolve into a knowledge-based organization that provides not only a comprehensive digital platform but also an array of digital products, services and processes.

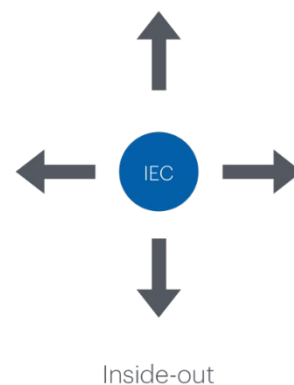
Inside-out transformation

Inside-out transformation is equally critical. We must create holistic value if we want to make a meaningful difference, not just for our Members but also for the planet and society. Our goal is not mere survival but the ability to thrive in a dynamic future. To achieve this, we must leverage the power of our collective expertise to drive positive impact. The IEC Global Impact Fund (IEC GIF) is one way that we are trying to make it happen.

The IEC GIF, which came from an idea of my predecessor, Yinbiao Shu, has made significant strides in leveraging standards for societal good. It is initially being supported through a three-year annual contribution of 1% of the IEC Capital and Reserves over the pilot phase. This seed funding is building a global partnership aligned with the IEC values and mission. The Korean Agency for Technology and Standards (KATS) became our first funding partner, agreeing to contribute CHF 200 000 per year until 2025, and potentially longer, should the initiative continue beyond its current pilot phase.

The IEC GIF is expanding its network of partners through its pilot project. Once completed, the project is expected to improve the lives of tens of thousands of rural Kenyans by providing access to reliable and clean sources of electricity. This project exemplifies the potential of the IEC GIF to create a positive impact on a global scale. I witnessed this first-hand during a trip to Kenya earlier this year. I visited a school and a hospital with the Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS) and our other local partners to meet some of the people directly affected.

Our collaboration with KATS and the successful IEC Global Impact Fund Forum in Nanjing, China earlier this year, are testaments to our commitment. We must now expand our impact by identifying new projects and partners, aligning our efforts with organizations such as the United Nations and Sustainable Energy for All (SEforALL).



IEC Global Impact Fund



The IEC GIF provides grants for projects that address specific global environmental, governance and societal challenges through the application of IEC International Standards and Conformity Assessment Systems.



Projects target specific countries where effective, safe, and efficient solutions based on IEC technical know-how can be implemented by small and medium enterprises (SMEs).



The pilot project is supporting an SME-led project in Kenya to promote sustainable battery e-waste management.

We are creating similar impact through our conformity assessment services, including verification of carbon footprint claims and promoting the incorporation of environmentally conscious design in developing products. In parallel, our standards for material efficiency, recyclability and life cycle assessment are supporting growing efforts towards creating a more circular economy.

The way forward

Looking ahead, we must continue to invest in our core competencies while embracing new opportunities. We must strengthen our position as a trusted authority on emerging technologies, step up collaborations and expand our global reach.

Key areas of focus for the coming year include accelerating digital transformation, strengthening financial sustainability, expanding the impact of the IEC GIF and enhancing Member engagement.

There are also some areas where we must try harder. It is debatable, for example, whether we are doing enough to inspire the next generation of leaders. The reality is that we need diverse voices and backgrounds to shape the future. It is essential that we raise our profile and evolve into a more recognizable brand to attract young talents. We have to create an environment where our Young Professionals feel empowered to contribute and make a difference. They should perceive the IEC as a crucial organization for addressing global issues such as climate change and human rights. It is vital that we break down barriers and reach all our stakeholders more effectively. This also means strengthening the IEC brand, in terms of positioning and identity, as well as developing a communications strategy tailored to engage different internal and external audiences.

I urge you to embrace this transformative journey with enthusiasm and determination. Together, we can build a stronger, more resilient and more visible IEC that no longer flies under the radar of media scrutiny and public opinion. To realize our ambitions, it is essential that the Secretariat and Members work together more collaboratively, with the IEC Strategic Plan as our compass and guide. The three strategic themes and nine goals are interconnected and are all equally essential to our long-term success. Above all, the Strategic Plan helps us to align our individual efforts with the overall direction of the IEC and contribute to a brighter future for our organization and the world.

Our challenges are real, but so are the opportunities. Let us rise to the occasion, harness the power of digital transformation and create a legacy to make Lord Kelvin proud!