Every year, October 14 is celebrated worldwide as World Standards Day. This is to commemorate the birth of the International Organization for Standardization, also known as ISO, which on 14 October 1946, delegates from twenty-five (25) countries, meeting in London, decided to create a new international organization “the object of which would be to facilitate the international coordination and unification of industrial standards.”

Thirty one (31) years afterwards, ARSO was born at the historic 10th -17th January 1977 Founding Conference of ARSO, under the auspices of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the OAU (now AU), at the Ghana International Conference Centre in Accra, Ghana at a time when Dr. Robert Oteng was Head of the Ghana Standards Board (currently Ghana Standards Authority (GSA)) and attended by representatives of Twenty one (21) African countries/Government and the international community comprising: the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), the International Electro technical Commission (IEC), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the Arab Organization for Standardization and Metrology (ARSM); the International Organization for Legal Metrology (OIML), and the Union of African Railways (UARr).

The genesis of ARSO is traced to the unfolding events and the prevailing mood of the African socio-political and economic Pan-Africanism of the 1970s. By then the idea of a continental standardisation body had received considerable impetus from the buoyant and optimistic mood that characterised the post-independence period in most of Africa. The mood then, ….

Continued... Page 4...

From the Desk of the Secretary General

Welcome to the new edition of ARSO newsletter, African Standardisation Watch - reflections within Africa, which will be a quarterly issue. This issue replaces its predecessor “ARSO Newsletter”.

Am delighted to convey the compliments of the African Organisation for Standardisation (ARSO) to all standards bodies and stakeholders.

I appreciate the confidence that the ARSO Council and ARSO fraternity have in my ability to steer ARSO to greater success in the years to come.

Continued... Page 2...

ARSO EVENTS

- 22-24 April, 2013; THC 02—Agriculture & Food Products Meeting at ARSO Central Secretariat
- 6-8 May, 2013; Training on Standardisation at ARSO Central Secretariat
- 19 June, 2013; Africa’s Standards Day in Younde, Cameroon
The Case of involving African Consumers in Standardisation Activities through the ARSO COCO

A Workshop co-hosted by ARSO and ACTIF on 4th December 2012 and addressed by ARSO Secretary General Dr. Hermogene Nsengimana and the Chairperson of ISO – COPOLCO, Ms. Norma McCormick, revealed that the participation of the Consumer Organisations in standardisation was well overdue and the failure had been caused by among other things lack of proper coordination and the ignorance on their expected participation in the standardisation process. A majority of African consumer associations are not yet very familiar with standardisation process as their participation in the work of different national and international standardization organizations is dismal though they believe that it is important.

It highlighted various issues that are of concern to the African continent gave a platform for discussions and re-strategizing priorities for the involvement of the African Consumers in the standardisation process and the role of standards in the increasing of the Cotton and Textile products value chain as well as the involvement of the private Sector ARSO Standardisation work.

It is appreciated that the continent has strong national Consumer bodies such as Rwanda (Consumers’ Protection organization (ADECOR), Kenya Consumers Organisation, Consumer Information Networks, Youth Education Network, Consumer Union and Trust Society (CUTS) but lack of a pan-African Consumer Organisation is disturbing.

The ARSO’s Consumer Committee (ARSO COCO) to be hosted by one of the ARSO member States has already achieved the support of the Consumers as a vehicle through which African Consumers’ voice in the continental and international standardisation process will be represented.

note that ARSO has come a long way with the support of Member States, African Union, UNECA and all the Stakeholders within the vision of the Abuja treaty of 1991 for African Economic Integration

Cont from page 1...

It is a great pleasure to serve this great organization but at the same time challenging.

Thus I seek your full support, alone I may fail but together we can.

As you are aware, ARSO recently held its 46th Council meeting in which the delegates noted the need for a review of the ARSO Strategic Framework 2009-2014 and related programmes, a clearly defined standards harmonisation plan, an effective resource mobilization strategy, complete review of the ARSO Constitution, a review of the interactive Communication Strategy and an inclusive strategic engagement with member countries and Stakeholders. The outcome will serve as my guidance.

I am completely confident that this step undertaken by the Council will bear fruits in the near future. I personally encourage you to take active participation in these activities and it would be most appreciated if you can share with us your ideas, comments and suggestions. I humbly note that ARSO has come a long way with the support of Member States, African Union, UNECA and all the Stakeholders within the vision of the Abuja treaty of 1991 for African Economic Integration. I take this opportunity to salute the great work of the former Secretary Generals, ARSO Presidents, Council members and ARSO Central Secretariat staff and call upon to your support in order to achieve the mandate of ARSO.

THC 02—Agriculture & Food Products Meeting at ARSO Central Secretariat

Despite its vast agricultural potential, Africa as a continent has remained a net importer of agricultural products in the last three decades. In 1980, Africa had an almost balanced agriculture trade when both agricultural exports and imports were at about USD 14 Billion, but by 2007 its agricultural imports exceeded agricultural exports by about USD 22 Billion (FAOSTAT, 2011).

The ARSO THC 02 is being convened to harmonize Agriculture and Food Standards to facilitate intra Africa trade in the respective products.

The Meeting will be on 22-24 April, 2013 at ARSO Central Secretariat.


“Accelerating Sustainable Economic Development for Africa through Standardisation.”
“Training on Standardisation”

Following the approval of the ARSO Strategic Plan 2012 – 2017 by the 47th ARSO Council meeting, the ARSO Central Secretariat has initiated capacity building programmes contained in the strategic plan. These capacity building programmes include training of participants from Member States to effectively participate in standardization and conformity assessment activities at the national, sub-regional, continental and international levels in line with the ARSO mandate. Consequently, the ARSO Central Secretariat has designed a Standardization Training for Member States aimed at fulfilling this need while at the same time addressing practical matters related to current and emerging issues which are influencing the standardization objectives such as:

1) The WTO TBT and SPS Agreements
2) Mainstreaming SMEs into the Economy Through Standardization
3) Standards as Tools for Value Chain Development in Africa
4) Role of Standards in the African Integration Agenda
5) Boosting Intra-African Trade and International Market Access Through Standards
6) Sustainability Standards as Tools for Sustainable Development in Africa
7) Education on Standardization in African Education Institutions

The ARSO Secretariat has scheduled the first part of the training (to be conducted in English) to take place from 6th to 8th May 2013 at the ARSO Central Secretariat, Nairobi.

ARSO will sponsor 10 participants from 10 fully paid up Member States whose assessment indicates the need to do so. Only one participant will be sponsored per country. Countries are allowed to sponsor more than one delegate but should inform ARSO Central Secretariat in advance for logistical arrangements.

For French-speaking member state, the workshop will be held in July 2013 at a date and venue to be communicated in due course.


“Talks with the Nigerian Delegation on 13 February 2013”

A delegation of Nigerian Officials paid a Courtesy call on ARSO Secretary General at the ARSO Central Secretariat. The Delegation Comprising Government Officials and members of the SON Standards Council and SON Staff members led by the SON Director General, Dr. Joseph Ikemefuna Oduomodu who is also the Acting ARSO President, had also visited the Kenya Bureau of Standards and held talks with the KEBs Managing Director, Ms. Eva Oduor.

The discussions were based on ARSO-Nigerian cooperation highlighting the various roles Nigeria had played since the establishment of ARSO and the implementation of ARSO Programmes with regard to Leadership position, Council Membership, African Standards Harmonisation and Hosting of ARSO Meetings.

The meeting discussed the Projects for ARSO-SON collaboration within the ARSO Strategic Plan 2012-2017 with a focus on Mainstreaming the SMEs in the African Standardization Process, Creation of Awareness on the benefits of Standardisation and Conformity Assessment, Capacity building and Training on standardisation and conformity assessment, Exchange of Information on Standards and conformity assessment.

ARSO in collaboration with African Ministries of Industry and Commerce is initiating a programme within the continent on mainstreaming the SMEs in the African Standardization Process.

A need for a Continental Quality Policy which currently ARSO is developing was highlighted with a focus to regulating operations at the major ports of

“ARSO-Nigerian cooperation highlighting the various roles Nigeria had played since the establishment of ARSO and the implementation of ARSO Programmes”

ARSO Secretary General discussing with the Nigerian Delegation on 13 February 2013

“Accelerating Sustainable Economic Development for Africa through Standardisation.”
“ISO Secretary General talks on the benefits of standards”

A visit by the ISO Secretary General Mr. Rob Steel to Africa and Kenya (KEBS) in particular to deliver a lecture on ISO and the benefits of International standards on 14th December 2012 to an audience comprising the Kenya business community could have been best end year gift.

The ARSO Secretary General, Dr. Hermogene Nsengimana in his keynote address further highlighted to the audience the role of ARSO in the standardisation arena based on the ARSO programmes and activities as per the ARSO Strategic Plan 2012-2017.

Cont from page 1… “Celebrating the African Standards Day : Celebrating the foundation of ARSO and the role of standardisation in Africa.”

….under the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), was one of pan-African solidarity and collective self-reliance born of a shared destiny with standardisation viewed as a guidepost of the destiny and bedrock of African Economic Integration Agenda and a route to linking up of the fresh Africa’s economy with the rest of the world and to deliver the African Common Market for economic prosperity of the continent.

The creation of ARSO was the inspiration and the vision of some great sons of Africa among them Mr Zawdu Felleke of Ethiopia (appointed first ARSO Secretary General), the Late Dr. Fletcher Banda of Malawi, the Late Mr. Francis Beda Maiko of Kenya, the late Dr. Ademola Banjo of Nigeria (elected first ARSO President) and the Late Dr. Robert Oteng of Ghana who, when attending an ISO General Assembly in the Mid-70s as representatives of Africa had a common vision. Others were Dr. Fanad Ahmed Sobly, the then Chairman Egyptian Organisation for Standardization (EOS), Arabs Republic of Egypt, M. Oyono Owo, the then Chef de Service de Normalisation Ministère de l’économie de normalisation et des plan, Cameroon, Mr. Shyam Kumar Gujadhur the then Director, Mauritius Standards Bureau, and later ARSO President, Mr. Mohamed Hadi Krema, Head of Standards and Specification section Ministry of Industry Tripoli, Standards and Specification Section, Libyan Arab Republic, among others.

The vision of these founding fathers of ARSO was to get African Standardizers united and work together towards contributing to the building of the African economies through standardisation so that Africa as a continent should rise to the challenges of global economic order. ARSO has come of age and at 36 years old, the Organisation under the current Secretary General Dr. Hermogene Nsengimana with Dr. Joseph Odumodu of Nigeria as the Acting President is poised to play a vital role in achieving the Economic Integration of Africa as per the shared vision of the founding fathers, the tenets of the 1980 Lagos Plan of Action and the 1991 Abuja Treaty as well as the reaffirmed commitment of the African Heads of State at the 20th AU Summit of July 2012, committing themselves to ensuring the achievement of the African Free Trade Area by the 2017.

ARSO is set to initiating the Africa’s Standards Day geared towards the commemoration of the birth of ARSO and the commitment of Founding Fathers and the twenty one (21) African Governments to push for the standardisation and Conformity Assessment Agenda in Africa through ARSO.

The African Standards Day for 2013 will be Celebrated on the 19th June at Yaoundé Cameroon under the theme “Celebrating Standardisation as a Strategic Resource to Africa’s economic integration.”

The event is meant to create more awareness on the benefits of standardisation to the African continent, share in the vision of the founding fathers of ARSO, review the achievements, challenges and programmes as per the 2012-2017 strategic plan and rededicate the energy of ARSO in the right path to success.

Source: first-hand account and experience by the former ARSO President Mr. Austin Khulumula (who participated in the founding conference) in his Address to the ARSO General Assembly in 2004 and actual records at the ARSO Central Secretariat, including the first Constitution of ARSO adopted at the Conference, preserved with the Physical seal and the roster of the Twenty One (21) African Countries that signed the adoption and the formation of ARSO.
“Cameroon to Host the 19th ARSO General Assembly in Younde Cameroon”

The 19th ARSO General Assembly and the associated events have been scheduled for the 17th - 21st June 2013 in Yaoundé, Cameroon. The events to be hosted by the Government of the Republic of Cameroon through the “Agence des Normes et de la Qualité” (ANOR) include:

- 48th ARSO Council Meeting - 17th and 18th June 2013. (Note: ARSO Council members only)
- Forum for the 36th ARSO Anniversary Celebrations dubbed “African Standards Day” – 19th June 2013 (Note: all ARSO members and invited guests)
- 19th ARSO General Assembly Meeting - 20th - 21st June 2013. (Note: all ARSO members and invited guests).

All are welcome to ARSO-Younde 2013.

Cameroon looks forward to the implementation of Vision 2035 based on a strong Quality and Standardisation Infrastructure as it hosts the ARSO Strategic Oversight Committee

Despite the gradual recovery from the devaluation of the CFA franc in 1994, Cameroon’s growth is still to find its strength in terms of its inner dynamics and the expected impact on the living conditions of the population. One of the strategies is the Promotion of enterprises notably SMEs/SMIs. During the ARSO Oversight Committee Meeting hosted by Government of the Republic of Cameroon through Agence des Normes et de la Qualité (ANOR) on 6th - 9th August 2012, ARSO Secretary General Dr. Hermogene Nsengimana met Hon. Laurent Serge Etoundi, Cameroonian Minister of SMEs and discussed how ARSO and Cameroon can partner in making the SMEs sector in Cameroon more productive and improve their competitiveness. Currently, under the ARSO Strategic Framework 2012-2017, ARSO has initiated the SMEs and standardisation programme where partnership with the Africa’s Ministries of Trade and Industry and the African Regional Industrial Property Organisation (ARIPO) is being sought.

ARSO holds talks with Crown Agents


Crown Agents is an international development specialist working with leaders across the world to make profound changes to systems, organisations and society. The focus of the meeting was working strategies on facilitating standardisation in Africa.

“Accelerating Sustainable Economic Development for Africa through Standardisation.”
“Southern Sudan embraces the role of standardisation in national economic growth”

With plans to set up a National Standards Bureau, the Embassy of the Southern Sudan discussed with ARSO the modalities of Southern Sudan participation in the national and continental standardisation activities on 6th September 2012. ARSO Secretary General assured Mr. Barnaba Bol Nyuol, First Secretary in the Embassy of ARSO’s ability to assist Southern Sudan in implementing its standardisation programmes.

“Making Standardisation a key pillar for the African Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) by 2017”

The outcome of the Africa Trade Forum 2012 (ATF-II) and the inaugural Africa Trade Forum of 2011 (ATF-I) obliged the Heads of African State to REAFFIRM their commitment to deepen Africa’s market integration through the establishment of the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) by the indicative date of 2017 and the implementation of the Action Plan for Boosting Intra-African Trade.

The creation of the CFTA would substantially expand intra-African trade by breaking down tariffs and non-tariffs barriers as well as unleash the entrepreneurial dynamism and spirit across a continent without trade barriers. ATF-II strongly supported the role of standardisation and the quality Infrastructure in realising the CFTA by 2017. However, the framing of the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) has already acknowledged the technical barriers to trade (TBTs) arising from the use of weak standards, metrology, conformity assessment and accreditation systems on the continent.

In view of this, ARSO, on its part, is championing the process of strengthening the Standardisation and Quality infrastructure in Africa and in its Strategic Plan 2012 – 2017 has incorporated the priority sectors for standards and conformity assessment in line with Article 49 of the Abuja Treaty. This involves, involving the private sector in the setting up of quality standards and conformity assessment systems especially in areas which are commercially viable.

ARSO has produced 802 standards which are currently being revised, with the involvement of the private Sector, in connection with the current economic realities. It is time that "Value Addition" or "Value Chain" experts in Africa live up to the call the world runs on standards.


Check the link for more information on ARSO Standardisation Education Programme Initiative.


“Knowledge is power : standardisation as a Strategic Resource to be harnessed in Africa through ARSO’s African Standardisation Education Programme.”

“Accelerating Sustainable Economic Development for Africa through Standardisation.”
“Accelerating Sustainable Economic Development for Africa through Standardisation.”
Hosting of ARSO Events: ARSO Appreciations and Thanks all stake holders:

⇒ The Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, through Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON): for Hosting the 46th ARSO Council Meeting at the Oriental Hotel, Island, Lagos Nigeria. 18th – 24th June 2012 together the other related events, namely:
   • ARSO-KATS Training/Korea – Africa Standards Cooperation event (held back to back with the ARSO GA events on the 18th, 19th and 20th June 2012.

⇒ The Government of the Republic of Tanzania, through the Tanzania Bureau of Standards (TBS): for the successful hosting of the 47th ARSO Council Meeting at the Naura Springs Hotel on 23rd – 24th October 2012. The 47th ARSO Council approved the Revised ARSO Constitution for ratification by the ARSO members which is on-going.

⇒ The Korean Agency for Technology and Standards (KATS) and Korea Testing Laboratory: for co-sponsoring the ARSO-KATS Capacity building which was held on 18th – 29th November 2012 in Seoul, Korea under the ARSO/African - Korean International Standards Cooperation Programme. 12 Standardisation Experts from ARSO member States benefitted from this event.

⇒ Mr. Rajeev Arora, the Executive Director African Cotton and Textile Industries Federation (ACTIF): for sponsoring one-day Workshop on the Standardisation Process and the African Consumers’ Participation at the Sankara Hotel in Nairobi, Kenya on 4th December 2012. Ms. Norma McCormick, Chairperson of ISO-COPOLCO, participated as a Key Resource Person.

⇒ The Government of the Republic of Kenya, through the Kenya Bureau of Standards: for the continued hosting of the ARSO Central Secretariat and the sponsoring of the ARSO Strategic Framework Mid-Term review workshop on the 13th July 2012 at the Red Court Hotel, Nairobi, Kenya.

⇒ The Government of the Republic of Cameroon Through the through Agence des Normes et de la Qualité (ANOR) for Hosting the ARSO Oversight Committee Meeting in Younde Cameroon on 6th - 9th August 2012 and for Confirming to host the events of the 19th ARSO General Assembly in June 2013.

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