



## **THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**

### **BETWEEN**

**THE INTERNATIONAL ELECTROTECHNICAL COMMISSION (IEC),  
THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR STANDARDIZATION  
(ISO),  
THE INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION (ITU)  
AND THE UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE  
(UNECE)**

**CONCERNING STANDARDIZATION IN THE FIELD OF ELECTRONIC  
BUSINESS**

In January 1992, recognizing the risk of divergent approaches to standardization efforts in electronic commerce, the chief executives of IEC, ISO, ITU and UNECE agreed to coordinate the development of standardization work among their organizations and that that future international standardization efforts increasingly need to employ joint planning and close coordination. The principles to govern their cooperation were established in a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by IEC, ISO and UNECE.

In November 1998, the three organizations, recognized the mutual benefit of collaborating with International User Groups and extended the previous framework of cooperation to cover ‘**electronic business**’ within and between enterprises. They endorsed the participation of CALS<sup>1</sup> and NATO<sup>2</sup> CALS as International User Groups. In March 2000, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) signed the Memorandum of Understanding, joining the three founding international standards-setting organizations of the MoU.

In November 2001, the MoU Management Group recognised that the OASIS<sup>3</sup> consortium meets the criteria set out by for the participation of International user Groups and resolved inviting OASIS to join the MoU.

At the signatory ceremony in March 2002, the Chief Executive Officers of the standard-setting organizations underlined the principles and practices of the MoU namely to minimize the risk of divergent and competitive approaches to standardization, the need to avoid duplication of efforts and avoid confusion amongst users and that coordinated standards are essential to provide greater inter-sectoral interoperability and technical consistence in the field of electronic business. The participation of ITU is essential to secure the interoperability required by the network economy.

The Chief Executive Officers also stressed that, when countries adopt international standards and harmonize their technical regulations worldwide, everybody stands to gain. Moreover, the development of technical instruments shared by all countries facilitates and strengthens their involvement in harmonious economic relations. This vital role of international standards as the technical foundation for the global market is explicitly recognized by the World Trade Organization.

The MoU establishes a coordination mechanism under a unique cooperative model to produce mutually supportive standards required in business as well as product design and manufacturing to meet the needs of both the industry and end users. Given that the MoU provides the vital framework for e-business, the MoU will support this rapidly changing and fast growing business sector.

The MoU is an excellent practical example of greater partnership between the governmental and private sectors. It lays the foundation for healthy development of e-businesse to the benefit of all stakeholders. Under the MoU, the four organizations undertake to review their standardization activities and develop a joint, coordinated programme for standards development which will benefit the marketplace.

The MoU is open to other international, regional, governmental, industry and consumer organizations whose core mission involves standards-setting requirements.

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<sup>1</sup> Continuous Acquisition and Lifecycle Support

<sup>2</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization

<sup>3</sup> Organization for the Advancement of Structured Information Standards