

CONSEGI 2008 DECLARATION

We, the undersigned representatives of state IT organisations from Brazil, South Africa, Venezuela, Ecuador, Cuba and Paraguay, note with disappointment the press release from ISO/IEC/JTC-1 of 20 August regarding the appeals registered by the national bodies of Brazil, South Africa, India and Venezuela. Our national bodies, together with India, had independently raised a number of serious concerns about the process surrounding the fast track approval of DIS29500. That those concerns were not properly addressed in the form of a conciliation panel reflects poorly on the integrity of these international standards development institutions.

Whereas we do not intend to waste any more resources on lobbying our national bodies to pursue the appeals further, we feel it is important to make the following points clear:

1. The bending of the rules to facilitate the fast track processing of DIS29500 remains a significant concern to us. That the ISO TMB did not deem it necessary to properly explore the substance of the appeals must, of necessity, put confidence in those institutions ability to meet our national requirements into question.
2. The overlap of subject matter with the existing ISO/IEC26300 (Open Document Format) standard remains an area of concern. Many of our countries have made substantial commitments to the use of ISO/IEC26300, not least because it was published as an ISO standard in 2006.
3. The large scale adoption of a standard for office document formats is a long and expensive exercise, with multi-year projects being undertaken in each of our countries. Many of us have dedicated significant time and resources to this effort. For example, in Brazil, the process of translation of ISO/IEC26300 into Portuguese has taken over a year.

The issues which emerged over the past year have placed all of us at a difficult crossroads. Given the organisation's inability to follow its own rules we are no longer confident that ISO/IEC will be capable of transforming itself into the open and vendor-neutral standards setting organisation which is such an urgent requirement. What is now clear is that we will have to, albeit reluctantly, re-evaluate our assessment of ISO/IEC, particularly in its relevance to our various national government interoperability frameworks. Whereas in the past it has been assumed that an ISO/IEC standard should automatically be considered for use within government, clearly this position no longer stands.

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