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**Who Develops ISO Standards?
A Survey of Participation in ISO's International
Standards Development Processes**

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Background

- The International Organization for Standardization - also known as “ISO” - began creating technical standards for things like hardware and photo film in the late 1940s. In recent years, however, ISO has been expanding into matters relating to social and environmental policy.
- ISO is world’s largest international standards developer. The norms established by ISO have a major impact on national and local environmental and social issues.

Summary of Findings

- Although the problem of under-representation by less developed regions has been recognized by the ISO for over 40 years, there has been no significant improvement in participation, as measured by “Participating-membership” in ISO’s Technical Committees – the fora where ISO actually develops its standards.
- On average, Western Europe represents almost half the voting base in ISO’s standards development work, despite representing approximately six percent of the world’s population.
- Contrary to popular perception, development of ISO’s environmental management standards is not dominated by industry: while industry does represent the largest single stakeholder group, it only constitutes one third of total participation at international meetings. Together, consultants, registrars, and representatives from standards bodies make up almost 40 percent of the participants attending Technical Committee 207 meetings.
- In recent years, ISO has taken steps to improve the balance of stakeholder representation in its standard development processes, although these initiatives have yet to demonstrate improvements in historical deficiencies in participation by certain interests, namely government and civil society representatives.
- Publicly available information on the stakeholder representation in ISO standards development is very limited. There is no consistent and systematic protocol for tracking stakeholder participation, which in turn prevents an assessment of whether, and the degree to which, input from the full range of affected stakeholders is achieved.

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1. Introduction

This report quantifies and analyses participation in standards development within the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). ISO is perhaps the world's largest and best known developer of international standards, with 148 member countries and more than 14,000 standards developed over its almost 60-year history. Though this international institution initially focused on developing technical standards for specific products such as films and screws, ISO has expanded its scope significantly, and now develops management system standards and other protocols that have significant environmental and social policy implications.

Anecdotal evidence suggests this change in the subject matter being standardized has not been accompanied by a parallel shift in the representation of affected stakeholders, and that less developed regions and numerous key stakeholder groups remain underrepresented in ISO. The goal of this study is to assess the empirical data to verify or disprove this perception. It also seeks to provide the information needed to promote fairer and more meaningful developing country and stakeholder participation in international standards development. As such, this report can serve as a benchmark that can be used to measure progress toward more representative participation in ISO over time.

This study analyzes representation in ISO's standards development activities from two perspectives: geographic region and stakeholder group. The first part of the study looks at the country/regional representation in all active Technical Committees (TCs) within ISO. The second part looks at ISO/TC 207 – Environmental Management, the second largest committee in ISO, as a case study to examine both regional and stakeholder representation in more detail. TC 207 was selected because it is emblematic of ISO's transformation from a technical standard-setting institution to one that is increasingly affecting broader public policy issues. The study concludes with a brief review of two new initiatives within ISO to develop water management standards and a corporate social responsibility guidance standard (shortened to "SR" within ISO circles), both of which signify ISO's continued expansion into the social and environmental arenas.

2. Background

What makes ISO and its standard development processes worthy of policy decision-makers and the general public's attention? The following section provides background information that sets the context for this report.

2.1 Brief History of ISO and its New Direction

International standardization began in the electrotechnical field when the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) was established in 1906. The International Federation of the National Standardizing Associations (ISA) was then set up in 1926 to create standards in the field of mechanical engineering. Four years after ISA was dissolved in 1942, delegates from 25 countries decided to create a new international organization, ISO, “to facilitate the international coordination and unification of industrial standards.”¹ Since its creation, ISO has experienced three major turning points. For its first 40 years, ISO followed its initial mission, focusing on technical standards for specific products or technologies such as screws, sizing systems for clothing and shoes, and laser technology.² The organization’s first turning point came in the 1980s when ISO delved into the development of “process” standards, specifically the ISO 9000 Quality Management System standards. The creation of generic management standards that could cover almost any industry sector was a notable departure from the product/industry/technology-specific nature of previous ISO standards.³ The ISO 9000 series became ISO’s most widely known and successful (measured by sales) standards ever, with more than half a million organizations adopting them globally.

ISO’s evolution continued with another turning point a decade later. In 1993, with the creation of ISO/TC 207 to develop the ISO14000 Environmental Management standards, ISO took its most notable step into the public policy arena, extending its influence beyond industry and their customers, and into issues of general public interest.⁴

ISO’s third transition is presently taking place in the form of the organization’s current (and accelerating) pursuit of the development of standards that directly support and advance sustainable development. In its most recent long-term strategy statement, *ISO Horizon 2010: Standards for a Sustainable World* (ISO 2003), ISO expresses its intention to continue moving into the environmental and social arenas, stating that its standards can serve “products and services that enter into world trade and that impact on the health, safety, environment and social progress of mankind.” The trend is

¹ ISO Website: <http://www.iso.org/iso/en/aboutiso/introduction/index.html#four>

² The list of all ISO standards is available at: <http://www.iso.org/iso/en/stdsdevelopment/tc/tclist/TechnicalCommitteeList.TechnicalCommitteeList>

³ ISO states: “ISO standards were, before ISO 9000 and ISO 14000, principally of concern to engineers and other technical specialists concerned by the precise scope addressed in the standard.” http://www.iso.org/iso/en/iso9000-14000/basics/general/basics_2.html

⁴ This issue is clearly recognized in ISO 14001(1996), which states: “environmental management systems address the needs of a broad range of interested parties and evolving needs of society for environmental protection.”

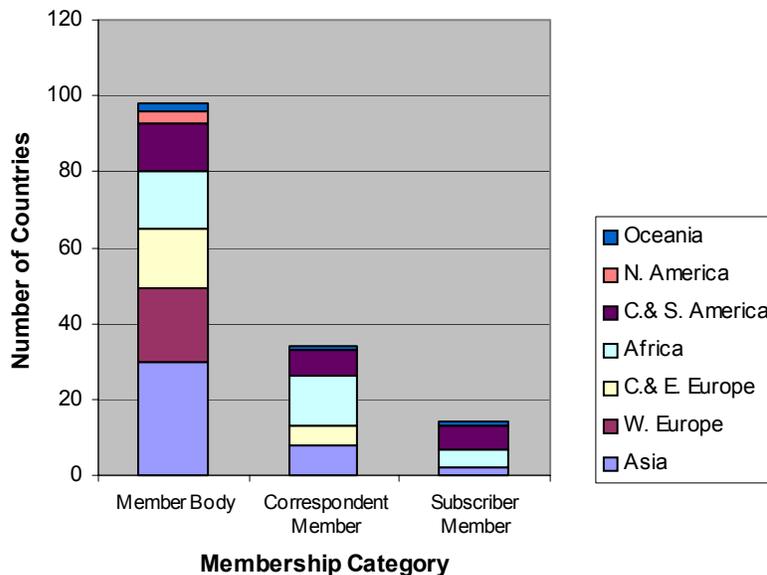
already evident in recent initiatives within ISO that are discussed in more detail in Section 5.

Six decades after its creation, ISO has grown into the world’s largest and most widely recognized standards development organization. ISO’s influence is exercised not solely through its size and popularity, but also because of the status of its outputs as the world’s “trade-legal” standards as recognized by the World Trade Organization (WTO).⁵ Once nationalized, these international standards can become market requirements (even for companies without foreign operations), for instance, as part of government procurement criteria, as has happened in the case of the ISO 9000 and ISO 14000 series standards.⁶ There is, therefore, little doubt that any new ISO standards in the social or environmental field can and will have a sizable influence on businesses, governments, and civil society around the world.

Currently, a total of 148 countries participate in the ISO confederation, either as a **member body** (97 countries, with active participation and voting rights), as a **correspondent member** (36 countries, without voting rights but full

information access), or as a **subscriber member** (15 countries, with reduced membership fee and limited access to the information).⁷ Figure 1 shows the regional breakdown for each membership category.

Figure 1. ISO Membership by Category and Region



⁵ WTO’s Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Agreement requires member countries to adopt relevant international standards as the basis for their national standards. TBT Agreement Article 2.4 states: “Where technical regulations are required and relevant international standards exist or their completion is imminent, Members shall use them, or the relevant parts of them, as a basis for their technical regulations except when such international standards or relevant parts would be an ineffective or inappropriate means for the fulfillment of the legitimate objectives pursued, for instance because of fundamental climatic or geographical factors or fundamental technological problems.”

⁶ Morrison et al. 2000. Managing a Better Environment: Opportunities and Obstacles for ISO 14001 in Public Policy and Commerce. Pacific Institute. Oakland, California.

⁷ For a full description of each membership category and list of countries, see: <http://www.iso.org/iso/en/aboutiso/isomembers/index.html>

2.2 ISO's Standards Development Process

ISO's standards development process consists of three main phases. First, the need for a standard is expressed, typically by an industry sector, which communicates this need to a national member body within ISO. The member body then carries the new work item proposal to ISO. Once ISO member bodies formally agree by ballot to the need for an International Standard, technical experts from countries interested in the subject matter finalize the technical scope of the future standard. Countries then proceed to negotiate the detailed contents and provisions within the standard, using a consensus-based approach. The third phase comprises the formal approval of the final draft document,⁸ at which time the agreed upon text is published as an ISO International Standard.⁹

Technical Committees (TCs) are the forums where ISO standards are actually discussed and formed. These forums are where national member bodies, and their expert delegates, provide their input into the standards. In order to participate in the work of TCs, a national member body expresses to ISO Central Secretariat whether it intends to act as a Participating or Observing member. Participating members (P-members) actively take part in the work: they are expected to attend meetings and have an obligation to vote on all formal questions, enquiry drafts, and final draft International Standards. Observing members (O-members) agree to follow the TC's work as an observer, and therefore to receive committee documents. O-members have the right to submit comments and to attend meetings. A national body may choose neither P-member nor O-member status for a given committee, in which case it will have neither the rights nor the obligations in that TC, but maintains the right to vote on enquiry drafts and on final draft International Standards.¹⁰ International organizations can also participate in TCs as "liaison organizations," but are not allowed to vote in the balloting related to the advancement of draft standards. Altogether there are 188 active TCs in ISO today.¹¹

⁸ The acceptance criteria stipulate approval by two-thirds of the ISO "Participating members" involved in the TC developing the standard, and approval by 75 percent of all members that vote.

⁹ ISO Website: "About ISO" <http://www.iso.org/iso/en/aboutiso/introduction/index.html#twenty>

¹¹ ISO Website: "List of Technical Committees" (as of November 20, 2003). The difference between this number and the number given the newest committee, ISO/TC 225, is due to the dissolution of some TCs. The following TCs have been dissolved: 3, 7, 9, 13, 15, 16, 32, 40, 49, 50, 53, 55, 56, 57, 62, 64, 65, 66, 73, 75, 78, 80, 88, 90, 95, 97, 99, 103, 124, 125, 139, 140, 141, 143, 151, 169, 187 and 200.

3. Regional Representation in Technical Committees

This section examines the countries and world regions that are represented in ISO's standards development work.

3.1 Research Approach

In measuring regional representation in TC activities, we looked at which countries are involved in standard development as “Participating members” (P-members).¹² P-membership in TCs is not necessarily the only, or even the most optimal parameter of participation level. Other important factors include participation in TC Working Groups (WG) (where standards are actually deliberated), actual attendance at ISO meetings, the number of delegates at those meetings, and whether the country plays a leadership role (e.g., secretariat, chair, convener, etc.) for the standard under development.

P-membership in TCs, however, is still significant because P-members most actively influence the course of standards development with the right to vote on standards' progression from their initiation through to final publication.¹³ As a general rule, the P-members of a particular TC are most committed to advancing the work at hand, and will send the most delegates on the most consistent basis. Thus, P-members are the most influential actors in the ISO standards development system relative to other types of members (e.g., Observing members, liaison organizations, etc.) A practical reason for using P-membership as a parameter is that the information is readily available for all of the active 188 TCs.¹⁴ And because TCs are assigned their respective number in the sequence in which they were created, TC numbering can serve as rough proxy for trends in ISO participation. To supplement the analysis of P-membership in TCs, this study also looks at which countries/regions host TC chair and secretariat positions.

3.2 Analysis

Figure 3 illustrates P-member involvement in TCs by geographic region¹⁵ from 1942 to 2003.¹⁶ The consistently largest representation is by the Western European region. Asia and Central and Eastern Europe follow, though these regions are not as regularly involved. North America and Oceania show

¹² Other TC participants, such as Observer members and Liaison organizations are not evaluated in this section.

¹³ A TC can only start the development of a new standard with the approval of P-members. A P-member majority approval is required to elevate a Committee Draft (CD) to Draft International Standard (DIS). O-members can cast their vote during the final stages of standards development either approving or disapproving a DIS and/or Final Draft International Standard (FDIS), however, a two-thirds P-member approval is required to elevate the drafts into DIS and FDIS.

¹⁴ ISO Website: “Technical Committee List”: <http://www.iso.ch/iso/en/stdsdevelopment/tc/tclist/TechnicalCommitteeList>.

¹⁵ The regional breakdown is based on World Resources Institute. 1999. World Resources: A Guide to the Global Environment. Available [Online]: http://www.wri.org/wr_98-99/

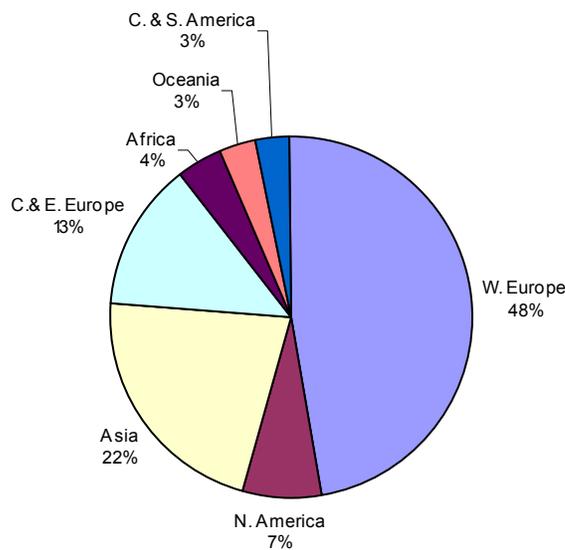
¹⁶ The scale of X-axis does not correspond to a real time scale (i.e., distance between each TC is set equal), however, the order of TC numbers corresponds with the order of their creation (i.e., the smaller the TC number, the earlier it was created).

similarly smaller representation on a relative basis, which is almost entirely due to the fact that there are only three countries in both of these regions. Oceania, however, is much less frequently present in TCs, participating only about a half of ISO’s 188 active TCs, while North America participates in more than 80 percent of TCs (see Table 1). Figure 2 illustrates Western Europe’s dominance in standards development, with almost half of the P-membership in TCs on average.¹⁷

Table 1. ISO Technical Committee Involvement

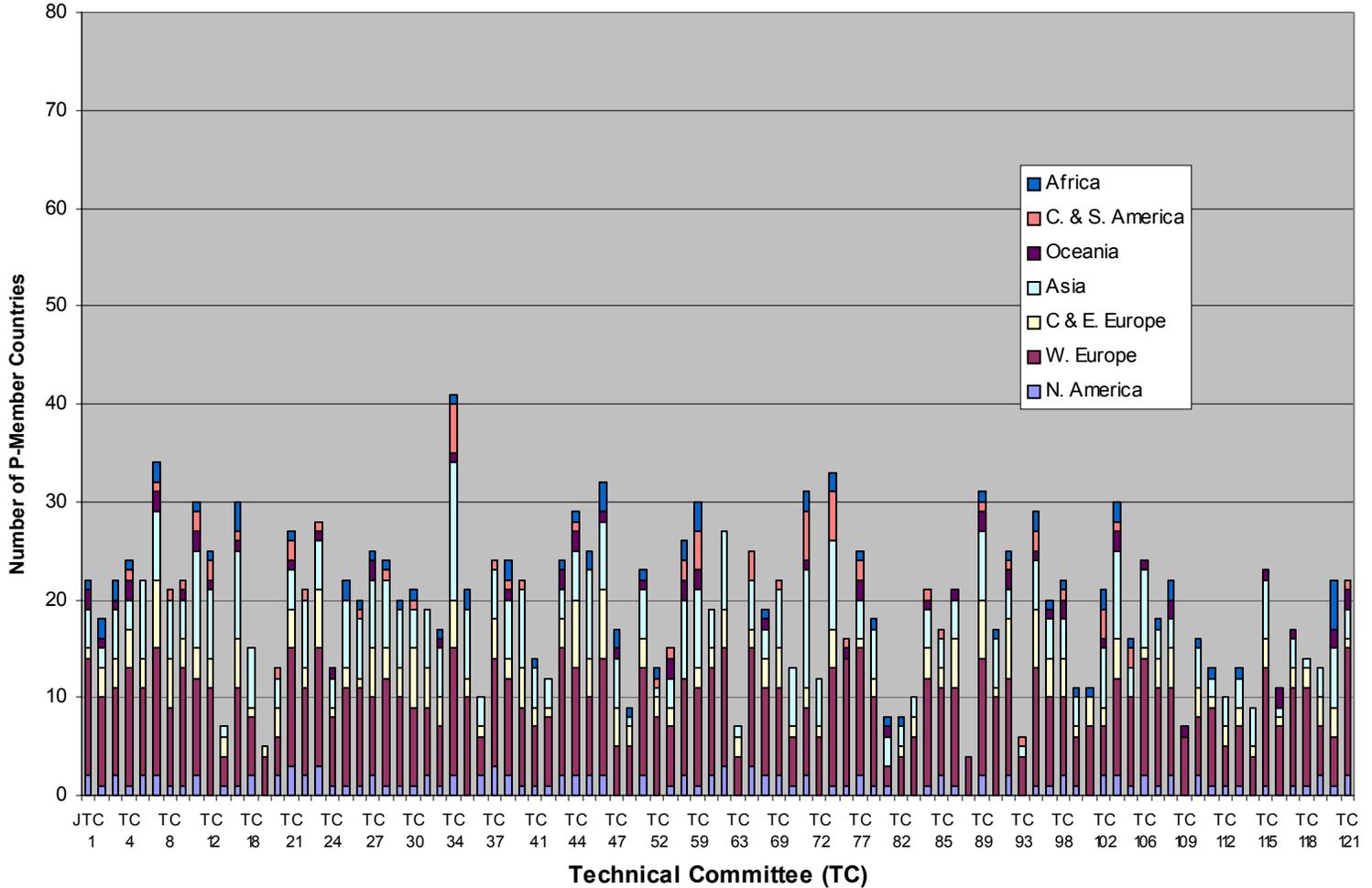
Region	Number of TCs with P-membership	Percentage
W. Europe	188	100
Asia	179	95
C.&E. Europe	175	93
N. America	153	81
Africa	105	56
Oceania	100	53
C.&S America	86	46

Figure 2: Average Technical Committee Participating-Membership by Region



¹⁷ This average is calculated by adding the regional representation percentage of each TC, divided by the total number of TCs (188). In instances where a region had no P-members in a TC, a value of 0% was assigned.

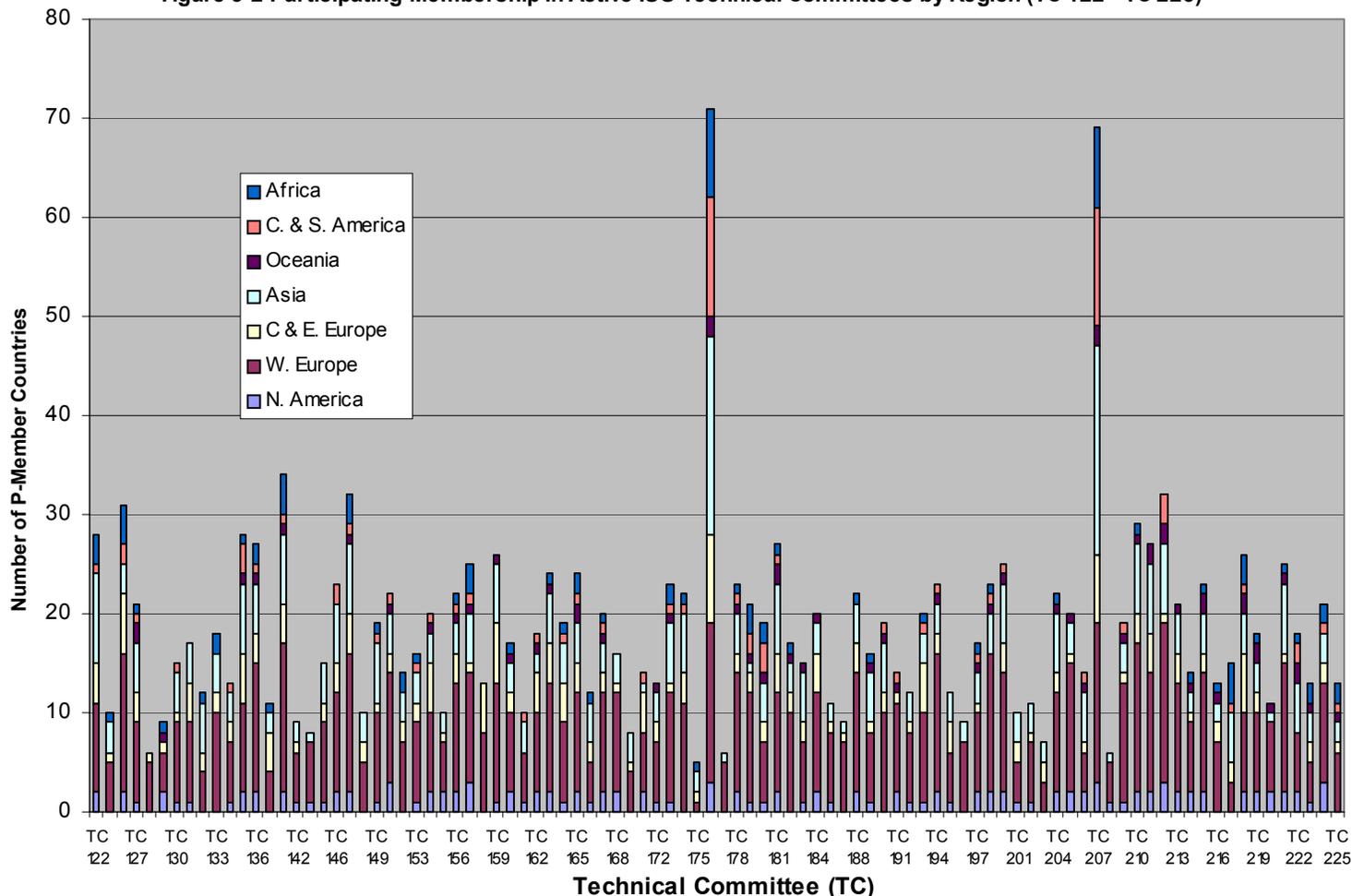
Figure 3-1 Participating-Membership in Active ISO Technical Committees by Region (JTC1 - TC 121)



Figures 4 and 5 illustrate the discrepancy in regional representation between ISO member bodies and P-membership in TCs. The Western European region has the most significant participation, representing almost half of the P-members, even though these countries make up only 12% of ISO’s member bodies. The Asian region has a relatively proportionate representation, making up 25% of ISO member bodies, and participating as 22% of P-members. Both Africa and Central and South American regions are clearly underrepresented in TC activities. They represent 44% of ISO member bodies, but combined, their average participation at the TC level makes up only 7% of P-members.

As noted above, even though each P-member has equal influence in terms of voting on draft standards, the actual level of involvement and interest in TC activities vary among P-members. As illustrated in the next section, some countries send more experts to TC meetings than others, while some countries send no delegates to TC meetings, even though they have P-member status. It can be

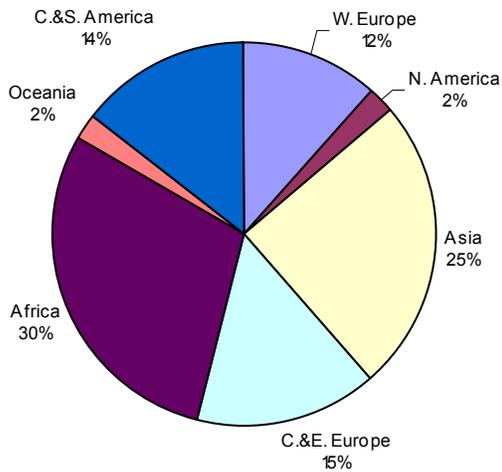
Figure 3-2 Participating-Membership in Active ISO Technical Committees by Region (TC 122 - TC 225)



assumed that when member bodies host the chairmanship or secretariat of a TC, it indicates a relatively high level of interest to actively participate in standard’s development. Figures 6 and 7 show the regional representation of TC secretariats and chairmanships, respectively.

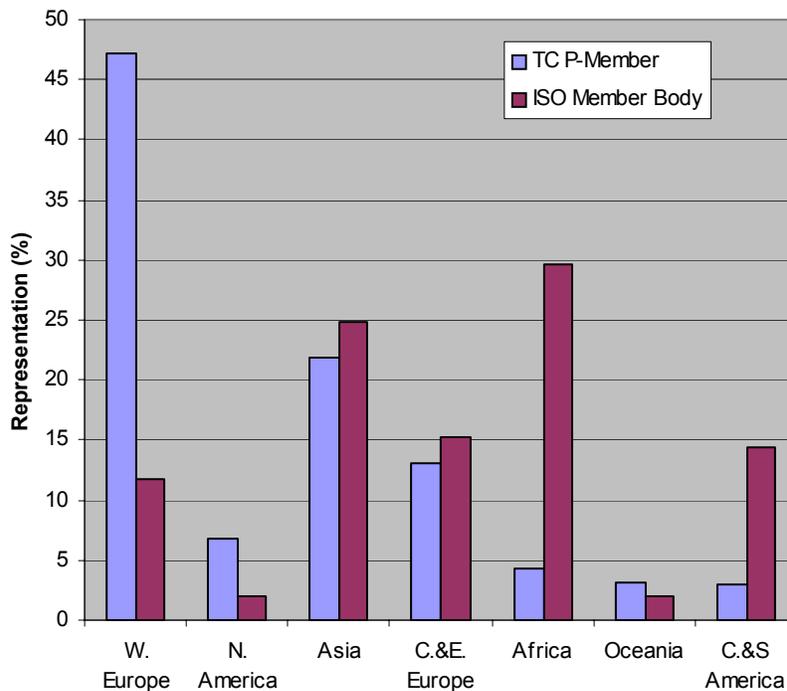
Western European region hosts 47% of chairs and 58% of secretariats, matching or exceeding its P-member representation in TCs. In comparison, North America has relatively small P-member representation (7%) in TCs, but hosts 19% of secretariats and 22% of chairs, while Asian countries and Central and Eastern European countries do not host these positions as much relative to their representation, measured by TC P-membership. Asia constitutes 22% of TC P-membership, but chairs only 8% of the TCs, and hosts 10% of secretariats. Similarly, Central and Eastern European region makes up 13% of the TC P-membership, yet only 2% of chairs and 3% of secretariats are from this region.

Figure 4: Member Bodies of ISO by Region



Insufficient developing country representation in ISO’s standard development activities has long been recognized as a problem by ISO. To increase the level of involvement from less developed regions, ISO in 1961 created DEVCO, its policy committee on developing country matters.¹⁸ DEVCO’s initial mandate was to identify the needs and requirements of developing countries in the field of standardization and related activities. Subsequent to the analysis of the needs, DEVCO has carried out ISO’s

Figure 5: Comparison of Average Technical Committee Participating-Membership and ISO Member Bodies by Region



¹⁸ For the complete terms of reference for DEVCO, see ISO Website: “ISO’s Structure. DEVCO Committee on developing country matters: <http://www.iso.org/iso/en/aboutiso/isostructure/DEVCO.html>

Figure 6: ISO Technical Committee Secretariats by Region

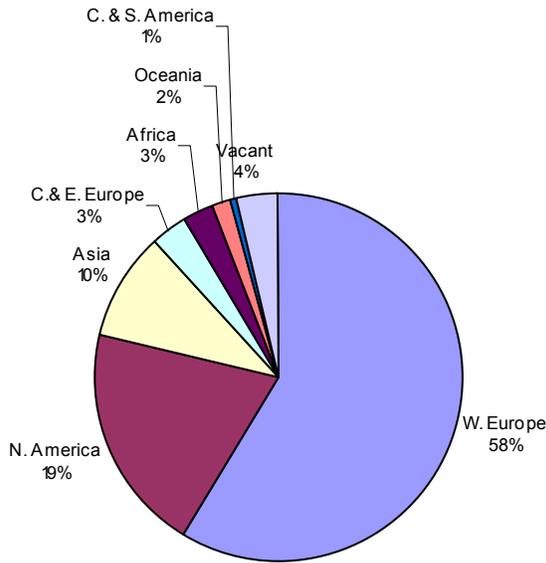
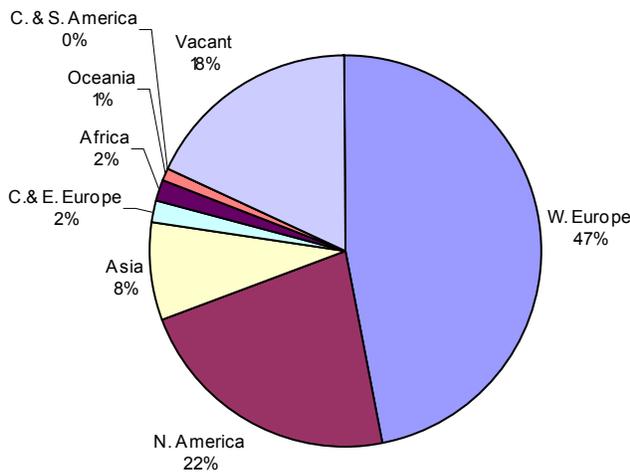


Figure 7: ISO Technical Committee Chairmanships by Region



Programmes for Developing Countries, known as DEVPRO.¹⁹ Furthermore, in 2002, the ISO Council established the Developing Countries Task Force (DCTF), which developed a program of action in 2003 to further deal with the under-representation challenge.²⁰ Despite all these initiatives, however, the longitudinal analysis in TC participation by less developed regions reveals that the effects of these programs is yet to materialize vis-à-vis TC P-membership and/or chairmanship/secretariat hosting.

¹⁹ DEVPRO is developed by DEVCO every three years, and approved by the ISO Council. DEVPRO activities include regional training seminars held in the developing countries on topics related to standardization for ISO members and industry; fellowships for further training in the industrialized countries for officers of ISO members; technical committee secretariat training; sponsorships to technical meetings of ISO; publication of Development Manuals for developing countries on technical matters related to standardization.

²⁰ DCTC's Programme for Action specifically mentions the need to establish Directives and guidance to support Secretariat allocation, appointment of committee chairs and co-chairs by developing countries.

4. Participation in ISO/TC 207 Standards Development

This section examines who develops the ISO 14000 environmental management standards at the international level. It looks at participation from two perspectives – geographic region and stakeholder group. Our objective here is to verify or disprove the perception by many outside of ISO that certain regions and stakeholder groups are disproportionately represented in TC 207's standards development processes.

4.1 Research Approach

TC 207 was selected for the analysis since it is responsible for developing the first set of ISO standards that have broad environmental policy implications. By looking at the regional and stakeholder representation over the last seven years, this assessment aims to confirm the anecdotal observation that certain stakeholder groups dominate decision-making in TC 207.

Annual TC plenary meeting attendance is used as the indicator of participation for this analysis. Participation at the TC level was chosen for this study since official records of meeting participation for seven consecutive years (1997 to 2003) are available, which allows a longitudinal examination of both regional and stakeholder representation in the TC's standards development processes.²¹ The attendance lists contain information on delegates' country of representation and organizational affiliation. As necessary, further Internet-based research on organizational affiliation was conducted in order to assign individuals to one of the seven stakeholder groups used in the analysis. A total of 2,560 participants at six meetings²² are categorized into the following stakeholder groups:

- **Industry:** individual firms and industry associations representing a specific industry or group of professionals;
- **Consultant and Registrar:** firms that provide engineering/technical services, or support or training relating to the ISO 14000 standards, and/or ISO 14001 certification;
- **Standards Organization:** representatives from national member bodies, standard development organizations, and accreditation bodies (This includes ISO 14001 certifiers in countries where such services are provided by the standards organization.);
- **Government:** representatives from governmental agencies/ministries (This excludes standards organizations in countries where such organizations are government entities);

²¹ Other possible parameters include Working Group (WG) or Subcommittee (SC) participation, or leadership positions at the TC, WG or SC levels. Analyses using these parameters were conducted by Morrison et al. (2000) *Managing a Better Environment: Opportunities and Obstacles for ISO 14001 in Public Policy and Commerce* and by ICF Incorporated (1997) *The Role of National Standards Bodies and Key Stakeholder Groups in the ISO/TC 207 Environmental Management Systems Standards Development Activity*.

²² Participants' affiliation information was not available for the plenary meeting held in 1998 in San Francisco.

- **Research:** research and/or academic institutions;
- **NGO:** non-governmental organizations, such as consumer organizations, environmental advocacy groups, and other civil society representatives;
- **Other:** stakeholder groups that do not fit into above categories, including financial institutions, media, intergovernmental organizations such as OECD and UNCTAD.

4.2 Analysis

4.2.1 Regional Representation at Technical Committee 207

Figure 8 shows the number of annual plenary meeting participants from each region. From the 5th plenary meeting in 1997 to the 7th meeting in Seoul, there was a slight increase in the number of participants, but total participation has been steadily decreasing since the 8th meeting in 2000. In large part, this can be explained by the completion of numerous standards within the TC's work program. The number of participants from Western Europe, Central and Eastern Europe, and especially North America decreased in last three years, whereas Africa and Central and South Africa has maintained a consistently small number of participants. Also, it is evident that the region hosting the meeting sends a larger number of delegates to the meetings than usual. Overall, Asia has sent more participants than other regions, which stands to reason given the region has hosted the largest percentage of plenary meetings during the study period.

Figure 8: Regional Representation of TC 207 Plenary Participants (1997-2003)

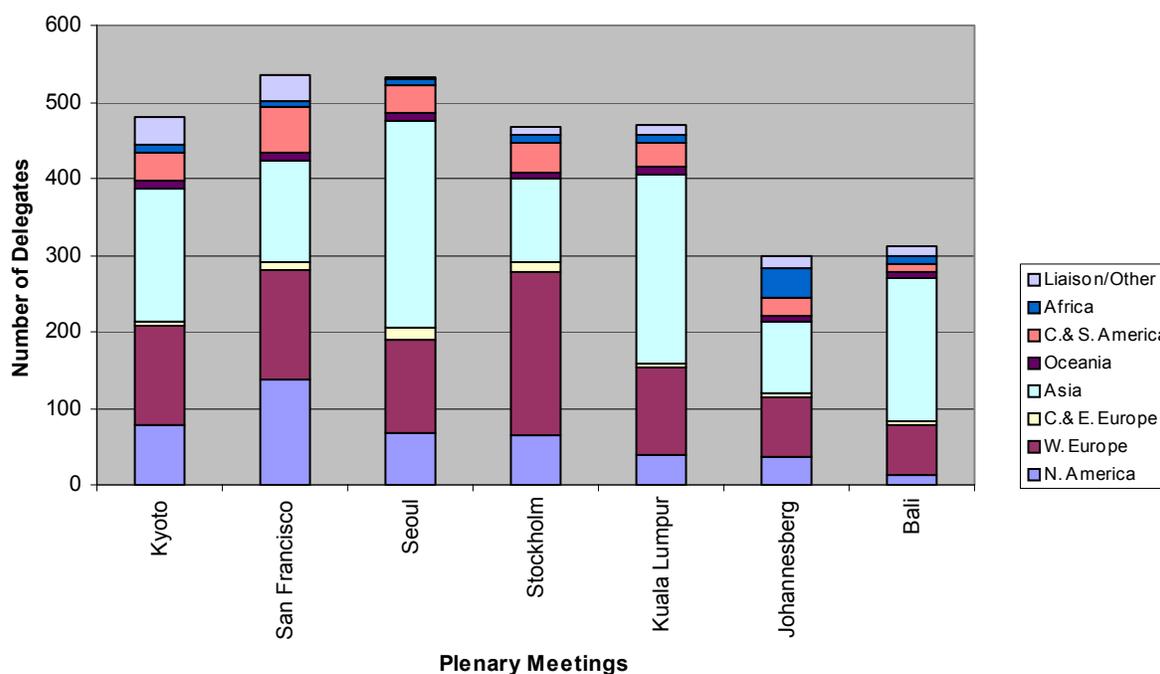
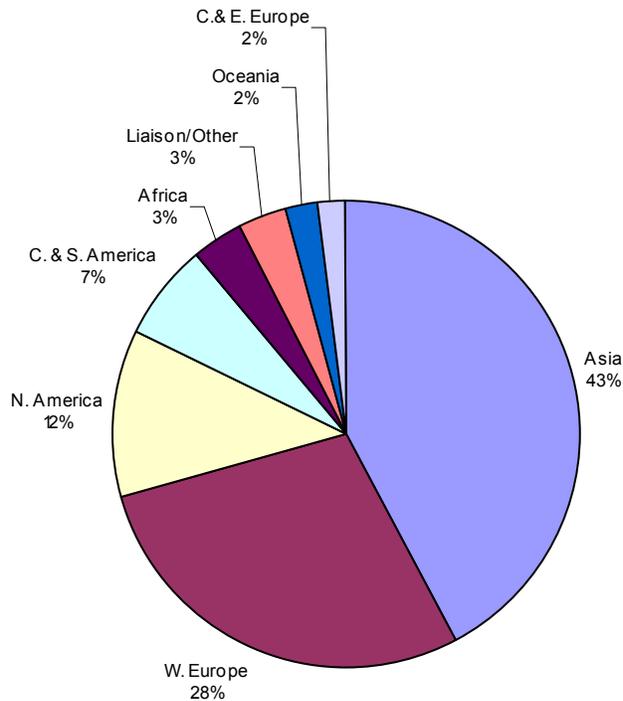


Figure 9: Average TC 207 Participant Attendance by Region (1997 - 2003)



fewer representatives at TC 207 meetings compared to the P-membership of these regions. Overall, more than 80 percent of the participants are from Asia, North America and Western Europe, even though these countries make up only about a half of the P-membership in TC 207. And as is the case with other TCs examined earlier in this paper, the analysis of TC 207 participation shows no clear improvement in terms of developing country representation over the last seven years. On the positive side, this analysis suggests that holding future meetings in under-represented regions offers an effective way to increase the participation from those regions.

The average regional representation by TC participants for the study period is shown in Figure 9 and Table 2 illustrates TC 207’s Participating Membership by region. Comparing Figure 9 and Table 2, it is clear that some regions send more delegates than one would expect based merely on their P-membership.²³ For instance, North America represents 4 percent of the P-membership in TC 207, yet their delegates make up 12 percent of the participants at its annual meetings. Asia also sends more delegates (43%) than its P-member percentage would suggest (30%), although this is probably largely due to the fact that 4 out of 7 meetings were hosted in Asian countries. Africa, South and Central America, and Central and Eastern Europe have

Table 2. TC 207 P-membership by Region

Region	Number of P-Member Countries	Representation (%)
Asia	22	29.7
W. Europe	17	23.0
C. & S. America	12	16.2
Africa	11	14.9
C. & E. Europe	7	9.5
N. America	3	4.1
Oceania	2	2.7

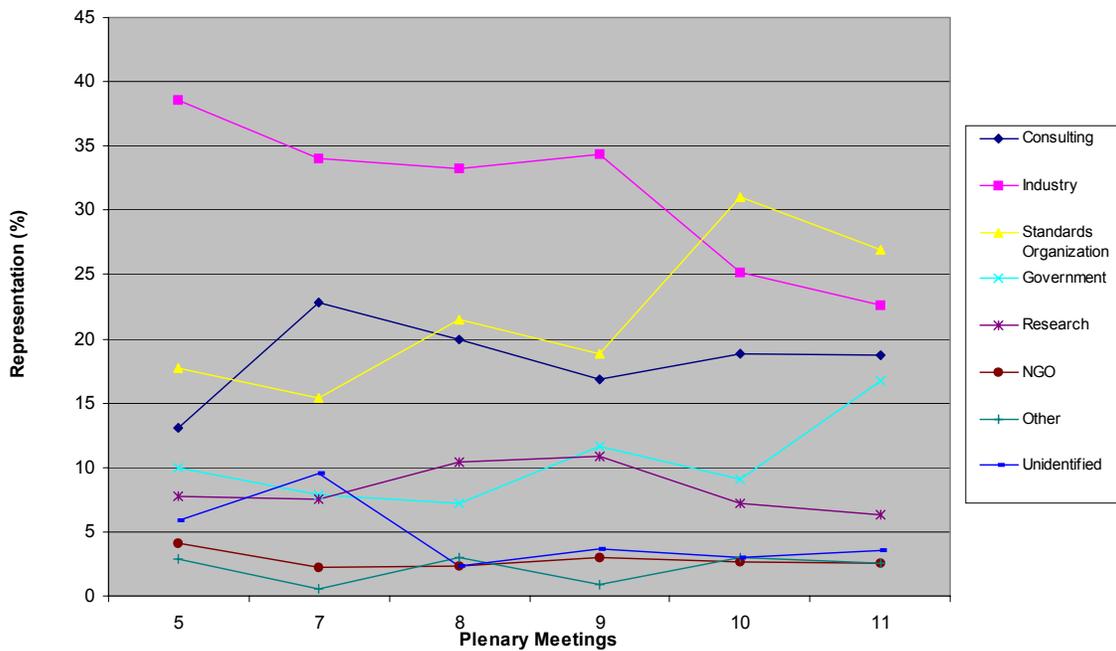
²³ ICF’s study (Ibid.) gives more detailed analysis on the participation level of each country. The study surveyed TC 207 P-member countries regarding how often they participate in the standard development activities. Australia, Canada, Germany, Japan, Korea, Netherlands, Norway, New Zealand, Sweden, UK, and USA answered that they participate in all or close to all of the committees and working groups, whereas China, Czech Republic and Zimbabwe said they participate in less than 50 percent of the committees and working groups.

4.2.2 Stakeholder Representation at TC 207

According to ISO rules, member bodies are responsible for taking into account the views of the full range of national interests pertaining to the standard under development and to present a consolidated, national consensus position to the technical committee.²⁴ Also, according to the *Fundamental Principles of the ISO System*, Responsibility 4a states “For the ISO work in which they choose to participate, ISO members are expected to organize national consultation mechanisms, according to their national needs and possibilities, which prepare national positions that reflect a balance of their country’s national interests and are presented by their national delegations for consideration by relevant ISO TC/SCs (or other technical bodies established by the TMB).” However, there is no specific direction on how member bodies should attain such national consensus positions or establish a balance of stakeholder interests.

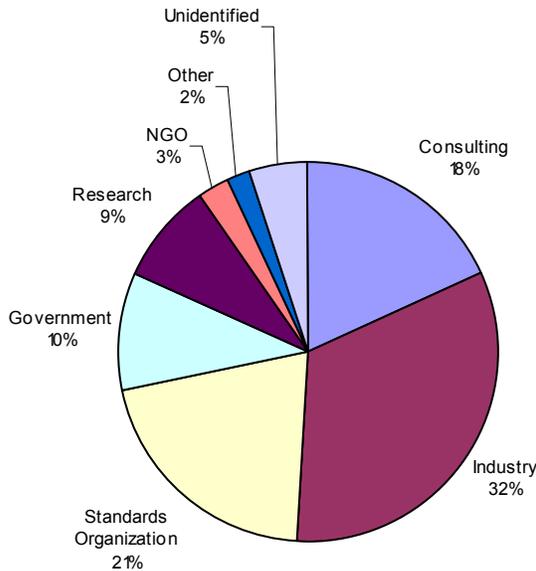
Figure 10 shows changes in stakeholder representation in TC 207 over the last seven years. Industry, standards organizations, and consultants/registrars are the major participants in these meetings, whereas NGOs are consistently the least represented stakeholder group at every plenary meeting. The consultant/registrars sector constantly makes up almost 15 to 20 percent of participants. In

Figure 10: Participation in TC 207 Plenary Meetings by Stakeholder Group



²⁴ ISO Directive clause 1.7.1 states “National bodies have the responsibility to organize their national input in an efficient and timely manner, taking account of all relevant interests at their national level.”

Figure 11: Average TC 207 Plenary Meeting Participation by Stakeholder Group (1997-2003)



recent years, industry participation has somewhat decreased and conversely standards organizations and government participants have increased. This may be explained by the fact that the last three meetings were held in developing countries, which tend to send more standards organizations and government officials as discussed below. Therefore, further observation is required to determine if decreasing industry participation will be a lasting trend. The average representation by stakeholder group is shown in Figure 11. Industry is clearly the largest stakeholder group (32%), but standard organizations (21%) and the consulting/registrar category (17%) also have significant representation at plenary meetings.

It is noteworthy that combined, these two stakeholder groups (who are not the primary users of the standards, but the ones who thrive on standards-related business) have more presence in ISO 14000 standards development than industry, the audience for whom the standards are presumably intended.

As early as 1998, TC 207 has recognized the issue of unbalanced stakeholder involvement, especially the under-representation of civil society participants. Within TC 207, NGO Contact Group was formed in 1998 to research and how NGOs feel relate to TC 207’s work.²⁵ Based partly on the finding by the group, an NGO Task Group was then formed in 2001 to develop recommendations to expand and enhance NGO participation in ISO 14000 standards development.²⁶ In 2003, TC 207 created the NGO-Chairman’s Advisory Group (CAG) Task Force, a joint group of NGOs and representatives of the TC 207 leadership to review the recommendation developed by the Task Group.²⁷ At the same time, the NGO participants in TC 207 established an NGO Forum to

²⁵ The contact group created surveys to obtain information from NGOs, explore what resources NGOs require to attend international meetings, and how to involve NGOs in the ISO process

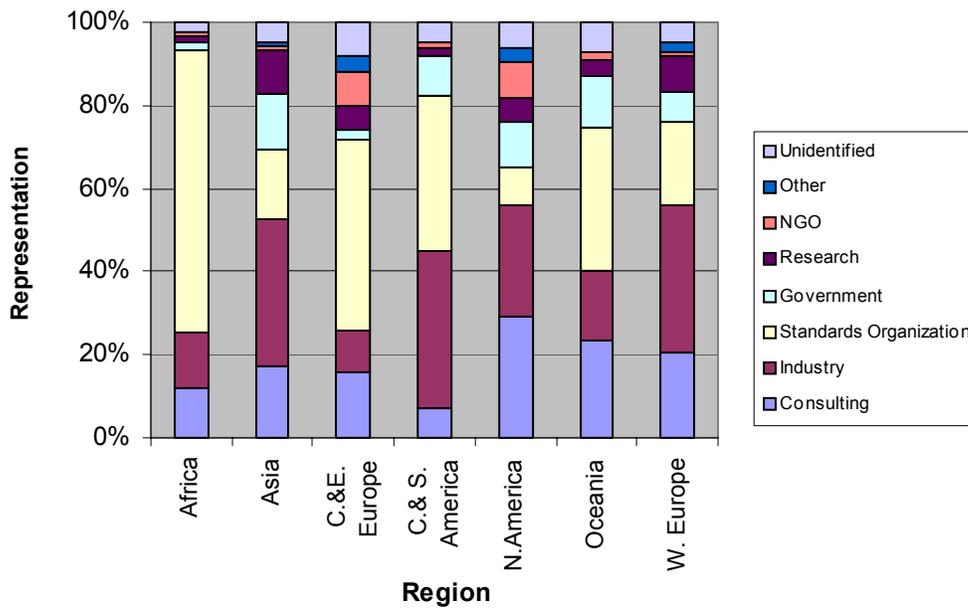
²⁶ TC 207 NGO Task Group developed two reports “A Guide for NGO Participation in ISO/TC 207” (2002) and “Increasing the Effectiveness of NGO Participation in TC 207” that includes recommendations for improving NGO participation within the committee.

²⁷The NGO-CAG Task Force consists of eight members (4 CAG representatives and 4 NGO representatives), chaired by an NGO representative. In September 2004, the Task Force delivered its recommendations to TC 207 in the form of a five-pronged action plan. At the time of this writing, the proposed action plan was pending approval by TC 207 member countries via a three-month letter ballot.

organize NGO input into the NGO-CAG Task Force, and to address other issues that NGOs consider important. While these initiatives and programs demonstrate the recognition of the under-representation problem and willingness to discuss the issue within TC 207, this analysis was unable to detect any meaningful effects of these initiatives in terms of increased NGO attendance at TC 207 meetings.

Figure 12 looks at stakeholder representation according to region. In North America, Western Europe and Asia, industry and consultants make up more than half the delegates. In less developed regions, standards organizations send the majority of delegates. Based on overall and relative attendance rates in TC 207, one could say that industry and consulting groups from industrialized regions have the highest degree of influence in ISO 14000 standards development.

Figure 12: Average Stakeholder Representation at TC 207 Plenary Meetings by Region



5. Participation in New ISO Standards Initiatives

This section briefly looks at two new initiatives in ISO in order to further examine whether and how ISO's shift in standardization subject matter is accompanied by changes in regional and stakeholder representation.

5.1 Research Approach

As described in Section 2.2, ISO's activities in social and environmental standards have grown beyond TC 207 and its environmental management standards. In late 2001, a new Technical Committee (TC 224) was created to develop standards relating to water management.²⁸ And in September 2002, ISO began deliberating on the possibility of a new international standard in the area of Corporate Social Responsibility (referred to as "SR" within ISO circles). Regional and stakeholder participation in these two initiatives is examined in this section.

For the water standards, we take a similar approach to the one taken for TC 207. Lists of registered delegates at TC 224 plenary meetings were used to assess regional and stakeholder representation. Regional representation according to the Participating membership for TC 224 is also examined. For the CSR initiative, membership of the Technical Management Board (TMB) Advisory Group on SR (AG) and participant lists for the AG meetings were analyzed.²⁹ For both of the assessments, the same method was taken to determine and categorize the stakeholder representation as was used in Section 4.

5.2. Analysis

5.2.1 ISO's Water Management Standards – TC 224

There are 21 Participating members in TC 224 with Western Europe making up more than half (11 countries) (See Figure 13). Asia has three countries participating (Japan, Korea, Malaysia); North America (USA, Canada), Central and Eastern Europe (Russia, Slovakia), and Africa (Morocco, South Africa) have two P-members each. Argentina is the only P-member from Latin American region. Oceania has no Participating members.³⁰ Figure 14 looks at the regional representation from the perspective of meeting attendance. Altogether there are 91 registered delegates to TC 224. As is the case with TC 207, Western Europe (43%), Asia (20%) and North America (16%) have the largest

²⁸ The Scope of TC 224 is described in its Business Plan: "Standardization of a framework for the definition and measurement of service activities relating to drinking water supply systems and wastewater systems. The standardization includes: the definition of a language common to the different stakeholders, the definition of the characteristics of the elements of the service according to the consumers expectations, a list of requirements to fulfill for the management of a drinking water supply system and a wastewater system, service quality criteria and a related system of performance indicators, without setting any target values or thresholds. Excludes: design and construction of water supply and wastewater systems, or maintenance techniques; limits of acceptability for drinking water quality and wastewater discharged in the receiving body; analytical methods."

²⁹ SR AG member list and meeting participant lists were from IISD's ISO Strategic Advisory Group on SR Update Briefings. Available at: http://www.iisd.org/standards/csr_documents.asp

³⁰ Both Australia and New Zealand are O-members of TC 224.

Figure 13: Regional Representation in TC 224 by Participating Membership

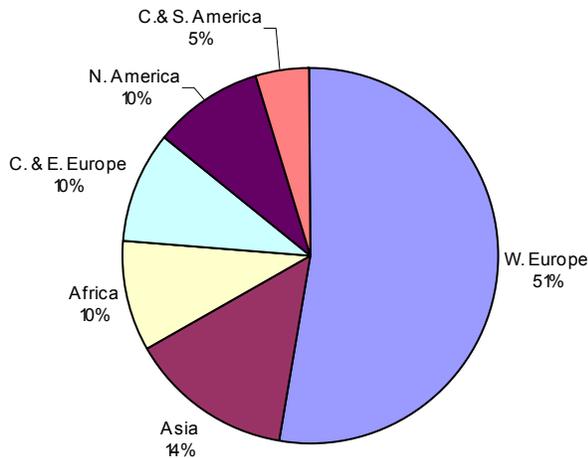
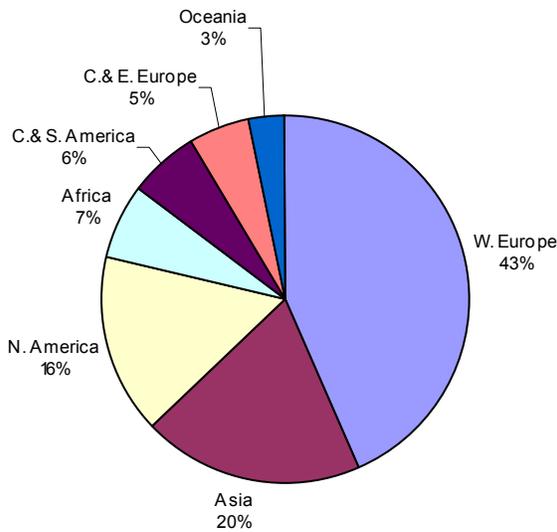


Figure 14: Regional Representation in TC 224 by Registered Delegates



developed regions sent their delegates to the first plenary meeting in Paris, at the second plenary meeting, there were participants from Argentina, Malaysia, Malawi, Morocco, and Nigeria. During the second plenary, the TC chair from France recommended that each industrialized country sponsor the participation of a developing country, and since that time France has sponsored Moroccan delegates to subsequent meetings.

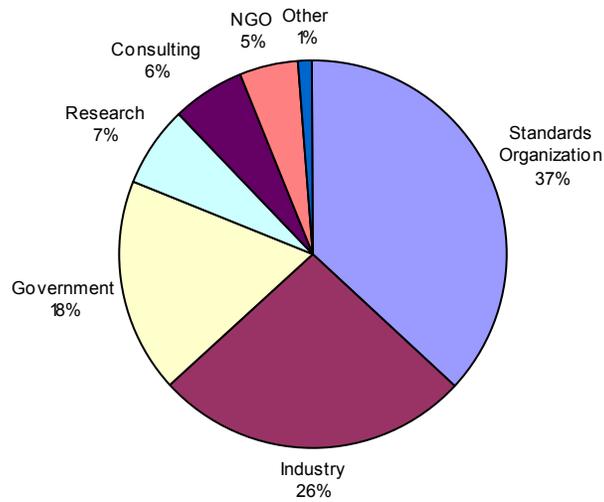
number of delegates participating in the meetings. Combined these regions make up 80% of the delegates. It is also notable that France has a significantly larger number of delegates (26), double the number of the second largest delegations. (The US, Japan, and Canada send 13, 13, and 12 representatives, respectively.) Considering that France houses two of the world’s largest private water service companies, its extensive representation could have significant impact on the content of the new standards.

One of the major arguments in favor of the creation of the water management standards was to improve water provision to underserved populations in less developed countries.³¹ Nevertheless, under-representation by less developed regions of the world is evident within TC 224. Considering that ISO’s water management standards will have more significant implications in these countries than in the industrialized nations, the lack of participation from the Southern hemisphere is an issue of concern. There has been some discussion within TC 224 regarding how to improve developing country representation. And while none of the P-member countries from less

³¹ISO/TC224 Business Plan (Draft #4) Service activities relating to drinking water supply and sewerage (2003)

Figure 15 shows the stakeholder representation in TC 224. The major difference from TC 207 is that there are more standards organizations and less consultants/registrars participating in this committee. This is because it is unlikely there will be any third-party certification component in the new water management standards. As is the case with TC 207, NGOs are the least represented stakeholder group. It should also be noted that only three countries have NGO delegates. Out of eight NGO representatives participating at TC 224 meetings, five are from France, two from United States, and one from the United Kingdom. There are no NGO participants from the Asia, Africa, Central and Eastern Europe, or Central and South America regions, meaning there is no NGO input at TC 224 meetings from less developed countries.

Figure 15: Stakeholder Representation of Registered Delegates within TC 224



³² COPOLCO Resolution 20/2002 emphasizes “the need for ISO to adopt standards development processes on [SR] which ensure that the perspectives of the full range of stakeholders are meaningfully involved; ISO needs to engage in close and regular communication with other international organizations engaging in work in this area, including the UN, ILO, OECD, and others.” COPOLCO’s report to ISO on desirability and feasibility of ISO CSR standards states that: “In the ISO CR standards development process, meaningful and balanced representation of all stakeholders is essential for the standards to be perceived as credible in the marketplace.”

5.2.2 ISO's Social Responsibility (SR) Initiative

Unlike the ISO TCs examined in earlier parts of this study, participation in the Advisory Group (AG) on SR was established by invitation from ISO's Technical Management Board (TMB). Taking into account a resolution by ISO's Consumer Committee (COPOLCO) that the AG include the full range of affected stakeholders,³² the membership of AG was established by the TMB in December 2002 according to the following criteria:

- Eight members, nominated by the ISO TMB, representing the Americas (two), Africa (two) Europe (two) and Asia/Oceania (two); with one of the regional representatives from industry and the other from another stakeholder group;
- Two representatives from ISO policy committees - one from the ISO Committee on Developing Countries (DEVCO) and the other COPOLCO;
- One member from each of the eight international organizations:
 - International Chamber of Commerce;
 - International Organization of Employers;
 - Consumers International;
 - Global Reporting Initiative;
 - International Labour Organization;
 - International Confederation of Free Trade Unions;
 - International Federation for the Application of Standards; and
 - International Institute for Sustainable Development.

In September 2003, the TMB approved three additional members:

- An international environmental NGO;
- An international human rights organization; and
- An industry group.

Because of these strict criteria for membership, the AG has a much broader and more balanced stakeholder representation compared to the TCs examined earlier in this study.³³ And over the course of its deliberations, not surprisingly, the AG made several statements emphasizing the importance of broad stakeholder participation in the process. For instance, its final recommendation to the TMB stated that it is necessary that “any Technical Committee that is convened and any of its constituent bodies includes the range of interested parties such as those included within the AG.”³⁴

In addition to assembling the AG, ISO hosted an international conference on SR in June 2004 in order to gather feedback from various stakeholders regarding its SR initiative. When issuing invitations for the conference, the

³³ As an aside it should be noted that the TMB's earnest attempt to include a range of organizations did not necessarily result in the appointee's participation, due to resource limitations. For instance, the African representatives were absent for more than half of the face-to-face meetings. And the human rights group representative was unable to participate in any of the face-to-face meetings due to lack of staff and financial resources; he tendered his resignation from the AG in April 2004.

³⁴ ISO/TMB AG on SR N32 Recommendations to the ISO Technical Management Board April 30, 2004

TMB encouraged member bodies “to establish their delegations to ensure balanced representation of all stakeholder categories with the maximum number of delegates being eight per member body.” Even though there was no specific procedure given regarding how national member bodies should attain such a mix of stakeholders, the TMB request was noteworthy because of the prominence it gave to the issue of stakeholder diversity at an ISO meeting. The TMB’s precedent-setting resolution also mentioned the possibility of funding to ensure good representation from developing countries. For the organizations and individuals that could not participate in the conference, related material and the results of the conference were made available on ISO’s website.

Subsequent to the international conference on SR, the decision was made by the TMB for ISO to move forward with the development of an SR guidance standard. The TMB’s enabling resolution³⁵ included several statements that confirmed the emphasis on balanced stakeholder involvement in the development of this new standard:

“ISO TMB

agreed to ensure that ISO processes are adjusted where necessary to ensure meaningful participation by the full range of interested parties;

concur that special efforts should be made by ISO and its members to raise awareness in developing countries of ISO’s SR activities as well as to ensure their meaningful participation in this work;

recommends that sustainable mechanisms be established to facilitate the participation in ISO SR work of experts from developing countries, NGOs, consumers and other groups having limited resources;

further agrees that the work should be conducted under a twinned leadership between developed and developing countries;

and **recommends** that a leadership post should be created to deal specifically with stakeholder participation and engagement, including funding.”

Even though it is yet to be seen how these suggestion will be implemented, they represent a precedent-setting emphasis on balanced stakeholder participation, which is a praiseworthy development for ISO. Collectively, they represent a positive and notable step forward for the organization.

³⁵ ISO Technical Management Board resolution 35/2004 (Stockholm, 24-25 June 2004)

6. Discussion and Conclusion

The examination of regional representation in ISO's TCs created over the past 60 years shows that ISO standards have historically, and continue to be, dominated by industrialized nations, especially Western European countries. And although the problem of under-representation of less-developed regions has been recognized by ISO for almost four decades, noticeable improvements in participation cannot be detected to date as measured by Participating-membership in TCs. Furthermore, even when developing countries do establish P-member status in a TC, evidence suggests their involvement in standards development is typically not as substantive as developed nations, which tend to send far more delegates to meetings and to hold more leadership positions within TCs.

This phenomenon has proven true for ISO's TC 207. Despite the unique implications of its standards for global environmental protection, our analysis of attendance at TC plenary meetings over the last seven years reveals a clear pattern of under-representation by less-developed nations. Further, our examination of meeting participants' organizational affiliations verifies that TC 207 remains heavily influenced by the private sector, and that civil society groups have a minimal presence in standards development. Surprisingly, our study also reveals that organizations that thrive on standard development itself, as well as related services such as conformity assessment, send more representatives to TC 207 meetings than the actual primary users of the standards – industry. The recently launched TC 224 on water management illustrates a similar lack of balance vis-à-vis regional and stakeholder representation.

In conducting this study, we found that publicly available information on the stakeholder representation of participants in ISO's standards development processes is extremely limited, if not non-existent. Currently, there is no consistent and systematic record of who attends meetings, either at the TC level, or for TCs' subsidiary bodies, nor does there exist harmonized metrics to assess such information at the national mirror body level. As a result, there is no mechanism for ISO or its member bodies to consistently evaluate the degree to which (or whether) input from all the concerned parties is achieved.

It should be noted that the issue of stakeholder participation has been recognized as a problem by ISO, and that several programs and initiatives to improve the current situation are underway. ISO's long-term strategy consultation paper for 2005-2010 selected both developing country and stakeholder representation as two of the 12 topics on which ISO needs to focus in the coming years.³⁶ The authors of this paper also fully support one of the recommendations collected during ISO's strategic consultation process

³⁶ ISO Strategic planning process: results of the consultation and analysis of the responses (ISO 2004)

that suggested ISO develop statistics on stakeholder diversity (e.g., representation within national mirror committees, TC delegations, and WG experts, etc) to enable ISO and its national member bodies to measure how they are performing in terms of ensuring a balanced representation of interests. ISO's standards' activities in the environmental and social arenas have direct and increasing effects on a much larger set of stakeholders than its technical and engineering standards have historically had. The policy implications of these new standards at both the domestic and international levels are growing as ISO continues to strive to become a leading international organization that develops standards in support of sustainable development. However, on the basis of this analysis, we conclude that ISO's shift from a technical and engineering standards institution to a social and environmental standard-setting body has not yet been accompanied by the necessary changes in broader stakeholder involvement.

If ISO is to continue down this path, it is crucial that it take meaningful actions to improve its stakeholder involvement so that its standards can be credible and meaningful. Without the appropriate input from all affected interests, the standards will not only add less value to society, but might even hamper the development of a more sustainable world. With the proper attention to the issue of more balanced stakeholder involvement, we believe ISO can create more effective, credible, and useful standards, which in turn will advance global sustainability goals.