

“Global Standards for Global Trade: Fact versus Fiction”

George T. Willingmyre, P.E.

President, GTW Associates

Abstract

Companies, institutions and countries employ standards as strategic tools of competition in the global marketplace. There is no single “best approach or organization” for a specific sector and no optimum global approach for all sectors. At a WTO Negotiating Group on Market Access meeting this July a member noted: Fundamentally, whether a standard is relevant, effective and appropriate in fulfilling a Member’s particular regulatory or market need is not determined by which body developed it...the diversity of bodies that develop standards promotes innovation and helps ensure that standards are of high quality and respond to regulatory and market needs.

The presentation will explore current topics and controversies arising from the intersection between voluntary, industry-driven standards and the role of governments and related policies affecting standards. Topics that have international implications include the effect of standards as non-tariff barriers to international trade, interplay of standards-setting, essential intellectual property and competition policy, use of national standards and practices, such as government procurement by some governments to promote industrial policy goals in strategic sectors and to advance other national priorities which may distort domestic and international markets and impede global business and consumer interests.