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ISO 14,001 in the APEC Context:
Uses, Limitations and Policy Alternatives

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Abstract

APEC's eighteen members span East Asia, Australasia and the Western Hemisphere, and include states with different kinds and levels of industrial development as well as the world's fastest growing economies and some of the most polluted places on earth. These economies have agreed to liberalize trade and investment barriers over the next quarter century, to facilitate trade and investment, and to increase economic and technical cooperation.

APEC's Environmental Ministers first met in March 1994, producing a set of "Principles for Sustainable Development."(1) Interestingly, rather than create an environmental committee which could be marginalized from the central trade and investment agenda, in February 1995 the Senior Officials Meeting agreed that all APEC Committees and Working Groups should include environmental issues as part of their reporting requirements.

The July 1996 Ministerial Meeting on Sustainable Development reiterated the "cross-cutting" nature of environmental issues and developed a three-part Action Programme. One of the three major components of the Programme deals with Clean Production/Clean Technology. It will, among other things, formulate specific strategies for industrial and agricultural sectors, mobilize public-private partnerships in major industry sectors to promote cleaner production, include capacity-building, training, information-sharing, access to expert input and the like.(2)

As part of the Cleaner Production strategy, the Environment Ministers pledged to promote "ISO 14000, which involves voluntary action by industry to establish environmental management systems and commit to continuous improvements in environmental performance." In less than three years, the 14,000 series of environmental management standards of the International Organization for Standardization has become the subject of debate and discussion among industry, government and

non-governmental groups in many parts of the world.

This paper analyzes the potential role of the ISO 14001 environmental management system (EMS) and related standards in the context of APEC. It summarizes the genesis and content of the standards. It then focuses on three aspects of the standards that are particularly salient within the APEC context: performance, information generation and market access. The final section explores some options for incorporating ISO 14,001 as one element of a larger framework for environmental protection and sustainable development in APEC.

[This paper was prepared for the Trade and Environment Policy Project (TEPP) series - a collaboration between the Nautilus Institute, National Wildlife Federation, and the Berkeley Roundtable on the International Economy. Newly edited versions of this and other TEPP papers on APEC will be published this summer in a special issue of the Journal of Environment and Development. Contact the Nautilus Institute for more information.]

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