

Historical Development of Industrial Standardization in Japan as the Background of the Current Standards and Conformity Assessment Policy

Manabu ETO

Japan's industrial standardization policy originates from the governmental procurement standards established in the late Meiji period (about 1910). Since then, the major purpose of the standardization policy has undergone many transitions from export inspection to military procurement to export quality improvement. The GATT Standard Code (1980) and WTO/TBT Agreement (1995) have shown importance of the international leadership in standardization; the most important goal of the current standardization policy is establishing international standards based on Japanese technology.

Many problems remain to be solved, however, to achieve the goal, as shown by the "General Strategy

for International Standardization" established by the Intellectual Property Strategy Headquarters on December 6, 2006, which proposes intensified activities of the industrial sector, development of human resources, closer cooperation with other countries particularly in Asia, and development of fair practice rules in the area of international standardization. Specific policies along these lines are now under development.

This article gives a historical review of Japan's standardization policy as the background of the present status, and discusses the purpose, methodology and current situations of the new standards and conformity assessment policy.