

PRESS RELEASE

Malaysian delegation at the ISO meeting in Geneva (25 – 29 Feb '08) finds the technical issues in the draft standard OOXML unresolved satisfactorily

Cyberjaya, 4 March 2008 - Malaysia's Department of Standards

(STANDARDS MALAYSIA) recently found the Draft ISO standard, ISO/IEC DIS 29500: Office Open XML (OOXML) specification for electronic document formats, had the majority of its technical issues still not addressed satisfactorily.

STANDARDS MALAYSIA sent a delegation to attend the "Ballot Resolution Meeting" ([BRM](#)) in Geneva, Switzerland where they deliberated on OOXML submitted by Ecma International, a standards setting organization.



Puan Fadilah Baharin, the Director General of STANDARDS MALAYSIA

Malaysia voted to 'Disapprove' by default on Ecma's dispositions due to the quality of their technical responses during the week. Malaysia approved on certain resolutions, which were found appropriate and discussed during the BRM, but this was by far in the minority. There have been structural changes and important contributions to the Draft by other National Bodies which alter the Draft significantly. Malaysia will review these changes before making a decision on its final vote by end March 2008.

Puan Fadilah Baharin, Director General of STANDARDS MALAYSIA who was in Geneva to oversee the Malaysian delegates said, "The Malaysian delegation actively participated in the BRM, including making good technical suggestions on how to improve the proposed standard. We were impressed with the commitment and professionalism shown by all the technical experts represented by the various National Bodies."

The original specification had more than 6,000 pages, an unprecedented volume in ISO for the Fast Track process.

At a previous stage of the process, after a 5-month ballot period ending on 2 September 2007, the drafted ISO standard failed to get the required vote from participating countries, failing 2 of the 3 criteria for approval. This process also resulted in more than 1,000 unique comments from the countries.

On 14 January 2008, Ecma International provided proposed dispositions to these comments which were discussed at the BRM.

The meeting was scheduled for 5 days from 25 to 29 February in accordance to ISO/IEC "Fast Track" rules. The time of deliberation is fixed and will not be adjusted according to the volume of comments. This is the limitation imposed due to the Fast Track process.

"Malaysia had submitted 23 comments and more than 70% of them were not addressed satisfactorily by Ecma's proposed dispositions. We intended to resolve these technical issues at the BRM, but we could only raise 2 concerns due to the time constraints imposed," Fadilah said.

After 3 days, it was apparent that there would be no time to review all the items within the remaining 2 days on all substantial concerns against the Ecma standard. The 32 National Bodies, including Malaysia, were then requested to submit a vote on all the items which were not discussed at the BRM and told to vote on Ecma's remaining dispositions to 'Approve,' 'Disapprove' or 'Abstain.'

"Malaysia decided to vote 'Disapprove' to these undiscussed issues," Fadilah elaborated, "The limitation of the BRM process clearly showed that such a task of approving this draft standard does not fit in the Fast Track process employed by Ecma International. Malaysia and other country delegations worked very hard which extended into evenings after the BRM sessions. All the technical experts from diverse backgrounds, including from Microsoft, the original proposer of the Draft, put their heads together to fix the specification. Malaysia approved the counter proposals by many National Bodies which were discussed during the BRM. Unfortunately there were just far too many to fix within the given time."

Last year, many countries raised concerns against the appropriateness of the voluminous OOXML draft standard submitted by the Ecma International to ISO for a Fast Track process. To date, our observation to these concerns have yet to be addressed better after the BRM. Malaysia's concern is currently being shared greatly by many other National Bodies from Asia including India, China and Korea; as well as from the US and Canada.

The process now entails discussion within the 87 'P' and 'O' countries who first voted on 2 September 2007, for them to evaluate the instructions from the BRM and return to ISO a final vote whether to approve OOXML as an ISO standard, by 30 March 2008.

STANDARDS MALAYSIA will convene a SIRIM Technical Committee meeting soon to decide Malaysia's final vote on the quality of OOXML as an ISO/IEC standard.