

CONCEPT NOTE ON RSB/TC CO-SECRETARIAT

1. Background

Rwanda Standards Board (RSB) is a public institution established by Rwanda Government Legislation N° 50/2013 of 28/06/2013 determining the mission, organization and functioning of the Rwanda Standards Board to undertake all activities pertaining to the development of Standards, Conformity Assessment and Metrology services in the country. The vision of RSB is to be a trusted party in providing internationally recognized and customer suited standardization services.

Its mission is to provide standards-based solutions for Consumer Protection and Trade promotion for socio-economic growth in a safe and stable environment, RSB strives to engage key stakeholders to ensure active participation and successful collaboration in response to the National Priorities considered as shared goals and necessarily achieved once joint efforts are undertaken under effective public and private partnership framework

In fact, in Rwanda, standards development is based on collective efforts of stakeholders represented in technical Committees made of researchers, manufacturers, academia, government institutions and consumers that work together to develop national standards that evolve to meet the demands of society and market. RSB acts as secretariat to these committees and is the only body with powers as custodian and publishing entity of national standards. During the restructuration of RSB technical committees in 2024, RSB established 78 different technical committees, covering a range of sectors whereby more than 700 local experts participate in those TCs.

At global level, Rwanda through RSB is a member body to the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and participates in international standardization work under 28 ISO Technical Committees, in International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) standardization work under five IEC Technical Committees of Rwanda Interest, the participation in Codex Alimentarius Work where the National Initiatives are coordinated under National Codex Committee as well as monitoring the global standardization activities coordinated under ITU, ASTM, IEEE, UL Standards, AOAC among other, which may inform the national standardization work.

In addition, Rwanda is also an active member of Panafrican Quality Infrastructure Institutions such as the African Organization for Standardization (ARSO) and African Electrotechnical Committee (AFSEC), where through RSB, Rwanda participates in standards harmonization at continental level. This continental framework prioritized in response to necessary support to the business community to take advantage to the available opportunities created under the Af-CFTA Agreement is driven together with the EAC Standards Harmonization Framework where it hosts the secretariat of eight technical committees and participates in more than 83 technical committees to ensure harmonization of standards at EAC level in support to the EAC Common Market Protocol.

Considering the number of organizations participating in standardization activities and the statistics from the Ministry of Trade and Industry, which show an estimated 72,000 SMEs in the country, the level of participation of SMEs and other stakeholders is still low.

Further, the Rwanda Quality Policy 2018 emphasizes on increasing collaboration engaging the public institutions and the private sector to play an important role in standardization work, RSB is putting in place strategies and mechanisms to increase Public Private Partnerships (PPP) and stakeholder engagement in standardization processes. Among key actions, include:

- Continual capacity building of technical committee members,
- Adoption of co-secretariat approach,
- Encouraging stakeholders to participate in Regional and International standardization activities, and
- Establishment of standard awards.

Under this background, RSB has established a framework to operationalize technical committee co-secretariat approach determining the enrollment to host the co-secretariat, responsibilities and obligations of the organ hosting the co-secretariat.

2. Launching the Co-Secretariat approach

2.1. Rationale

Within the implementation of the current standard for standards RS0 as published in 2019, as stipulated in the NSD 2024-2025 action plan,

Considering the need of increasing stakeholders' engagement in standards development and other conformity assessment activities,

Considering also the need to make familiar TC members with the rules and procedures governing the standardization activities, Rwanda Standards Board has introduced co-secretariat approach for the RSB/TC(s) to assist the secretary in handling activities of the RSB/TC.

In addition to handle, together with the secretary, the management of RSB/TC activities, it is expected:

- The level of awareness, uptake and implementation of standards to increase
- The Handle-on skills in standards development increased, and
- Active participation in standardization activities

2.2. Enrollment process and selection criteria

2.2.1 Enrollment process

The process of enrollment for the interested institution/company is as follow:

- a) Call for application
- b) Selection for the best applicant
- c) Official nomination for selected candidates

- d) Capacity building on standardization procedures
- e) Starting the work for nominated Co-Secretaries.

2.2.2 Selection criteria

- a) Being familiar with standards development procedures and principles
- b) The proposed institutions shall have actively participated in standardization activity of the concerned RSB/TC:
 - (i) Attend TC meetings regularly, arrives on time and send apologies for delay or absence
 - (ii) Share the comments on documents to be discussed prior to the meeting date
 - (iii) Contribute to TC discussions during the meeting either physical or virtual
- c) Having skilled staff/staffs with expertise in the subject matter of the RSB/TC
- d) Willing to assume Co-secretariat responsibilities
- e) Having experience to manage documentation, meetings, communications and coordination will be an added value
- f) Recognized as reputable and independent from conflict of interests
- g) Legally recognized institution with clear governance structure
- h) Willing to support financially or contributing in the mobilization resources needed for the standardization activities when possible

2.3. Nomination of the selected organization to host the co-secretary

The establishment of the co-secretariat will be function of the workload of the technical committee or the nature of the standard being developed and shall be initiated by RSB/TC secretary. The secretary shall justify the need of establishing the co-secretary by also proposing the hosting institution and NSD Management shall take decision. The proposed hosting institution and co-secretary shall have been actively participating in standardizations activity of the concerned RSB/TC.

Once the request is approved, RSB should address of formal request the target institution by specifying the target staff where necessary. The request should also indicate the responsibilities of the co-secretary. Upon the response to the request, RSB shall provide an appointment letter to the nominated co-secretary.

2.4. Term of the co-secretary

The term of the co-secretary corresponds with the required period to review the composition of the technical committee, which is a period of 3 years. For a secretariat established for a specific project, the term of the co-secretary may correspond with the period of development of the concerned standard and retaken during the review of that standard. A Memorandum of Understanding establishing partnership in operationalization of the technical committee work will be signed between RSB and the organization (s) selected to host the co-secretariat.

2.5. Responsibilities of the co-secretariat

The RSB Standards Committees co-secretaries should work hand in hand with the secretary of the TC in:

1. Providing the management and secretariat support services associated with running the committee;
2. Arranging meetings (in consultation with the chairperson) as required in order to meet the target;

3. ensuring that documents for the meeting are timely sent to the committee members;
4. recording the minutes and other committee documents;
5. ensuring timely implementation of the committee meeting resolution.
6. Supporting financially or contributing in the mobilization resources needed for the standardization activities.

3. Targets for 2024-2025 Financial

In this financial year 2024-2025, in order to promote Stakeholder Engagement, it was planned to engage at least six (6) Stakeholders to collaborate with RSB in handling the secretariat of technical Committees in the following sectors of priority: **milk, nutrition, cereals, fertilizers, cosmetics, mining, roads, clay, stone, concrete building materials and environmental protection (Climate change actions).**

In this regard, RSB is pleased to call upon all interested organizations (public/private) to apply for being co-secretariat.

Interested organizations are required to submit their applications via online registration form accessible on: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1yAK95-pvw7Fxb0wCNOnea1u9wX8IAMmmk-ILNTx9Uvw/edit> by 20th June 2025.