“Houston, we’ve got a problem”. Certainly not! ISO/TC 67 held its 39th plenary meeting in Houston on 18 and 19 September 2019, after a kind invitation from ANSI – the US member of ISO – and BP that provided the meeting facilities. The hosts provided informative presentations illustrating (technological) developments and challenges of the oil and gas sector. Richard Mortimer, Vice President Engineering at BP, presented BP’s modernisation and transformation covering standards, digital, and lower carbon. David Miller, Director Standards at API, explained the way standardisation for the oil and gas sector is organised within the USA including the roles of ANSI and API.

Philip Smedley, new chair of ISO/TC 67, presented in his opening address his objectives for the 39th plenary meeting of ISO/TC 67

Philip Smedley, new chair of ISO/TC 67, highlighted in his opening address to strive for more interaction during the meeting. For that purpose, the agenda included a panel discussion with representatives from API, IOGP/JIP33, ISO/TC 67, NORSOK standards and Chinese sector. One of the discussion topics dealt with advanced technologies and innovation, for which panellists were in agreement with each other recognising that these developments should also be embraced and enforced with standards. Panellists emphasised that standards should therefore be performance based to give room for new developments. Cooperation was mentioned as another critical success factor, not only to improve the quality of standards, but also to avoid duplication of work and possible deviations. Communication was identified as an area in which the oil and gas sector can make improvements to better explain the benefits of standardisation, both internally by connecting experts with business, and externally to engage more stakeholders. Last but not least, the role of standards in building trust and providing transparency was underlined. The panel discussion was much appreciated by the meeting participants and will most likely become a recurring agenda item.

ISO/TC 67 is responsible for standardisation of the materials, equipment and offshore structures used in the drilling, production, transport by pipelines and processing of liquid and gaseous hydrocarbons within the petroleum, petrochemical and natural gas industries.

ISO/TC 67 has set the following goals:
- prepare standards required by the industry
- prepare standards that are adopted worldwide by bodies such as ABNT (Brazil), API (USA), CEN (Europe), GOST R (Russian Federation), GSO (Gulf Region) and SAC (China)
- prepare standards that are recognised by regulators
- publish standards that enable companies to minimise their specifications
- deliver standards to the target dates on the agreed work programme
API-IOGP-ISO WORKSHOP

On 16 September in the morning and on 24 September in the afternoon, the first series of API-IOGP-ISO workshops took place, aiming at further improving the cooperation and coordination between API and ISO, the two main organisations that develop standards for the oil and gas sector. In the past, several standards were published under both labels (‘co-branded’ / ‘dual-branded’). As a consequence of trade regulations that also address the oil and gas sector, API needed to terminate this form of cooperation. Since then, API and ISO follow their own road to maintain their standards.

Because the oil and gas sector will benefit from having only one single, broadly supported standard for each topic, stakeholders had expressed the wish to jointly maintain and develop the standards needed by the sector, as far as legally possible. During the API-IOGP-ISO workshop, leadership of the relevant API and ISO committees discussed in which way their work programmes can be coordinated and how cooperation should be organised to meet the ‘one single standard’ objective.

The workshop was interactive of nature divided in various themes linked to the scope of committees. Feedback from participants was very positive and additional sessions will be organised. In the coming months, steps will be taken to develop a joint work programme taking into account the outcomes of the API-IOGP-ISO workshop.
HIGHLIGHTS SUBCOMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS

During the plenary meeting, the eight subcommittees and seven working groups of ISO/TC 67 provided their status reports focussing on progress and concerns, successes, sharing best practices and input needed to proceed with their activities.

A relatively new development concerned the publication of so-called ISO supplements to API standards as an alternative for ‘co-branding’, which was stopped in 2012 due to impact of sanction regulations. An ISO supplement contains a normative reference to the equivalent API standard (without reproducing the content) supplemented with requirements responding to the global needs. Especially subcommittees with a large share of previously co-branded standards reported new energy in their committees, not only to prepare the ISO supplements to update their work programme, but also to develop new full-text ISO standards.

The new working group on offshore bulk materials under Korean leadership provided their first status report covering the status of the transformation of the deliverables of the ‘Unified bulk standardisation joint industry project’ into ISO documents.

Other highlights included the completion of the initial work programme of six ISO documents to support safe operations in the Arctic region and the upcoming redraft of the ISO 15156 series addressing materials for use in H₂S-containing environments in oil and gas production.

Also nice examples were provided to promote standards and standardisation by presenting papers at conferences, organising dedicated events for specific targeted audience, and publishing articles and news feeds in various types of media.

JIP33: HARMONISATION OF SPECIFICATIONS

On 16 September, the first JIP33 industry day was organised. JIP33 is a joint industry project of IOGP aiming at simplifying and harmonising the procurement specifications of equipment and packaging, which should result in major cost savings. Companies tend to specify additional requirements on top of ISO and API standards. Within JIP33, the oil and gas producers jointly determine which of their company specifications are relevant requirements for all companies as they create added value. These requirements are then first published in an IOGP specification about the topic concerned. Companies are encouraged to apply this specification replacing their own company specifications. The IOGP specification is also offered to the respective ISO or API committee to be taken into account in the next revision of the standard concerned in order to reduce additional specifications.

By organising industry days, JIP33 intends to reach out to a broader audience to inform them about the JIP33 objectives, the results and successes that have already achieved, and the impact on companies in the supply chain. Also the way stakeholders can contribute to the development of these specifications is addressed, including the 4-week public review. The first industry day welcomed many participants, mainly representatives of US-based companies. Meanwhile, JIP33 Industry Days were also organised in Milan (Europe) and Kuala Lumpur (Southeast Asia) to cover other important areas in the world. Read also the blog on the JIP33 website.

Richard Mortimer explained the importance of standardisation to realise significant cost savings.
HIGHLIGHTS OTHER ACTIVITIES

ISO/TC 67 has also ad-hoc groups, advisory groups and task forces to address particular to prepare for or support standardisation activities.

Former chair Neil Reeve presented the recommendations to update the well integrity standards in response to gaps that were identified by the IRF (Internal Regulators’ Forum).

Committee manager Françoise de Jong presented the update of the task force related to communication, highlighting the launch of the new ISO/TC 67 website and the introduction of the LinkedIn group ‘International standards for oil and gas sector’.

Tom Shortall reported about the recently established advisory group about digital implementation, which will monitor the activities in the field of digital transformation of analogue data, the use of digital technologies in new applications, and tools and training materials to support experts in drafting standards for the future.

In addition to digital transition, the transition towards a circular, low carbon economy is also on ISO/TC 67’s agenda following a Chinese proposal on ‘green manufacturing’. Terry Qin provided an update of the recently established ad-hoc group on this topic, which will initially focus on developing guidelines for working groups to address sustainability and circularity when revising existing standards or developing new standards.

The Chinese delegations also presented their ideas to establish an ad-hoc group on improved and enhanced oil recovery (IOR/EOR) by using various simulation technologies taking into the carbon footprint of these technologies.

MORE INFORMATION

Contact the ISO/TC 67 Secretariat by e-mailing to isotc67@nen.nl or calling +31 15 2 690 326 for more information. Interested to take part? Contact your national standards body to get involved! The next ISO/TC 67 meeting will be organised in Beijing, after a kind offer by the Chinese delegation.

IOGP STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The IOGP Standards Committee met on 17 September. This committee does not develop standards. However, they deliver an important contribution to international standards by identifying new topics, carrying out preparatory work, studies and research that can be used as input for standards, and by sharing experiences and viewpoints also to coordinate activities.

Through the Engineering Leadership Council, established last year, standardisation is also embedded at top management. This is important, since decisions about investments and resources are taken at this level. IOGP also offers a safe environment for experts to have technical discussions about the ISO standards within the so-called Standards Solution. This safe environment was established in 2012 and has proven to be successful by delivering about 80 standards – both revisions and new topics – to ISO for balloting and publication.

During the Standards Committee meeting, the subcommittees in the field of materials, coatings, offshore structures, information standards, process safety, well integrity and electrical installations provided their status report. In addition, the progress of task groups were presented. One important task group concerns the one dealing with requirements digitisation, in which the transformation to machine-readable requirements is studied. This would also involve a cultural change for experts in the way they have to formulate their specifications. Digitalisation will offer also big opportunities in making specifications available to the users. JIP33 was a central theme at the meeting, linking various activities and improving the efficiency.

All these activities also generate a lot of enthusiasm and positive energy. The ‘low carbon agenda’ is another topic of interest within the Standards Committee. Members share the view that the oil and gas sector is part of the solution with their knowledge, expertise and experience in the field of a safe, reliable and affordable energy supply system.