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India-Africa Standards and Regulations: Shared Challenges and Mutual Learning

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1 Background

Standards and technical regulations have become some of the most significant instruments shaping the contemporary global trading landscape. These are now pervasive across almost all sectors of the economy, including agriculture, manufacturing, food safety, pharmaceuticals, digital trade, environmental protection, and emerging technologies. While the gradual reduction of traditional trade barriers, such as tariffs, has created opportunities for greater market access and deeper economic integration, the simultaneous rise of increasingly stringent standards, technical regulations, and conformity assessment procedures has emerged as a major challenge for developing countries and the least developed countries (LDCs). India and Africa have faced similar challenges in accessing the markets of developed economies, especially the United States of America (USA) and the European Union (EU). Both India and Africa have faced various rejections of their products in these markets due to non-compliance with their stringent requirements.[1]

Navigating these challenges is strategically significant for India-Africa economic engagement. The bilateral trade between India and Africa stood at USD 81.99 billion in FY 2024-25, with flows concentrated in pharmaceuticals, petroleum products, automobiles, engineering goods, chemicals, food grains, textiles, crude oil, gas, coal, fertilisers, pulses, and precious stones - sectors where testing, certification, inspection, traceability, metrology,

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and regulatory recognition directly influence commercial viability.[2]

The World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT Agreement) and the Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement) provide the core international framework governing standards-related measures. The TBT Agreement recognizes the importance of standards, technical regulations, and conformity-assessment procedures (CAPs) in improving the efficiency of production and facilitating international trade, but they can also become unnecessary obstacles to trade if poorly designed or implemented.[3] The SPS Agreement recognizes members' rights to take measures necessary to protect human, animal, or plant life or health in a non-arbitrary and justifiable manner. Compliance with the TBT Agreement and the SPS Agreement has been challenging for the developing countries and LDCs. Beyond the regulations, exporters from both India and Africa increasingly face private sustainability standards such as Global Good Agricultural Practices (G.A.P.), Sedex Members Ethical Trade Audit (SMETA), and buyer-led environmental, social, traceability, and due diligence requirements. These standards may be formally voluntary, but in practice they often operate as de-facto market-entry conditions for premium markets, especially in the Europe and the USA. The ITC's Standards Map records more than 365 sustainability standards, reflecting the growing complexity of this compliance landscape.[4] The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development's (UNCTAD) 2026 assessment further underlines the scale of the issue, estimating that non-tariff measures (NTMs) impose higher export costs than tariffs for 88 per cent of countries, while least developed countries lose around 10 per cent of exports to G20 markets because of difficulties in meeting such requirements.[5] India's recent experience with pesticide and contaminant scrutiny in spices, where nearly 12 per cent of tested samples reportedly failed domestic quality and safety checks in 2024, shows that even relatively developed regulatory regimes face continuing pressures of credibility, coordination, and implementation.[6] For African exporters, similar challenges are further complicated by uneven quality infrastructure (QI) capacities across 54 economies, even as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)seeks to build a more integrated market.

The AfCFTA plays a central role in standards setting and institutional coordination in the harmonization of African standards, particularly in the context of TBT (Annex 6) and SPS measures (Annex 7). The TBT Annex 6 of the AfCFTA Agreement explicitly covers standards, TRs, CAPs, accreditation, and metrology, placing QI within Africa's continental market-building process.[7] These annexes aim to eliminate unnecessary barriers to trade through a series of actions, including promoting the use of international standards, harmonization of standards, equivalence of technical regulation, mutual recognition, and capacity building. This is significant because Africa is embedding quality infrastructure directly into continental market-building through a pan-African trade agreement.

1 Ousmane Z. Traoré, Karine Latouche, and Lota D. Tamini, European RASFF Border Rejections, African Countries' Reputation and Exports of Edible Vegetables and Fruits (November 2020).

2 Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, Africa-India Background Brief.https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Africa-India-Background-Brief-Final.pdf

3 The World Trade Organization, Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade. https://www.wto.org/tbt

4 International Trade Centre / WTO presentation, "Standards Map." https://www.wto.org/library/events/event_resources/tar_10122025/989.pdf

5 United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, "Global Trade Update: Invisible Barriers - The Costs of Non-Tariff Measures," PDF version, May 2026. https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ditcinf2026d5_en.pdf

6 ThePrint, 18 August 2024. https://theprint.in/india/near-12-of-indias-tested-spice-samples-fail-quality-safety-standards/2228211/

7 African Union, Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area: Compiled Annexes, Annex 6 on Technical Barriers to Trade.https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36437-ax-Compiled-Annexes_AfCFTA_Agreement_English.pdf

India-Africa cooperation in this area should therefore be framed as a mutual learning and capacity-building agenda: strengthening credible, transparent, and proportionate systems that protect public interest, reduce avoidable compliance burdens, and enable businesseson both sides to participate more effectively in regional and global value chains. India and Africa share many similarities in their quality infrastructure and ecosystem in terms of state-led institutions in standards setting, regulatory model, and capacity constraints etc. The following sections will delve into India and Africa's quality ecosystems, India's standards and regulatory experiences, followed by a policy direction for India-Africa standards and quality partnership.

2 India-Africa: A Brief Overview of Quality Ecosystem

2.1 India's Quality Infrastructure

India's quality infrastructure is primarily national in design, with the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) established under the BIS Act, 2016, as India's National Standards Body (NSB). BIS develops and publishes Indian Standards, operates certification and conformity-assessment schemes, and represents India in international standardization forums such as the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC). While Indian Standards are generally voluntary, the Central Government may, after consultation with BIS, make them mandatory for specified products in the public interest, including health, safety, environmental protection, prevention of unfair trade practices, and national security, a model which many African countries also follow. This is commonly done through Quality Control Orders (QCOs) issued by the line ministries, with BIS responsible for the associated certification and licensing arrangements.[8]

Specialised authorities carry out sectoral regulation in areas such as food (Food Safety and Standards Authority of India - FSSAI), pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, and medical devices (Central Drugs Standard Control Organization - CDSCO), energy efficiency (Bureau of Energy Efficiency - BEE), and telecommunications (Department of Telecommunications).

The Quality Council of India (QCI) supports India's voluntary quality ecosystem through accreditation and quality-promotion activities. Accreditation for testing laboratories is provided principally through the National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL),while the National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies (NABCB) handles accreditation for certification, inspection, and validation/verification bodies, both having multilateral recognition arrangements with Global Accreditation Cooperation Incorporated (GACI). Alongside these national accreditation boards, India's accreditation landscape also includes private accreditation bodies operating with international recognition, including Quality and Accreditation Institute (QAI), Federation for Development of Accreditation Services (FDAS), and International Quality and Accreditation Services(IQAS)

[8] Bureau of Indian Standards, Bureau of Indian Standards Act, 2016. https://www.bis.gov.in/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/BIS-Act-2016.pdf

- adding further capacity to the accreditation ecosystem. The legal metrology is vested in the Ministry of Consumer Affairs and supported by institutions like the National Physical Laboratory (NPL) and the Regional Reference Standards Laboratory. The legal metrology helps in ensuring accuracy and reliability in weight and measurement for public protection and fair trade.[9] This gives India a relatively mature institutional base in which standards, accreditation, certification, and metrology are located within identifiable national institutions.

To promote trade, India's export-facing quality functions are supported by the Export Inspection Council (EIC), Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), Commodity Boards, Export Promotion Councils (EPCs), and the Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO), which help businesses with certification, documentation, compliance awareness, and destination-market intelligence. India has also developed sector-specific quality certification schemes such as the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP), AYUSH Premium Mark, and Indian Certification of Medical Devices (ICMED), which are capable of addressing regulatory requirements of developed economies. In the voluntary sector, India has developed schemes that seek external benchmarking or recognition, including Ind G.A.P. by QCI with Global G.A.P., Indian Coffee Sustainability Standards and Certification Scheme (INDICOFS), and forest certification schemes by the Network for Certification and Conservation of Forests(NCCF), which are already benchmarked with the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC). Digital tools such as BIS standards portals(eBIS, Manakonline, BIS Care),[10] Digital Certificates of Origin, and QCI's proposed QR-enabled verification instruments (e.g., Q Mark/ "Desh ka Haq", online accreditation interfaces, and "Quality Passport") signal a shift toward more traceable, tamper-resistant compliance verification, to reduce fraudulent certificates and enable trust-based compliance.

2.2 Africa's Quality Infrastructure

African countries are pursuing quality infrastructure reform in a more regionally complex setting. Unlike India, where the main architecture is nationally consolidated, Africa's quality infrastructure is being built across national, regional, and continental layers. The Pan-African Quality Infrastructure (PAQI)[11] serves as the principal continental coordination platform. PAQI brings together the African Organisation for Standardisation(ARSO), African Accreditation Cooperation (AFRAC), Intra-Africa Metrology System (AFRIMETS), and African Electrotechnical Standardisation Commission (AFSEC), covering the core pillars of standardisation, accreditation, metrology, and electrotechnical standards. ARSO is the principal standards body for the African continent. The ARSO is an intergovernmental body established in 1977 with the fundamental mandate to develop tools for standards development and standards harmonization to enhance Africa's internal as well

[9] India's Evolving Metrology Ecosystem: Strengthening Trade, Transparency, and Consumer Protection (20 May 2026) https://www.pib.gov.in/Press Release Page. aspx? PRID = 2263113 & reg = 3 & lang = 2

[10] Bureau of Indian Standards, Know Your Standard. https://www. bis. gov. in/know - your - standard/? lang = en

[11] Pan-African Quality Infrastructure (PAQI), official website. https://www.paqi.org/

[12] UN Economic and Social Commission for West Asia; available at <https:// archive.unescwa.org/african - organisation - standardisation>

as global trade competitiveness.[12] The ARSO performs a series of activities including the development of harmonized African standards, continental conformity assessment guidelines and standards harmonized procedures across national borders of the African continent, rather than replacing national standardization systems. AFSEC plays a crucial role in harmonizing or developing electrotechnical standards and the associated conformity assessment requirements.[13] The African Continental Technical Regulation Framework (ACTReF) aims to promote and coordinate the alignment of technical regulations with international best practices across African countries.[14]

At the national level, African countries continue to operate their own standards bodies, regulators, conformity-assessment institutions, accreditation arrangements, and metrology systems. However, their capacity is uneven. South Africa, Egypt, Tunisia, Kenya, and a few others have comparatively stronger institutional bases, while many countries are still expanding laboratory networks, accreditation coverage, metrology services, technical regulations, and market-surveillance systems. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)'s Africa quality infrastructure assessment also points to data gaps and uneven readiness across national systems, underlining that harmonization must be accompanied by sustained implementation support.[15]

Export-facing quality systems are also developing at the country level. Morocco's National Office for Food Safety supports export controls and sanitary and phytosanitary certification for animals, plants, agricultural inputs, food, and feed, including documentation aligned with destination-market requirements.[16] South Africa provides another example of a relatively mature trade-facing quality system, with institutions such as the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS), South African National Accreditation System (SANAS), and National Regulator for Compulsory Specifications (NRCS) supporting standards, accreditation, conformity assessment, and regulated product compliance. SANAS is also linked to international accreditation recognition through GACI, strengthening the acceptance of accredited test and inspection results.[17]

Africa's quality infrastructure agenda should therefore be understood as a two-level policy challenge: building continental harmonization through PAQI and AfCFTA, while strengthening national institutions and export-support systems that enable businesses to meet destination-market requirements. Its effectiveness will depend on whether standards, test reports, certificates, and inspection outcomes can be trusted across borders through credible accreditation, regulatory cooperation, mutual recognition, and sustained capacity-building.

2.3 India and Africa in the Global Quality Infrastructure Index (GQII): Identifying Functional Complementarities

The GQII 2025 offers an evidence-based reference for identifying areas of convergence and complementarity between India and African economies in quality infrastructure.[18] India ranks

[13] About AFSEC; available at <https://afsec-africa.org/ABOUT_AFSEC.aspx>

[14] Pan-African Quality Infrastructure (PAQI), ACTReF Concept Paper, Toward Free, Fair and Safe Trade in Africa. Available at https://www.paqi.org/ wp-content/uploads/2022/03/PAQI_ ACTReF_ Concept Paper_final.pdf

[15] UNIDO, "Quality Infrastructure for Sustainable Development Index: Africa Report." https://hub.unido.org/qi4sd/pdfs/QI4SD_Index_AFRICA_REPORT. pdf

[16] Morocco National Office for Food Safety (ONSSA), "Import and Export Controls." https://www.onssa.gov.ma/import-and-export-controls/?lang=en

[17] International Trade Administration, "South Africa - Standards for Trade," Country Commercial Guide, 30 January 2024.: https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/south-africa-standards-trade

[18] Mesopartner, "Global Quality Infrastructure Index (GQII)." https://www.mesopartner.com/gqii

11th overall, with strong component positions in accreditation and standardization, ranked 7th and 8th, respectively. Several African economies also appear within the top 100, with differentiated strengths across the three pillars: South Africa ranks 19th overall and performs particularly strongly in metrology, where it ranks 11th; Egypt ranks 26th overall with a strong accreditation profile; while Kenya, Tunisia, Morocco, Nigeria, Mauritius, Ethiopia, Ghana, and others illustrate the wider spread of African quality-infrastructure capabilities across national systems (Table 1). These profiles indicate differentiated strengths across the three pillars rather than a single hierarchy, supporting a function-specific framing of shared learning. India's experience in standardization, accreditation, export assurance, and digital certification may be useful for African partners. At the same time, stronger metrology capabilities in economies such as South Africa offer scope for technical exchange and peer learning for India and other developing economies. The GQII also notes that quality infrastructure development remains uneven across regions, with Africa continuing to register comparatively lower levels overall, and that changes in relative position tend to be gradual - reflecting the long-horizon nature of quality-system building.

3 Lessons from India's Standards and Regulatory Experience

India's experience with standards, technical regulation, and conformity assessment offers practical lessons

Table 1: India and African Countries in GQII Ranking 2025 (Top 100)

Economy	Overall rank	Standardisation rank	Metrology rank	Accreditation rank
India	11	8	31	7
South Africa	19	30	11	27
Egypt	26	40	24	15
Kenya	53	64	48	57
Tunisia	61	65	61	62
Morocco	76	68	59	105
Tanzania	82	87	98	72
Nigeria	84	56	122	99
Zimbabwe	87	96	91	74
Algeria	88	60	103	109
Mauritius	92	97	93	79
Côte d'Ivoire	93	86	127	77
Zambia	94	111	95	76
Namibia	95	107	95	81
Botswana	96	110	89	83
Ethiopia	97	80	84	115
Ghana	99	76	99	121
Senegal	100	105	132	82

***Source*:** mesopartner.com

for peer developing economies like the African nations are facing similar pressures of industrial upgradation, consumer protection, import regulation, and export competitiveness. These lessons are not presented as a template, but as implementation issues that arise when quality systems expand in scale and ambition.

a. Deficit in Technical Regulations:

India recognised in mid-2017 that it faced a significant deficit in technical regulations, with mandatory product coverage estimated at only about 15 per cent of that in the EU. This exposed consumers to risks from unsafe and substandard products and placed the domestic industry at an unfair disadvantage against low-quality goods, including imports. Apart from sector-specific regulators in areas such as food and drugs, India relied heavily on the BIS framework for product regulation. Before 2017, India had developed thousands of voluntary standards; however, mandatory product standards remained limited. For instance, by 2017, more than 19,000 voluntary standards had been formulated, but only 137 product standards were mandatory. With the enactment of the BIS Act 2016, the government simplified product regulations through QCOs under section 16 of the BIS Act.[19] India has used QCOs to address regulatory gaps in sectors such as textiles, chemicals, toys, and machinery safety, where consumer safety, product quality, and unfair competition concerns are significant. The scale of expansion has been substantial: products under compulsory BIS certification increased from 106 products under 14 QCOs in 2014 to 773 products under 191 QCOs, along with two horizontal orders, in 2025.[20] While the policy objective was to improve quality, protect consumers, and strengthen domestic manufacturing, the expansion also raised concerns relating to choices of products, especially raw materials, components, and intermediates, compliance costs, testing capacity, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) readiness, transition periods, and operational complexity. Recent withdrawal and recalibration of selected QCOs, particularly for industrial inputs, therefore point to the importance of a more risk-based and implementation-sensitive approach.[21]

This experience is relevant for African countries as they may have similar deficits in technical regulations and utilize the same model of NSBs as a hub of technical regulations, even as they develop harmonised standards and technical regulations under the AfCFTA. Quality ambitions can support industrial upgradation, consumer protection, and regional market integration. However, if regulations expand faster than industry preparedness or national and regional conformity-assessment capacity, they may create barriers for the same businesses they are intended to support.

b. Institutional role clarity:

India's experience with the dual role of BIS in standardisation and voluntary certification on one hand and technical regulations on the other has helped create a strong product-certification base, but it has also brought out the need to distinguish voluntary standards from mandatory technical regulations and house them separately, as the economy matures.

[19] Grinsted P, Kesari A and Singh K, Quality Rules in India: Trade, Technical Regulations and Consumer Protection, ORF Issues Brief (2018). https://www.orfonline.org/public/uploads/posts/pdf/20230821125110.pdf

[20] Press Information Bureau. (n.d.). Press release (PRID: 2110935). Government of India. https://www.pib.gov.in / Press Release Iframe Page.aspx?PRID=2110935&reg=3 & lang=2

[21] Jauhri, A., Kher, R., (2025). Decoding QCOs: Do we need to Rethink? Research and Information System for Developing Countries.

The developed economies do not use this model for regulations, and it immediately raises the issue of acceptance and equivalence by them, even if product requirements are based on international standards. Further, the power of market surveillance vested in BIS conflicts with its role as a certification body and does not align with the WTO TBT Guidelines on CAPs.[22] When the same ecosystem is closely associated with both writing standards and enforcing compliance, businesses may experience the system as overlapping, costly, or difficult to contest. For developing economies, the relevant principle is that NSBs should remain strong centres of voluntary standardisation and technical expertise, while governments and sector regulators should clearly decide which requirements become mandatory, how they are enforced, and how market surveillance is conducted through a separate mechanism.[23]

Several African national systems face similar role-separation questions. In some countries, national standards bodies combine standardisation, conformity assessment, and regulatory functions. Kenya's standards system has been identified as one case where these functions remain closely linked, creating risks of overreach and limiting the development of independent private conformity-assessment markets. Ethiopia's heavily state-subsidised testing model may reduce immediate costs for businesses, but raises longer-term questions of financial sustainability and service quality. These are common governance challenges for developing economies seeking to expand regulations and quality infrastructure while keeping services affordable and credible.

c. Moving from Certification-Heavy Models to Risk-Based Conformity Assessment:

Product certification is among the costliest conformity-assessment routes because it may involve factory inspection, product testing both from factory and market, certification fees, surveillance, and repeated compliance obligations. Inspection and testing models can also become expensive when applied consignment-by-consignment or at the border. BIS's earlier Scheme I certification model created a strong product-certification base, but a modern quality system cannot rely on one dominant model for all risk categories. India's later shift towards multiple CAPs, including Scheme II based on a simplified certification model, offers a more balanced reform lesson, but is still limited. Lower-risk goods may be addressed through supplier declaration, accredited third-party testing, and post-market surveillance, while higher-risk products may justify more rigorous surveillance.[24] The point is not deregulation, but regulatory proportionality.

Both India and African countries have often relied heavily on inspection and testing models, partly because regulators tend to trust direct control more than market-based assurance. More importantly, if domestic CAPs do not align with international accreditation and conformity-assessment standards, meaningful Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) become difficult - unless laboratories, certification bodies, inspection bodies, and accreditation systems are aligned with internationally accepted procedures. Without such trust, the principle of "tested once,

[22] Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade, 'Guidelines on Conformity Assessment Procedures: Non-Prescriptive Guidelines to Support Regulators in the Choice and Design of Appropriate and Proportionate CAPs', G/TBT/54. https://worldtradescanner.com/TBT-54.pdf.

[23] Jauhri, A., Kher, R., & Stutee, O. (2026). Reimagining India's quality ecosystem. Research and Information System for Developing Countries.

[24] Bureau of Indian Standards, BIS Act, Rules & Regulations. https://www.bis.gov.in/the-bureau/bis-act-rules-and-regulations/?lang=en

accepted everywhere" remains difficult to achieve.

d. Building Export Assurance and International Recognition Pathways:

Domestic regulation alone does not ensure export readiness unless it is based on global standards. In sectors such as food, pharmaceuticals, textiles, chemicals, and sustainability-sensitive products, where India's domestic regime may not be globally compatible, businesses often need to comply with destination-market requirements that go beyond domestic rules. India has partly addressed this through export-specific assurance systems, such as APEDA's NPOP and the EIC's seafood certification systems, which are designed around importing-country requirements and recognised by the European Commission (EC), among others. This is particularly relevant for economies with large micro and small-producer bases, where direct adoption of all international requirements into domestic regulations may be difficult without targeted support.

e. Building Reliable Accreditation and Conformity Assessment Bodies

For African countries, in some sectors, businesses continue to rely on foreign-based testing or international inspection/certification companies because domestic test results, inspection reports, or certifications are not yet widely accepted. AFSEC has noted that much electrotechnical equipment imported into Africa still relies on foreign-based testing and certification, and that several countries face skills shortages across relevant electrotechnical fields. This matters for renewable energy, e-mobility, electrical safety, grid systems, and industrial upgrading.

f. Growing importance of private sustainability standards:

As discussed earlier, Indian and African exporters seeking access to premium markets, especially in Europe, increasingly face buyer-led requirements on traceability, labour practices, environmental management, food safety, chemicals, deforestation, and due diligence. These requirements are often set by private schemes, retailers, or buyers rather than governments. They can exclude MSMEs, small holders, and first-generation exporters because compliance requires repeated audits, documentation, certification, and renewal.

Surprisingly, the NSBs, which are essentially in voluntary space, have not helped address this challenge, including in India, confining themselves to standards setting in ISO and IEC. Given that they represent the best expertise on standards in developing countries and LDCs, there is no reason why they should not address the challenge of private standards. To address such challenges, NSBs should leverage and expand their engagement with private bodies to get recognition or equivalence for their products to enhance market access. For instance, Sri Lanka has taken a commendable step to reduce this gap in organic exports by getting its national organic standard recognized under the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM)' Family of Standards' through the Common Objectives and Requirements of Organic Standards (COROS)

equivalence assessment.[25] This shows that developing-country NSBs can respond to private sustainability standards when domestic standards are linked to credible equivalence, certification, and market-recognition mechanisms. This is especially relevant if the voluntary standardization is separated from the regulatory functions, which is the way to go.

g. Strengthening Skills and Human Capacity:

Competent manpower is essential for implementing both domestic regulations and global standards. This includes, on one hand, the regulators, laboratory professionals, auditors, accreditation assessors, metrologists, inspectors, and certification personnel for administering regulations, and on the other hand, manpower to implement these regulations and standards in industry, like compliance managers, consultants, and recognised training providers. Creation of implementation capacity cannot be treated as the regulator's responsibility due to potential conflicts of interest and capacity bottlenecks. A wider quality-skills development ecosystem is therefore necessary, including certification of competent professionals and credible training institutions. India has an established skill ecosystem, which, unfortunately, has remained largely disconnected from industry needs and is only now beginning to respond.[26] The African countries would face a bigger challenge in creating such a framework at arm's length from regulators, accreditation, and certification bodies to help businesses upgrade to global standards and regulations.

4 Policy Directions for an India-Africa Standards and Quality Partnership

India-Africa cooperation on standards and quality should focus on practical, trade-facing, and capacity-building measures rather than broad institutional declarations.

a. A structured India-Africa capacity programme could combine short technical courses with a fellowship track for regulators, standards officials, laboratory managers, accreditation assessors, metrology professionals, and conformity-assessment personnel. It should focus on practical implementation skills, including technical regulation drafting, use of international standards, regulatory impact assessment, transition planning, WTO-TBT notifications, accreditation assessment, laboratory quality management, metrology, market surveillance, private standards, and digital certification.

b. Cooperation should support conformity-assessment models based on product risk rather than uniform certification requirements. This would reduce avoidable compliance costs while preserving safety and quality objectives, particularly for MSMEs.

c. India and African nations should aim to achieve MRAs with a phased approach beginning with recognition of accredited test reports, or product certifications, and regulator-to-regulator cooperation in selected sectors. Priority areas could include agri-food, pharmaceuticals and medical devices, electrical and

[25] IFOAM-Organics International, "Sri Lanka's National Organic Standard receives approval in the IFOAM Family of Standards," 2026. https://www.ifoam.bio/news/sri-lankas-national-organic-standard-receives

[26] Jauhri, A., Kher, R., & Stutee, O. (2026). Reimagining India's quality ecosystem. Research and Information System for Developing Countries.

renewable-energy equipment, textiles, chemicals, and selected engineering goods.

d. India's support may be directed toward regional laboratories, reference facilities, metrology hubs, and accreditation cooperation linked to PAQI and AfCFTA priorities. This would be especially useful in sectors where individual countries may not be able to maintain specialised infrastructure independently.

e. India and Africa should jointly address the growing burden of private standards in agri-food, textiles, leather, chemicals, and consumer goods. A dedicated platform could map major buyer-led schemes, provide MSME compliance toolkits, support group certification, train auditors and producer groups, and engage international buyers to reduce unnecessary duplication. The focus should be on making sustainability compliance a market-access tool rather than an exclusionary cost.

f. A digital gateway could provide sector-wise information on applicable standards, draft technical regulations, recognised laboratories, accredited certification bodies, enquiry points, accepted test routes, private standards guidance, and MRA status. This would reduce information gaps for exporters and support more transparent compliance systems.

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The word "DAKSHIN" (**दक्षिण**) is of Sanskrit origin, meaning "South." The Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, inaugurated DAKSHIN – Global South Centre of Excellence in November 2023. The initiative was inspired by the deliberations of Global South leaders during the Voice of the Global South Summits. DAKSHIN stands for Development and Knowledge Sharing Initiative. Hosted at the RIS, DAKSHIN has established linkages with leading think tanks and universities across the Global South and is building a dynamic network of scholars working on Global South issues.

AIC at RIS has been working to strengthen India's strategic partnership with ASEAN in its realisation of the ASEAN Community. AIC at RIS undertakes research, policy advocacy and regular networking activities with relevant organisations and think-tanks in India and ASEAN countries, with the aim of providing policy inputs, up-to-date information, data resources and sustained interaction, for strengthening ASEAN-India partnership.

CMEC has been established at RIS under the aegis of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPS&W), Government of India. CMEC is a collaboration between RIS and Indian Ports Association (IPA). It has been mandated to act as an advisory/technological arm of MoPSW to provide the analytical support on policies and their implementation.

FITM is a joint initiative by the Ministry of Ayush and RIS. It has been established with the objective of undertaking policy research on economy, intellectual property rights (IPRs) trade, sustainability and international cooperation in traditional medicines. FITM provides analytical support to the Ministry of Ayush on policy and strategy responses on emerging national and global developments.

BEF aims to serve as a dedicated platform for fostering dialogue on promoting the concept in the Indian Ocean and other regions. The forum focuses on conducting studies on the potential, prospects and challenges of blue economy; providing regular inputs to practitioners in the government and the private sectors; and promoting advocacy for its smooth adoption in national economic policies.

FIDC, has been engaged in exploring nuances of India's development cooperation programme, keeping in view the wider perspective of South-South Cooperation in the backdrop of international development cooperation scenario. It is a tripartite initiative of the Development Partnership Administration (DPA) of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, academia and civil society organisations.

FISD aims to harness the full potential and synergy between science and technology, diplomacy, foreign policy and development cooperation in order to meet India's development and security needs. It is also engaged in strengthening India's engagement with the international system and on key global issues involving science and technology.

As part of its work programme, RIS has been deeply involved in strengthening economic integration in the South Asia region. In this context, the role of the South Asia Centre for Policy Studies (SACEPS) is very important. SACEPS is a network organisation engaged in addressing regional issues of common concerns in South Asia.

Knowledge generated endogenously among the Southern partners can help in consolidation of stronger common issues at different global policy fora. The purpose of NeST is to provide a global platform for Southern Think-Tanks for collaboratively generating, systematising, consolidating and sharing knowledge on South South Cooperation approaches for international development.

DST-Satellite Centre for Policy Research on STI Diplomacy at RIS aims to advance policy research at the intersection of science, technology, innovation (STI) and diplomacy, in alignment with India's developmental priorities and foreign policy objectives.

— Policy research to shape the international development agenda —

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