

## ISO/TC 275 Plenary Meeting in France

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### International Affairs Department

The ISO/TC 275 Plenary Meeting was held in France on 12 October 2023, and two representatives from JS attended.

The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) is a non-governmental organization based in Geneva, Switzerland, that develops and publishes international standards in fields other than electricity and electronics<sup>\*1</sup>. Established in 1947, ISO's standards encompass a wide range of industries and fields, including technology, manufacturing, medicine, and agriculture.

ISO has established Technical Committees (TCs) to formulate standards in each field, and experts from related industries, academia, and government, among others, gather to collaborate on developing standards practically. TCs are numbered in order of establishment, so TC275 is the 275th Technical Committee to be established. According to the ISO website, the first Technical Committee, TC1, was established in 1947 and is responsible for screw threads, while the most recent Technical Committee, TC323, focuses on the circular economy.

TC275 was established in February 2013 at the initiative of AFNOR, the French Standards Association. Its theme is "sludge recovery, recycling, treatment, and disposal." JS has been working with the Japan Sewage Works Association, the domestic deliberative body for TC275, since its establishment.

TC275 also has working groups (WGs) that discuss more specialized topics. The names of the WGs and the countries that chair them are as follows. Japan chairs WG7 and also actively participates in WG5 by sending experts.

At the 9th plenary meeting, each working group presented activity reports, and the secretariat proposed TC275's future activity policy.

This time, the JS had the mission of submitting a request from the Japanese National Committee regarding sludge property testing and returning the results. At first, I was confused by the English spoken

with a French accent, but I gradually understood it. There were also polite explanations for the questions from Japan.

After the Pandemic, I've become accustomed to online meetings and have enjoyed their convenience, but at this time, I felt the benefits of meeting in person. It was worth the long journey from Japan to participate.

Before leaving Japan, I was feeling a little down because the domestic deliberation committee had even discussed the need for lobbying. Still, the atmosphere at TC275 was generally relaxed, perhaps because the theme is a bit niche, which also helped.

This year's conference venue, AFNOR, is in Saint-Denis, France. If you are a rugby fan, you may know that Saint-Denis is an industrial city on the outskirts of Paris, home to the Stade de France (Photo 1), France's largest stadium, with a capacity of 80,000. The stadium hosted ten major matches, including the opening and final games of the 2023 Rugby World Cup.

When I heard that the conference was being held in France in October, I was concerned that securing flights and hotel rooms would be challenging due to the World Cup, but my fears were unfounded. The conference was held on October 12th, which fell between the end of the World Cup qualifiers and the start of the finals.

The venue, AFNOR, was right next to the stadium (Photo 2). I booked a hotel near the venue without giving it much thought. Still, I was a little worried before I left because a JS staff member who had attended the first plenary meeting held at AFNOR in 2013 had warned me to be careful, as it was a slightly dangerous area. It certainly wasn't an atmosphere where I could immediately answer "yes" when asked if it was safe, but at least I didn't have to worry about pickpockets, as there were no matches, and the area was relatively quiet.

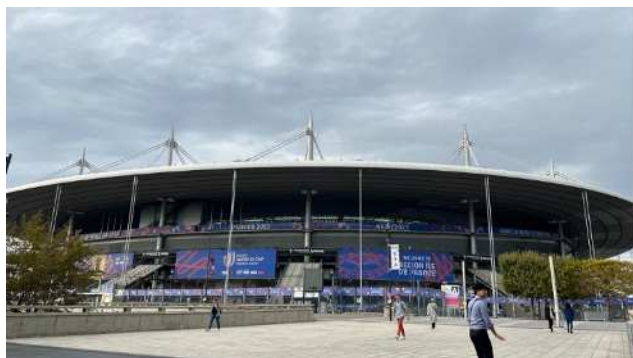


Photo 1 : Stade de France



Photo 2 : AFNOR

I assumed Saint-Denis was part of Paris until I arrived in France and spoke with a taxi driver. The nearest station to AFNOR is the Stade de France–Saint-Denis station on the RER high-speed train line. This station is next to Gare du Nord, the largest train station in Europe by annual ridership and the northern gateway to Paris. We discovered that it takes only five to ten minutes to get to the center of Paris, so we decided to visit the Sewer Museum (Photo 3) in our spare time.

When I think of Paris's sewers, I am reminded of "Les Misérables." The author Victor Hugo said, "There is another Paris under the sewers of Paris," and he describes the sewers in detail. Since I was there, I thought I would like to explore one part of the 2600km network that spreads out beneath Paris.

The Paris Sewer Museum is located along the south bank of the Seine, between the Eiffel Tower and the Musée d'Orsay. Its exterior is rather unassuming, and you could easily walk past it without noticing it, perhaps because it is an underground facility.

When I asked at the entrance, the receptionist said all the explanatory displays were in French (I'll explain why later), so I borrowed a headset to listen to the English commentary.



Photo 3 : Sewer Museum

According to my colleague, this is a section of a converted pumping station that has been opened to the public. Sewage is pumped up from the combined sewer that crosses the River Seine. We finished looking around the museum in about an hour, but apart from the one man at the entrance reception, we didn't see anyone who looked like a staff member inside. There were few tourists, and if you accidentally fell into the waterway, there might not be anyone to notice. The website displayed various warnings (such as "not recommended for pregnant women, children under 5, or people with claustrophobia", "do not climb over the fences", etc.). Still, I thought that, in general, everything was the user's responsibility.

This was the author's third visit to France, and although decades have passed since the first time, Paris has changed remarkably little. The same is true of the cityscape; even though there are so many tourists, there are extremely few English signs.

When I looked into it more out of curiosity, I found that France has a law called the Toubon Law that regulates the use of the French language (although I may be the only one who wasn't aware of it). This law, enacted in 1994, broadly obliges the use of French in highly public areas and regulates the use of foreign words, with high fines for violations.

I heard that the law's enactment was partly due to the French people's enthusiasm for defending the French language. Still, it was also based on a sense of threat towards foreign languages, particularly English, and a perceived crisis in the international status of the French language.

Leaving aside the pros and cons of this law, as someone who lives in a country where an extraordinary number of foreign languages have been introduced and where there is a flood of Japanese-made English that native English speakers will never understand, I am surprised by such government-led language policies. However, when I consider that this stubborn stance of protecting one's culture, including language, may be contributing to the city's appearance, I can't bring myself to reject it. This time, my business trip to France was a bit rushed, but I had many encounters and made some minor discoveries about France.

From now on, I would like to continue to follow with interest the future of languages in an advanced information society, including the Toubon Law.

\*1: The International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) standardizes electricity and electronics.