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NETHERLANDS COMMENT ON JTC1 N 5698, AS REQUESTED IN JTC1 N 5754, ON SC2

The Netherlands NB wholly supports the views of Japan, expressed in JTC1 N 5698. Regarding the reply of SC2 on N 5449 (in N 5684), and subsequently of that of the US on N 5698 in N 5818, we have some remarks in a general sense on major arguments for continuing the present practice in SC2/WG2.

1. "There is wide industrial support"

This is as long as it lasts. There are lots and lots of frustrated scientists around, whose research project, which they thought of prime importance to their company, was stopped suddenly, because top management made some calculation. To think that a few hundred of users will constitute a market can only be called naive, it is so only up to the moment the higher level becomes aware of what is happening.

2. "The aim is to be Universal"

Universality is not a merit but a trap.

-- it is unattainable, in particular with historic scripts, where a new character may be dug up any moment, as several scholars argued.

It may even be uncertain and unverifiable whether it is not new at all, but only having an uncommon shape.

-- more and more resources will be required to add lesser and lesser used scripts, blowing the standard up to unmanageable proportions. Could we have figures at last of the cost involved to SC2 members by a new amendment to ISO/IEC 10646?

-- one may learn from history, for example from the the development of programming languages. Those aimed at universality all failed in the long term, those having a more humble scope became big successes.

The Netherlands NB intends to follow closely the future SC2/WG2 activities as far as justifiable, and with much caution.

We end with a quotation:

Loge (as the Gods enter Walhalla):

Ihrem Ende eilen sie zu,
die so stark im Bestehen sich waenen.

Fast schaem ich mich, mit ihnen zu schaffen,
zur leckenden Lohe mich wieder zu verwandeln,
spur ich lockende Lust.

Sie aufzuzehren, die einst mich gezaemt,
statt mit den Blinden bloed' zu vergehn,
und waeren sie goettlichste Goetter!
Nicht dumm duenkte mich das!

Bedenken will ich's: wer weiss, was ich tu'!

English translation:

They hasten to their end,

though they think themselves strong and enduring.

I am almost ashamed to share their doings,
my fancy lures me to transform myself
back into flickering flames.

To burn them who once tamed me,
rather than foolishly end with the blind,
even though they be the most godlike gods,
does not seem stupid to me.

I'll think it over: who knows what I will do?

(Richard Wagner, Das Rheingold, vierte Szene)

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