Business Plan and Convener’s Report

ISO/IEC/JTC 1/SC 22/WG 23 (Programming Language Vulnerabilities)

Document: ISO/IEC JTC 1/SC 22/WG 23/N1103

Date: 2021-07-19

PERIOD COVERED: July 2020 – June 2021

SUBMITTED BY:

Convener, ISO/IEC JTC 1/SC 22/WG 23: Vulnerabilities  *Stephen Michell  
Maurya Software*

*156 Shinny Ave,  
Stittsville, Ontario K2V 0G4 Canada*

*Office: +1(613)299-9047   
E-mail: stephen.michell@maurya.on.ca*

**1. MANAGEMENT SUMMARY**

* 1.1.  JTC 1/SC 22/WG 23  Programming Language Vulnerabilities

1.2.  PROJECT REPORT

1.2.1. COMPLETED PROJECTS

ISO/IEC TR 24772-1:2019, *Programing languages –* *Guidance to Avoiding Vulnerabilities in Programming Languages – Part 1: Language independent guidance*

Published in December 2019

ISO/IEC TR 24772-2:2020, *Programing languages –* *Guidance to Avoiding Vulnerabilities in Programming Languages – Part 2: Vulnerability descriptions for programming language Ada*

Published in January 2020

ISO/IEC TR 24772-3:2020 *Programing languages –* *Guidance to Avoiding Vulnerabilities in Programming Languages – Part 3: Vulnerability descriptions for programming language C*

Published in January 2020

The 2012 version of ISO/IEC 24772 has been withdrawn.

ISO/IEC 17960, *Code Signing for Source Code.* This project is to produce an International Standard, and the standard has been published.

1.2.2. PROJECTS UNDERWAY

ISO/IEC NP 24772-1, *Programing languages –* *Guidance to Avoiding Vulnerabilities in Programming Languages – Part 1: Language independent guidance.* This is a rework of TR 24772-1:2019 to make it an international standard.

ISO/IEC WD 24772-2:2020, *Programing languages –* *Guidance to Avoiding Vulnerabilities in Programming Languages – Part 2: Vulnerability descriptions for programming language Ada*. This is a rework of TR 24772-2:2020 to make it an international standard.

ISO/IEC WD 24772-3:2020 *Programing languages –* *Guidance to Avoiding Vulnerabilities in Programming Languages – Part 3: Vulnerability descriptions for programming language C.* This is a rework of TR 24772-3:2020 to make it an international standard.

ISO/IEC WD24772-4, *Guidance to Avoiding Vulnerabilities in Programming Languages – Part 4: Vulnerability descriptions for programming language Python.* This is the update of TR24772:2013 for Python vulnerabilities which was Annex E, following the project split of project 22.24772. Under development

ISO/IEC WD 24772-6, *Guidance to Avoiding Vulnerabilities in Programming Languages – Part 6: Vulnerability descriptions for programming language SPARK.* This is a complete rewrite of TR24772:2013 for SPARK vulnerabilities which was Annex H, following the project split of project 22.24772. Significant changes to the SPARK language necessitated a major rewrite. Development complete and being reviewed by WG 9.

ISO/IEC WD 24772-8, *Guidance to Avoiding Vulnerabilities in Programming Languages – Part 8: Vulnerability descriptions for programming language Fortran.* This is the Part for language specific vulnerabilities for Fortran, following the project split of project 22.24772. Under development.

ISO/IEC WD 24772-10, *Guidance to Avoiding Vulnerabilities in Programming Languages – Part 10: Vulnerability descriptions for programming language C++.* This is a new Part for language specific vulnerabilities for C++. Under development.

ISO/IEC WD24772-11, *Guidance to Avoiding Vulnerabilities in Programming Languages – Part 11: Vulnerability descriptions for programming language Java.* This is a new Part for language specific vulnerabilities for Java. Being published.

1.2.3. CANCELLED PROJECTS

none

1.2.4. COOPERATION and COMPETITION

Where appropriate, WG 23 has established active liaisons with other SC22 working groups and international organizations, such as Ada Europe and ACM. See the table in 2.3 for a list of liaisons.

There is no apparent direct competition with any other current SC22 working group or JTC 1 subcommittee.

**2. PERIOD REVIEW**

2.1. MARKET REQUIREMENTS

WG 23 is responding to the needs of the programming language community by inclusion. WG 23 will accept input and liaison by any and all appropriate organizations.

The marketplace demands robust, secure software. Vulnerabilities are the antithesis of robust, secure software. Many of the attacks on software-based systems succeed because the computer language used did not prevent the attack vector and did not warn the developer that the code being produced contained flaws that could be used to generate attacks.

WG 23 has produced 3 editions of TR 24772 (the last one being TR 24772-1:2019, TR 24772-2:2020 and TR 24772-3:2020), but there are vulnerabilities that still need to be identified, and programming languages that still need to be documented with regards to vulnerabilities.

In addition ISO and IEC have changed the requirements for a Technical Report. In the 2021 Directives, they have stated that new technical reports can no longer provide guidance nor requirements. WG 23 has therefore in the position where it must make the 24772 series into international standards.

At the same time, we are hoping that we will be able to make all of these documents freely available.

2.2. ACHIEVEMENTS

WG 23 has published the first edition of TR 24772-1, -2 and -3 after splitting the original TR 24772 project and the TR into Part 1, language independent part, and Parts 2, 3, 4, 8, 10 and 11 for language-specific vulnerability descriptions for Ada, C, Python, Fortran, C++ and Java.

2.3. RESOURCES

Five national bodies have participated in the WG 23 meetings this year: Austria, Canada, Italy, UK, and the USA, as well as several liaisons.

Over the last several years WG 23 has made Web conferencing capabilities available for those that are finding it difficult to travel. At a typical WG 23, one-third to one-half of all participates are remote, but still participate meaningfully in the meeting. WG 23 finds that mixed-mode meetings work well in developing technical content. WG 23 would like to thank ISO for the Web conferencing support.

Of course, with the world-wide pandemic, WG 23 is holding all meetings virtually.

Liaison with five SC22 Language groups, and four groups outside of SC22 have been established. Liaisons fill a valuable role in that they identify the vulnerabilities that exist (and do not exist) in their language, produce the primary documentation of those vulnerabilities and turn them into the relevant language-dependent part in conjunction with the core team through the liaison individual.

Current WG 23 liaisons are:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Group** |  | **Name/Type** |  | **Person assigned** |
| SC 22/WG4 |  | Cobol |  | Robert Karlin, |
| SC 22/WG5 |  | Fortran |  | Dan Nagel |
| SC 22/WG9 |  | Ada |  | Erhard Ploedereder |
| SC 22/ WG14 |  | C |  | Clive Pygott |
| SC 22/ WG 21 |  | C++ |  | Group |
| Ada Europe |  |  |  | Erhard Ploedereder |
| MISRA |  |  |  | Clive Pygott |
|  |  |  |  |  |

Ada Europe

**3. FOCUS NEXT WORK PERIOD**

3.1.  DELIVERABLES

WG 23 has the following documents published:

JTC 1 24772-1:2019, *Guidance to Avoiding Vulnerabilities in Programming Languages – Part 1: Language Independent Guidance*

JTC 1 24772-2:2020, *Guidance to Avoiding Vulnerabilities in Programming Languages – Part 2, Vulnerability descriptions for programming language Ada*

JTC 1 24772-3:2020, *Guidance to Avoiding Vulnerabilities in Programming Languages – Part 3, Vulnerability descriptions for programming language C*

*ISO/IEC 17960, Code Signing for Source Code.* This project is to produce an International Standard, and the standard has been published.

WG 23 is working on the following parts of 24772:

JTC 1 24772-4, *Guidance to Avoiding Vulnerabilities in Programming Languages – Part 4: Vulnerability descriptions for programming language Python.*

JTC 1 24772-8, *Guidance to Avoiding Vulnerabilities in Programming Languages – Part 8: Vulnerability descriptions for programming language Fortran.*

JTC 1 24772-10, *Guidance to Avoiding Vulnerabilities in Programming Languages – Part 10: Vulnerability descriptions for programming language C++.*

JTC 1 24772-11, *Guidance to Avoiding Vulnerabilities in Programming Languages – Part 11: Vulnerability descriptions for programming language Java.*

3.2.  STRATEGIES

WG 23 decided in 2015 that a core document and seven language-specific annexes, with at least two or three more in planning, creates a maintenance burden that makes it difficult to keep all portions of the document up to date in a single document.

WG 23 therefore decided to split TR 24772 into a series of parts, as follows (see also clause 4.1 for the official request for SC 22 action):

* TR24772-1 *Programming languages — Guidance to avoiding vulnerabilities in programming languages – Part 1: Language Independent Guidance*
* TR24772-2 *Programming languages — Guidance to avoiding vulnerabilities in programming languages – Part 2: Ada*
* TR24772-3 *Programming languages — Guidance to avoiding vulnerabilities in programming languages – Part 3: C*
* TR24772-4 *Programming languages — Guidance to avoiding vulnerabilities in programming languages through – Part 4: Python*
* TR24772-5 *Programming languages — Guidance to avoiding vulnerabilities in programming languages – Part 5: Ruby*
* TR24772-6 *Programming languages — Guidance to avoiding vulnerabilities in programming languages – Part 6: SPARK*
* TR24772-7 *Programming languages — Guidance to avoiding vulnerabilities in programming languages – Part 7: PHP*
* TR24772-8 *Programming languages — Guidance to avoiding vulnerabilities in programming languages – Part 8: Fortran*
* TR24772-9 *Programming languages — Guidance to avoiding vulnerabilities in programming languages – Part 9: COBOL*
* TR24772-10 *Programming languages — Guidance to avoiding vulnerabilities in programming languages – Part 10: C++.*
* 24772-11 *Programming languages — Guidance to avoiding vulnerabilities in programming languages – Part 11: Java.*   
  This is a new request to SC 22.

Once TR 24772-1, TR 24772-2 and TR 24772-3 were published, ISO refused free availability for the technical reports. Then for 2021, ISO refuses to publish technical reports that contain guidance, which is what all these documents provide. Hence, WG 23 wishes to publish all of these documents as freely available international standards. At the time of this report, WG 23 is submitting 24772-1 to SC 22 for registration as a NP and for an immediate DIS ballot.

Within the next 4 months, WG 23 expects to submit the following documents for NWIP ballot and simultaneous DIS ballot:

* 24772-2 *Programming languages – Guidance to avoiding vulnerabilities in programming languages – Part 2 Ada*
* 24772-2 *Programming languages – Guidance to avoiding vulnerabilities in programming languages – Part 3 C*
* 24772-2 *Programming languages – Guidance to avoiding vulnerabilities in programming languages – Part 6 SPARK*
* 24772-2 *Programming languages – Guidance to avoiding vulnerabilities in programming languages – Part 4 Python*

3.3.  RISKS

Progress on Parts 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 10, and 11 for which work items are allocated are showing reasonable progress. Editorial and content development meetings are being held tri-weekly for Python, C++ and Java. Some of the other parts for which work items have not been initiated require the identification of resources within other working groups or external experts to undertake the work.

3.4.  OPPORTUNITIES

Since the 2019 SC 22 plenary, the US national body has provided resources to develop a Python part, and to develop a Java part.

3.5.  WORK PROGRAM PRIORITIES

See 4.1.

**4. OTHER ITEMS**

4.1. POSSIBLE ACTION REQUESTS AT FORTHCOMING 2020 PLENARY



4.2.  ELECTRONIC DOCUMENT DISTRIBUTION

Documents relevant to ISO/IEC/JTC1/SC22 processing are being entered on the ISO eCommittee web site for WG 23. WG 23 conducts some of its detailed technical discussion using the email reflector maintained by Keld Simonsen. WG 23 also has a Web site at http://open-std.org/jtc1/sc22/wg23.

4.4. RECENT MEETINGS

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| No | Date | Place | # attendees | Host |
| 57 | 27-28 Aug 2018 | Zoom | 6 | Convenor |
| 58 | 8-9 Nov 2018 | San Diego CA with WG 21 | 9 | USA, WG 21 |
| 59 | 21 January 2019 | Zoom Meeting | 5 | N/A |
| 60 | Cancelled |  |  |  |
| 61 | 20-22 Feb 2019 | Kona, Hawaii with WG 21 | 7 | USA, WG 21 |
| 62 | 6 May 2019 | Zoom Meeting | 5 | N/A |
| 63 | 16-18 July 2019 | Cologne Germany with WG 21 |  | Germany, WG 21 |
| 64 | Cancelled |  |  |  |
| 65 | 15 October 2019 | Zoom Meeting | 6 | N/A |
| 66 | 6-9 November 2020 | Belfast, UK with WG 21 | 6 | UK, WG 21 |
| 67 | 10-12 Feb 2020 | Prague, Czech Republic with WG 21 | 15 | Czech, WG 21 |
| 68 | 23-24 Feb 2020 | Las Vegas NV with INCITS Fortran | 6 | US, INCITS |
| 69 | 19 May 2020 | Zoom Meeting | 5 | Convenor |
| 70 | 15 Sep 2020 | Zoom Meeting | 6 | Convenor |
| 71 | 9 Nov 2020 | Zoom Meeting | 6 | Convenor |
| 72 | 22 Feb 2021 | Zoom Meeting | 5 | Convenor |
| 73 | 21 Jul 2021 | Zoom Meeting |  |  |

In addition, more than 50 subgroup meetings (on average weekly with 3 or 4 language groups meeting every third or fourth week) have been held with dedicated language experts to progress the development of Part 10 C++, Part 4 Python, Part 6 SPARK and Part 11 Java.

4.5. FUTURE MEETINGS

Due to the pandemic, all WG 23 meetings are being held virtually in small language-specific groups ranging from 5 to 12 individuals. When a general topic arises that needs a formal decision, a targeted meeting is called.

Once the pandemic is declared over and ISO/IEC permit face-to-face meetings we will resume having formal in-person WG meetings.