



IAF.18. Communiqué

The IAF 18th General Assembly was held in the Cape Town International Convention Centre, Cape Town, South Africa on the 9th and 11th October 2004. The meeting, which was hosted by the South African National Accreditation System (SANAS), was attended by over 130 participants from 41 economies and 7 international organisations. A large number of other meetings were held in association with the IAF 18th General Assembly, including the IAF Technical Committee, the ILAC General Assembly and a Joint IAF-ILAC General Assembly.

The General Assembly was pleased to re-elect Ms. Elva Nilsen, as the IAF Vice Chair for a further 3 year term. The meeting also thanked the former Director representing Accreditation Bodies from Low and Medium Income Economies, Ms. Veronica Garcia De Solorzano of ema, who was stepping down after three years in that role. Ms. Solorzano had also been Chair of the IAF Development Support Committee (DSC), one of the three major IAF Committees, as well as being the IAF Co-Chair of the Joint IAF-ILAC Development Support Committee. The General Assembly welcomed the appointment of the new DSC Chair, Mrs. Beatrice Mutabazi, representing the Southern African Development Community Cooperation in Accreditation (SADCA). Mr. Girdhar Gyani of NABCB was elected as Director representing Accreditation Bodies from Low and Medium Income Economies.

Membership of IAF continues to grow. The General Assembly was able to welcome the admission of PNAC (Pakistan) as a new Accreditation Body member, as well as PEFC (Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification) as a new Association member. Under the recently revised membership categories Observer membership is now available and the first organization to be offered this is the CAC-MAS-Q (Central Asian Cooperation on Metrology, Accreditation, Standardization) for an interim period. Observer membership is a special class of membership for situations where the Board of Directors believes it is in the best interests of Members of IAF to develop closer relationships with another body.

This now brings the number of IAF members to a total of 65 Members, these being 44 Accreditation Body Members, 15 Association Members (6 Certification/registration Body Associations & 9 Industry/User Associations), 4 Regional Groups with Special Recognition, 1 Partner Member and 1 Observer Member.

A major highlight of the Annual Meetings week was the extension of the IAF Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA) to now include Environmental Management Systems and Product Certification. As a result of these programs becoming operational 28 IAF Members were able to sign EMS MLA Certificates and 21 Members signed Product MLA Certificates at a ceremony during the IAF-ILAC Gala Dinner. A list of signatories to the two new arrangements can be found on the IAF web site.

The Romanian Accreditation Association (RENAR) and the Hong Kong Accreditation Service (HKAS) were also both admitted to membership of the IAF Quality Management System Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (QMS MLA) at the same ceremony.

During the week of the Annual Meetings the IAF Technical Committee resolved that a joint IAF-ISO Communiqué should be issued confirming the decision that there will be a phased transition period of 18 months for implementing the revision to ISO 14001, following its publication, possibly towards the end of this year or early in 2005. The 18 month period is intended to facilitate the transition during the normal certification cycle. It was further agreed that draft IAF Guidance on the transition to ISO 14001, which has been prepared by the IAF Technical Committee, should be circulated to all IAF Members for ballot approval prior to its being published and made available to all interested parties.

The General Assembly agreed to endorse the adoption of ISO/IEC 17011 *Conformity Assessment - General requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies*, for IAF use. ISO/IEC 17011 replaces ISO/IEC Guide 58, ISO/IEC Guide 61, and ISO/IEC/TR 17010. In this respect it was decided that the IAF Accreditation Body Members shall fulfil the requirements of ISO/IEC 17011 by 1 January 2006. The peer evaluations conducted in 2005 by IAF and regional MLA groups will be based on ISO/IEC 17011. However, nonconformities shall only be raised against the corresponding requirements of ISO/IEC Guide 61 as guided by IAF Guidance and other findings against ISO/IEC 17011 will be raised as concerns. It was further agreed that the MLA signatories shall be able to demonstrate their compliance with ISO/IEC 17011 to the regional MLA committees or the IAF MLA Management Committee (MLA MC) by 1 January 2006.

The General Assembly resolved that the MLA MC, in cooperation with regional MLA groups, will continue to evaluate the implementation of the IAF Policy on Cross Frontier Accreditation by each MLA signatory. The regional MLA groups will report the progress of the evaluation/monitoring to the MLA MC for review by June 2005. This follows the IAF MLA MC conducting a survey in May 2004 of all IAF MLA signatories as Foreign ABs regarding the implementation of the Guidance. The progress made to date is very positive with all 32 signatories of the IAF QMS MLA having adopted the IAF guidance, put their policy in place and implementing it as required.

In order to further assist the IAF member Accreditation Bodies (ABs) to implement the IAF guidance, a Cross Frontier Practices Task Group (CFP) has also been established. The mission of the CFP is to study and prepare guidance on the best practices for the implementation of the Cross Frontier Accreditation Guidance and to provide information to the IAF MLA MC to assist in the monitoring of its implementation.

The newly revised IAF Procedure for the Investigation and Resolution of Complaints was approved by the IAF General Assembly and will now be published and implemented for use. The new procedure will focus on appointing, in the first instance, the relevant Regional Accreditation Group to investigate a complaint made against any of its members. Alternatively, if the subject of the complaint is not a member of a Regional Group the MLA MC will appoint a "Designated Investigator" to undertake the enquiry. It is expected that the revised procedure will reduce the time taken to resolve issues raised.

The Joint IAF-ILAC Working Group (JWG) for the Harmonization of Peer Evaluation Processes has successfully completed the development of harmonized evaluation requirements and procedures (known as the A-series documents) which will be published jointly by IAF and ILAC. These documents will be the first joint publications issued by the two international accreditation organizations. The A-series documents (A1, A2 and A3) will become the main part of the IAF MLA Policies and Procedures (P&P) document and will be required to be implemented by IAF MLA signatories no later than 1 January 2006.

As a result of the Joint IAF-ILAC Guidance on the Application of ISO/IEC 17020 - *General criteria for the operation of various types of bodies performing inspection* now being completed, the General Assembly decided that the work on the Inspection MLA should be managed by using the existing MLA structures of IAF and ILAC. However IAF has recommended to ILAC to consider having joint processes for the IAF MLA MC and ILAC AMC (Arrangement Management Committee) to review peer evaluation reports, including a single joint decision making process to complete the management structure of the jointly owned IAF MLA and ILAC MRA (Mutual Recognition Arrangement) for Inspection.

IAF will next meet in Auckland, New Zealand, for its 19th Annual Meeting, between the 11th and 21st of September, 2005. Members accepted an invitation to hold the 2006 meeting in Mexico. Each of these meetings will be held in association with ILAC.

Further information about IAF may be obtained from the IAF web site at <<http://www.iaf.nu>>, or by contacting the IAF Secretary at email <secretary@iaf.nu>.