



ACCREDITATION – DELIVERING COMPETENCE, ENSURING TRUST

June 9th 2009

June 9th has been designated as *International Accreditation Day* by the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) and International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC). The value of accreditation has been widely recognised and adopted by economies and societies worldwide. This is reflected in the celebrations planned which range from promotional events and seminars for Industry and Regulatory officials, to press campaigns in over 50 countries worldwide. These awareness-raising events contribute to a greater recognition of accreditation, in particular from national Regulators, who are adopting accreditation as a mechanism to deliver credible solutions that can support or act as an alternative to Legislation. This is borne out by a recent survey of National Accreditation Bodies which reported 68% acceptance levels of accredited services, an increase of 27% since 2002.

This year's theme for Accreditation Day is '**competence**' - a core principle of what accreditation delivers. Technical and operational competence, as it relates to an organisation's ability to provide the market with quality products and services, is determined by accreditation. The concept of competence is associated with an organisation's ability to demonstrate its integrity and understanding of its procedures and capability to plan, to be proactive, and to ensure that its technical and management systems are effective in meeting the organisation's objectives and vision. In this way, industry and governments can have greater confidence in the products and services delivered by accredited organizations to their clients.

There is growing recognition of both the value of accreditation and the ILAC and IAF multilateral agreements (MLA) which now operate throughout many economies. For example, a new Regulation in **Europe** provides a legal framework for the provision of accreditation services within the Community. In the **Asia-Pacific** region, accreditation has been endorsed, and is now used to underpin the conformity assessment component of the Asia Pacific Economic Community (APEC) agreements. The Association of **South East Asian** Nations (ASEAN) has included accreditation in their Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) for electrical and electronic equipment as a means of meeting the mandatory requirements of each member and to facilitate the implementation of the ASEAN Free Trade Area. In the **Americas** and the **Caribbean**, the Inter American Accreditation Cooperation (IAAC) has successfully communicated the value of accreditation to Regulators and government entities to ensure that they increasingly rely on results from accredited laboratories to meet mandatory requirements in such diverse areas as food safety, environmental protection, toy safety and the quality of concrete, steel and electrical products.

The issue of competence is clearly demonstrated when examining real life situations that, without this confidence, would be disastrous for the users. The World Anti Doping Association (WADA) monitored Drug testing at the Olympics and relied on competent testing laboratories to deliver precise results, while the World Health Organisation (WHO) depends on competent Public Health laboratories to accurately diagnose the H1N1 Virus.

As we look to the future, the work of Accreditation bodies will seek to build on this recognition from Regulators and industry and to continue the development of accreditation frameworks in the developing economies. At the global level, closer co-operation is to be fostered between ILAC and IAF, with the aim of strengthening the multilateral / mutual international recognition through their respective Arrangements. In this way, the goal of **TESTED ONCE AND ACCEPTED EVERYWHERE'** is realized.

In the Caribbean, the 2009 International Accreditation Day will be commemorated with a conference entitled "**Competence and Quality - A Guarantee of Excellence**". The CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality (CROSQ), Jamaican National Agency for Accreditation (JANAAC) and the Trinidad and Tobago Laboratory Accreditation Service (TTLABS) are collaborating to host this event on **Tuesday 9th June 2009** at the **Terra Nova Hotel** in New Kingston, **Jamaica**. The day's events will begin with the launch of JANAAC as Jamaica's Accreditation entity and will continue into the afternoon with a series of technical presentations examining the role of Accreditation and the importance of competence in providing Quality in testing services.

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