

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

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Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade

ACTIVITIES OF INTERNATIONAL BODIES IN THE FIELD OF TESTING AND INSPECTION

Note by the Secretariat

1. A note on the activities of international and regional bodies in the field of testing and inspection was issued in February 1982 (TBT/W/43). Developments in the relevant activities of the International Laboratory Accreditation Conference (ILAC), the International Standardization Organization (ISO) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) are described in the present note in response to the request of the Committee at its meeting of 26 February 1985 (TBT/M/18, paragraph 38).

International Laboratory Accreditation Conference (ILAC)

2. The eighth annual meeting of ILAC took place in London on 22 to 26 October 1984. Sessions of the Conference will be held in future on a two-year cycle. The status of the Conference as an informal international meeting is maintained. Its principle aim of achieving the international acceptance of test results contains the following key elements:

- promoting the exchange and dissemination of information and ideas on laboratory accreditation, laboratory accreditation systems and other arrangements for assessing the quality of test results.
- facilitating and encouraging the acceptance of test results from accredited laboratories, inter alia, through bilateral and multilateral recognition of laboratory accreditation systems.
- co-operating and collaborating with interested international organizations on matters related to laboratory accreditation and other testing arrangements.

3. The Conference has pursued its technical work by means of Task Forces. At present the work of Task Force C and Task Force F is of particular interest to the Committee. Task Force C has produced during the course of its history, a series of reports relating to the principles and practices in laboratory accreditation which were transferred to ISO for publication as a single consolidated document. It has been requested to continue its work over the next two years with emphasis on the following specific subjects:

- (a) assessor training;
- (b) proficiency testing;
- (c) complaints and disputes;

- (d) classification of directories;
- (e) field laboratories;
- (f) laboratory test data control;
- (g) surveillance of accredited laboratories

It will also arrange a seminar on "The Development, Operation and Use of Training Courses for Laboratory Assessors" in conjunction with the 1986 Task Force C meeting.

4. Task Force F has been charged with the collection and analysis of information regarding different types of bilateral and multilateral arrangements; mutual acceptance of test results in various product areas involved in international trade; documentation of different types of bilateral/multilateral arrangements. The Task Force's report presented to ILAC 84 was transmitted to ISO for publication as an information document. In ILAC 84, the Task Force was charged with the responsibility for presentation to ILAC 86, of:

- collecting and analysing information on the implementation and outcome of mutual agreements between accreditation systems with emphasis on identifying those features relevant to the successful implementation and outcome of the agreements.
- collecting, analysing and disseminating information on how accreditation bodies develop and maintain confidence in each others systems, for example, by examination of relevant case histories.
- investigating the possibility of cooperation with appropriate international bodies, for example, by arranging a seminar in 1985/86 dealing with such topics as providing a sound technical base for acceptance of test reports and transforming recognition of technical competence into acceptance of such reports in international trade.

5. A new Task Force G was established by ILAC 84, to develop two separate documents giving general recommendations for:

- acceptance of laboratory accreditation bodies; and
- operation of laboratory accreditation systems

6. Activities of other task forces are as follows: Task Force D developed a report entitled "Guidelines for the Development of a Quality Manual for Testing Laboratories". This report has been transferred to ISO for processing and publication as an ISO/IEC Guide. The report of Task Force E on "Guidelines for the Determination of Recalibration Intervals of Measuring Equipment Used in Testing Laboratories" was published by OIML as International Document No. 10. In addition, an Editorial Committee is in charge of updating, improvement and publication of the International Directory of Laboratory Accreditation Systems and Other Schemes for Assessment of Testing Laboratories. ILAC 84 asked ISO to publish the directory for at least the 1985 edition.

7. The future of ILAC was discussed respectively during the plenary session of the Conference in 1983 and at the Open Forum held on the subject in London in May 1984. In this respect ILAC 84 resolved:

- that no steps should be taken to institutionalise the Conference in a corporate form involving the creation of a constitution, employment of full time executive and secretariat staff and involving payment of dues, subscriptions or regular financial contribution;
- that the Conference should continue for the foreseeable future to organise its activities and carry out its work in line with the pattern which has developed over recent Conferences, namely to meet in Plenary Session at Conferences organised by host countries at 2-yearly intervals; to carry out its technical work by means of Task Forces and associated Working Groups, the terms of reference and the work programme of which are established by Resolution at the plenary sessions; and to delegate to a Planning Committee established in accordance with Resolution 11/81 (formerly G 01/81) and 6/82 - chaired in turn by the next host country - the responsibility for overseeing and coordinating the implementation of Resolutions adopted by the Conference;
- that the increasing emphasis on technical and professional aspects of laboratory accreditation in the work of the Task Forces and Conferences complemented by technical seminars, laboratory accreditation training and programmes of visits to laboratories, test houses and similar institutions, should continue separately or in conjunction with future conferences;
- that the publication, distribution and application of the results of the Conference in the form of international standards, guides and information documents is an essential and important element in the Conference's aims. The Conference therefore whilst not excluding the possibility of publishing itself certain documents, looked principally to ISO/IEC, OIML and other international bodies to help achieve this while ensuring the opportunity for full participation of ILAC delegates and full consideration of the ILAC developed proposals in the standard development process;
- that future Plenary Sessions of the Conference will continue to be organised and chaired by host countries in accordance with Resolutions adopted by the Conference and each next host country will also continue to be fully responsible for chairing and providing secretarial support for the Planning Committee. Recognising that the latter may place a heavy administrative burden on host countries the Conference resolved that individual host countries that wish to, may request administrative and secretariat support from international bodies such as ISO and UN/ECE for the holding of Planning Committee meetings between Plenary Sessions providing that this assistance was confined to the organization and not the conduct of such meetings.

International Standardization Organization (ISO)

8. In view of the international developments within ISO and in other international fora on subjects relating to product certification, laboratory accreditation and quality assurance assessment, the ISO Council decided to expand the terms of reference of the ISO Committee on Certification (ISO/CERTICO) and changed the name of this Council committee to the Committee on Conformity Assessment (ISO/CASCO). Terms of reference of ISO/CASCO are:

- to study means of assessing the conformity of products, processes, services and quality systems to appropriate standards or other technical specifications;
- to prepare international guides relating to the testing, inspection and certification of products, processes and services, and to the operation and assessment of testing laboratories, inspection bodies, certification bodies and quality systems;
- to promote mutual recognition and acceptance of national and regional conformity assessment systems, and the appropriate use of international standards for testing, inspection, certification, quality systems and related purposes (ISO Council resolution 3/1985).

9. ISO proceeds with its activities of the preparation of standards related to products (terminology, test methods, requirements) which can form the basis for any testing carried out for mutual acceptance, either on a bilateral or multilateral basis.

10. In addition, it has prepared standard-type documents, including procedural rules and general guidelines, some of which originated from requests formulated as a result of International Laboratory Accreditation Conferences. The ISO/IEC Guides relevant to testing and inspection, published since 1982, are:

- ISO/IEC Guide 25 - "General Requirements for the Technical Competence of Testing Laboratories", Second edition, 1982;
- ISO/IEC Guide 36 - "Preparation of Standard Methods of Measuring Performance (SMMP) of Consumer Goods", First edition, 1982;
- ISO/IEC Guide 38 - "General Requirements for the Acceptance of Testing Laboratories", First edition, 1983;
- ISO/IEC Guide 39 - "General Requirements for the Acceptance of Inspection Bodies", First edition, 1983;
- ISO/IEC Guide 43 - "Development and Operation of Laboratory Proficiency Testing", First edition, 1984.

Furthermore, a draft of ISO/IEC Guidelines for the Presentation of Test Results will be submitted to ISO/CASCO for approval at its first meeting scheduled for 9-10 May 1985.

International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC)

11. Further to its participation in the activities of the ISO in the field of testing and inspection (preparation of Guides ISO/IEC), the IEC has set up two systems of its own: the IEC Quality Assessment System for Electronic Components (IECQ) and the IEC System for Conformity Testing to Standards for Safety of Electrical Equipment (IECEE).

12. The object of the IEC Quality Assessment System for Electronic Components is to facilitate trade, both national and international, by providing the supply of electronic components of assessed quality made and handled by approved manufacturers and distributors, which buyers may use confidently without further testing. The system is intended initially for mass-produced components, but may embrace components made for special purposes. It operates under the authority of the Council of the IEC. Overall management is by the Certification Management Committee (CMC), which comprises representatives of each participating country. At present twenty-one countries are participants to the system.

13. The IEC System for Conformity Testing to Standards for Safety of Electrical Equipment is the outcome of the integration of the International Commission for Conformity Certification of Electrical Equipment (CEE) within the IEC. The object of the IECEE is to facilitate international trade in electrical equipment normally used in homes, offices, workshops and similar locations. In pursuance of this, the IECEE operates and maintains a scheme for the recognition of test results indicating that one or more specimens of certain electrical equipment were tested and found to be in conformity with specific standards, primarily with regard to safety. It is applicable to such categories of equipment as approved by its Management Committee and notified to the Council of the IEC. Its member organizations are the National Committee of the IEC or a body notified to the IEC by the National Committee of IEC.