

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

RESTRICTED

TBT/W/43

15 February 1982

Special Distribution

Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade

TESTING AND INSPECTION

Note by the Secretariat

1. At its meeting of 20-22 October 1981, the Committee requested the secretariat to prepare, for consideration at a future meeting, a study on activities in the field of testing and inspection (TBT/M/8, paragraphs 47 and 48). This note has been prepared in response to this request.

2. The secretariat has already provided some information on relevant activities of international and regional bodies (see, for example, TBT/W/8 and Add.1 and TBT/W/30 and Corr.1-3). The paper on international standards prepared for the Committee's meeting of March 1982 also gives some information on international standards which include or deal exclusively with testing and test methods (TBT/W/45). The present paper gives supplementary information on the activities of international and regional bodies. Documentation on which this paper is based can be consulted in the secretariat.

International Laboratory Accreditation Conference (ILAC)

3. The Committee has been informed about previous meetings of ILAC (see TBT/M/6, paragraph 23). The fifth annual meeting of the Conference was held in Mexico City in October 1981. The Conference heard reports on the activities of its subsidiary bodies and adopted a number of resolutions.

4. Two of these bodies are of particular interest to the Committee, the first being Task Force C, which had been asked to work on:

- (1) guidelines for the operation of laboratory accreditation systems,
- (2) criteria for operation of internal quality control systems for laboratories,
- (3) criteria for arranging the initial and subsequent calibration of the equipment used by testing laboratories,
- (4) criteria for operation of proficiency testing programs by accreditation systems.

This Working Group is looking into conditions under which it would be possible, from a technical point of view, for test results issued in other countries to be accepted, a matter dealt with in Article 5.2 of the Agreement. The Working Group developed a model which is contained in Annex 1 together with an example of how this would be applied in a particular case. Further detailed work in this area will be undertaken in the coming year.

5. The second subsidiary body of particular interest is the Working Group on Bilateral Agreements which is collecting and analysing information concerning bilateral and other agreements for the reciprocal recognition of laboratory accreditation systems and mutual acceptance of test reports issued by test laboratories accredited under laboratory accreditation systems. The Group will continue this work and is to identify the common elements in and the significant differences between the agreements reviewed.

6. In addition, the Conference heard statements from national delegations giving details of testing arrangements in their country.

7. It may finally be mentioned that the Conference adopted resolutions organizing its future work - a Planning Committee was set up and procedures adopted for the work of the various subsidiary bodies.

International Standardization Organization (ISO)

8. A considerable number of standards drawn up by the ISO deal with test methods for products for which there exist ISO standards. Examples of test standards appear in document TBT/W/45. In addition, the ISO has written several Guides covering subjects in the area of testing, i.e. "Guide 4, Preparation of standard methods of measuring performance of consumer goods (SMMP)"; "Guide 12, Comparative testing of consumer products"; "Guide 24, Guidelines for the acceptance of testing and inspection agencies by certification bodies"; "Guide 25, Guidelines for assessing the technical competence of testing laboratories".

9. ISO Guide 25 is currently under revision in the framework of a joint ISO/CERTICO-ILAC ad hoc group which is expected to issue a revised draft following its second meeting on 5-6 March 1982. The UN/ECE (see below) has also expressed an interest in the revision of ISO Guide 25.

International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC)

10. The IEC is operating an International Quality Assessment System for Electronic Components, which is open to participation by all members of IEC. The System was described in document TBT/W/8/Add.1.

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE)

11. At its ninth session, on 3-6 November 1981, the Group of Experts on Standardization Policies of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe adopted proposals for work in the field of testing which are reproduced in Annex 2. The Seventh Meeting of Government Officials to be held in Geneva on 26-30 April 1982, will consider the holding of an ECE-sponsored seminar on testing in connexion with ILAC/83, which will be held in Czechoslovakia.

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

12. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development is currently implementing a Chemicals Programme initiated in the early 1970's, on which information was circulated to the members of the Committee in document TBT/Spec/2. One of the underlying objectives of the programme is the elimination of non-tariff barriers to trade. The major part of the programme is directed toward reaching international agreements on such areas as test methods, good laboratory practices, minimum data requirements for new chemicals and principles governing confidentiality of data. In May 1981, the Council of OECD adopted a decision (C(81)30 (Final) on mutual acceptance of test data when prepared according to the procedures defined in two texts annexed to the decision, one on good laboratory practice and the other on test guidelines. The decision was adopted unanimously, which means that it is mandatory on all OECD member States. Each country must adapt its national legislation to conform to the requirements of the decision and its annexes.

13. Work has also been undertaken in the OECD on a minimum package pre-marketing set of data (MPD), to be mutually accepted as a set of reference material for tested products, and on an agreement on confidentiality aspects of the communication of test results.

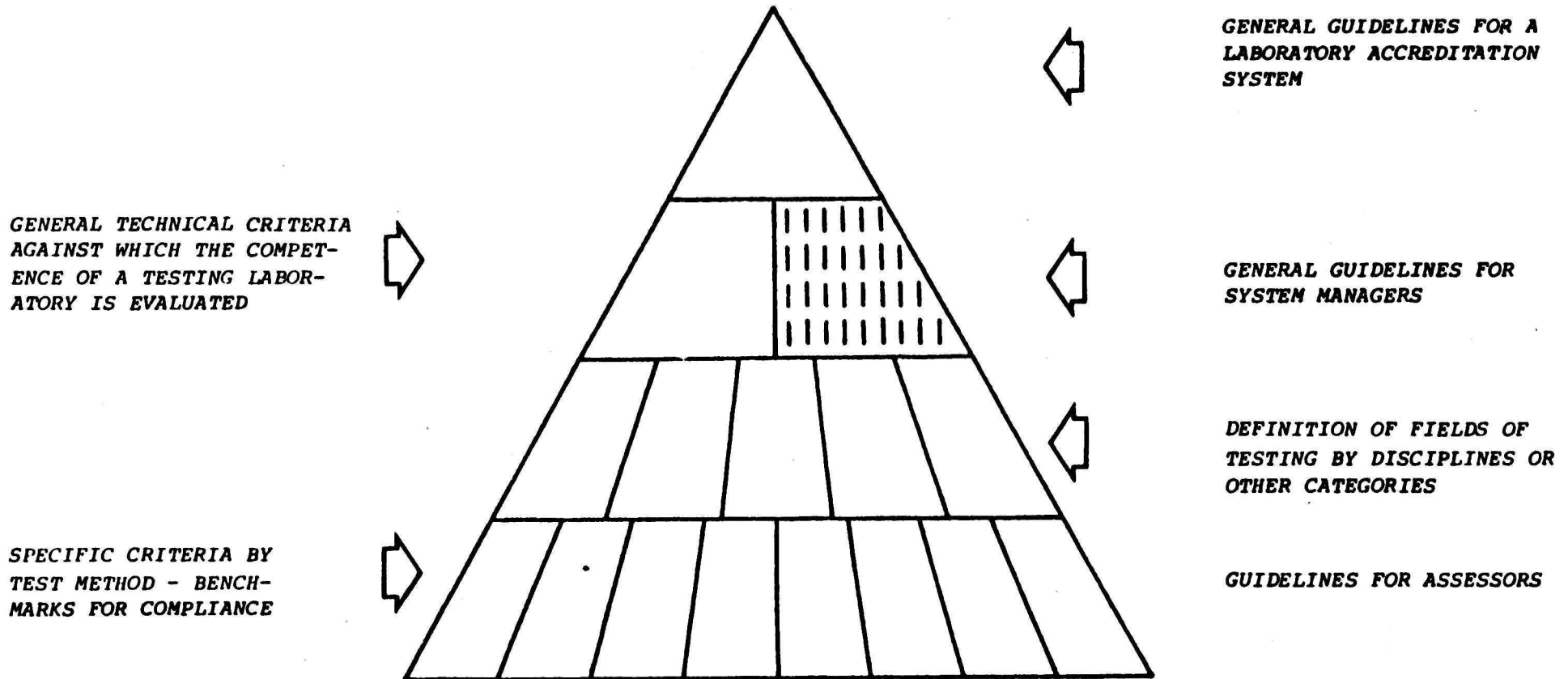


FIGURE 1 LABORATORY ACCREDITATION MODEL

GENERAL TECHNICAL CRITERIA

INFORMATION DISCLOSED

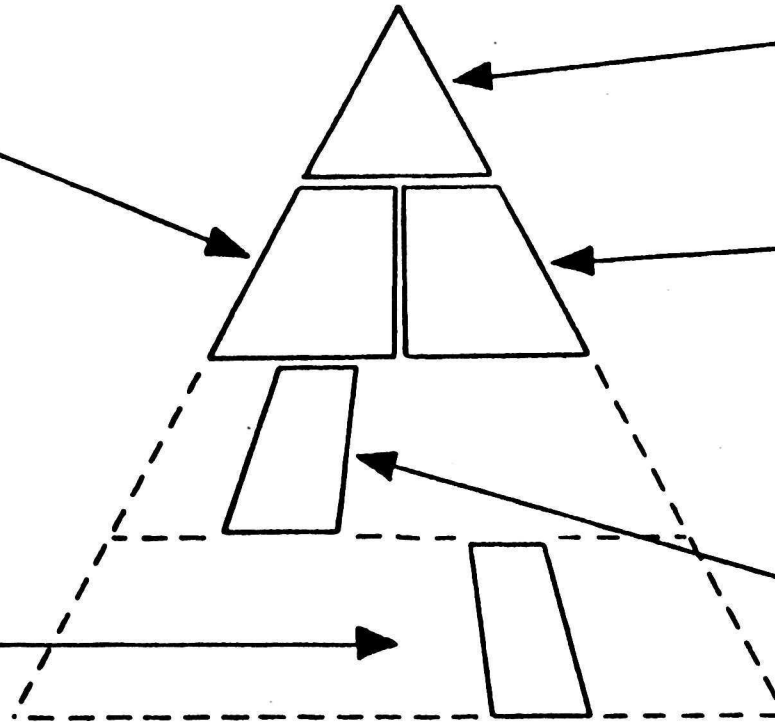
- . lab director and supervisory staff
- . equipment
- . calibration records
- . test reports

CRITERIA

- . the human and physical resources are appropriate for the task
- . equipment is calibrated (verified) periodically
- . test reports contain all information and are signed by responsible individual

SPECIFIC CRITERIA FOR ASTM TEST METHOD C177

- . lab director - experience in thermal process measurement
- . suitably trained technical staff
- . hot plate conforms to the dimensional and thermal requirements of C177
- . calibration - SRM 1450
- . test report - thickness, ΔT , thermal conductivity, etc
- . precision and accuracy of test method ($\pm n\%$)



SYSTEM GUIDELINES

- . Accredit using teams of 'peer' assessors and proficiency testing

SYSTEM MANAGER GUIDELINES

ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

- . on-site visit
 - interviews
 - record review
 - observe performance
- . proficiency testing
 - sample material
 - frequency
 - data analysis technique

DISCIPLINE

- . thermal conductivity testing of construction materials

FIGURE 2 EXAMPLE - APPLICATION OF LABORATORY ACCREDITATION MODEL TO A SPECIFIC THERMAL TRANSMISSION PROPERTIES TEST METHOD

ANNEX 2

Proposals for work on testing adopted by the UN/ECE Group of Experts
on Standardization Policies at its Ninth Session (3-6 November 1981)
(Extract from document STAND/GE.1/19)

Work should be concentrated on the implications of testing activities for international trade and on the co-ordination of government policies in that sphere. Government authorities are involved in testing activities at several levels, i.e.

- management or supervision of public testing laboratories;
- technical regulations for the conduct of laboratory tests;
- management or supervision of laboratory accreditation systems;
- conduct of tests at the request of government authorities in connection with public purchases.

Draft recommendations on three topics should be drawn up for submission to the Seventh Meeting of Government Officials [of UN/ECE] as follows:

- (a) to supply information on national testing organizations, taking into account the inventory published under the auspices of ILAC and initiating a survey on the organization of testing and other relevant aspects of the subject;
- (b) to take note of work begun within the framework of ILAC, CEN and other organizations to study bilateral or multilateral agreements on the recognition of test results or the recognition of laboratory accreditation systems; and
- (c) to take note of the resolutions adopted by the ILAC/81 Conference in Mexico City, particularly as regards adoption of procedures for planning and executing technical work on laboratory accreditation, and to confirm the interest taken by UN/ECE in the revision of ISO Guide 25 and the preparation of an international standard on the presentation of test results.