



IAF.17. Communiqué

The IAF 17th Annual Meeting was held in the Forum Hotel, Bratislava, Slovakia on 19 and 21 September 2003. The meeting was attended by 115 participants from 45 economies and 6 international organisations. A large number of other meetings were held in association with the IAF 17 meeting, including the ILAC General Assembly and a Joint IAF-ILAC General Assembly.

The Annual Meeting was pleased to re-elect Chairman, Dr Thomas Facklam, as the IAF Chair for a further 3 year term. The meeting also thanked the 1997-1998 IAF Chairman, Mr Harry Gundlach who was retiring from RvA, and the former Director and Treasurer Mr Joseph Dunbeck of ANSI-RAB, who was retiring after five years in that role, for their enormous contributions to IAF. Mr Anthony Craven of JAS-ANZ was elected as Director representing Accreditation Bodies from high income economies.

Membership of the IAF continues to grow at an impressive rate and the Annual Meeting was able to welcome the admission to membership of SA (Slovenia), NAA (Korea), RENAR (Romania) and IAS (Iran) as new Accreditation Body members, as well as EFAC, IFIA, INN as new Association members. This now brings the number of IAF members to a total of 63 Members being 43 Accreditation Body Members (of which 32 are MLA members), 14 Association Members (6 Certification/registration Body Associations & 8 Industry/User Associations), 4 Regional Groups with Special Recognition and 2 Special Recognition Liaison Groups.

A particular highlight of the week was the signing of the IAF Quality Management System Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (QMS MLA) by the Slovak National Accreditation Service (SNAS) Slovakia and the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Labor (BMWA) Austria at a ceremony during the IAF/ILAC Ceremonial Reception.

The Annual Meeting confirmed that the date of 15 December 2003 for transition to ISO 9001: 2000 for accredited certification will not be extended. The meeting also agreed to the new IAF Code of Conduct for immediate implementation. The guidance document on Cross-frontier Accreditation was also voted acceptable by all members with a transition period of six months and implementation from 1 May 2004.

IAF's Technical Committee completed work revising the IAF Guidance on ISO/IEC Guide 61 (for Accreditation Bodies), Guide 62 (for QMS Certification/Registration Bodies) and Guide 66 (for EMS Certification/Registration Bodies). A major improvement in these documents was new guidance on assessing the competence of QMS certification/registration body personnel. This work resulted in Issue 3 of each document being approved by IAF for publication in November, and for implementation one year later. A new Guidance document prepared on the application of ISO/IEC 17024 for the certification of persons was finalised and submitted for ballot.

The Joint Committee for Closer Co-operation between ILAC and IAF (JCCC) met to consider progress on a number of joint initiatives and common procedures for efficiencies. Progress will continue at the next joint meeting scheduled to be held in Cape Town in 2004. It was also agreed that an IAF and ILAC Joint Annual General Assembly will be scheduled in Cape Town 2004.

In 2002 the Joint IAF-ILAC General Assembly discussed having a single combined IAF - ILAC Mark. Members of both organisations have since decided that each organisation shall have separate Marks.

A new IAF Seal and a choice of some 8 new IAF MLA Marks were submitted to members for a 60 day ballot vote. The ballot closed on 16 September 2003 and the results of the new MLA Mark were announced to the IAF General Assembly. The new Seal and MLA Mark will be registered worldwide over the coming months and will then be available to accredited Certification Bodies subject to specific terms and conditions.

The Annual meeting approved the requirements of the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) program - "Arrangement between IAF and GFSI for the GFSI program" to be incorporated into the IAF Product Certification MLA. GFSI was launched in May 2000. GFSI agreed to use the expertise of IAF members and the IAF Product Certification MLA with the requirements of the GFSI Program for food safety schemes.

The Joint IAF-ILAC Development Support Committee, which is responsible for programs to assist developing and emerging accreditation bodies, reviewed the results of a survey on Intelligence System for Accreditation Body's Development (ISABD), are revising the criteria for funding support for developing Accreditation Bodies and developed the work programme for seminars and training for 2004.

The Joint Working Group on accreditation of Inspection Bodies held its third meeting and continued to consider the needs of both IAF and ILAC in the inspection field. Members of the Working Group agreed that this was an effective mechanism for working together cooperatively for the benefit of the members of both organisations and their customers. Common procedures and policy documents are being developed.

Earlier in the year the IAF Executive Committee had initiated a Customer Satisfaction Survey and a findings report was presented to the IAF General Assembly. A new Chairman's Advisory Group (CAG) has been formed which is responsible for advising the IAF Executive Committee on matters related to IAF promotional activities. These activities will include a strategy for raising the awareness of IAF and the benefits of the MLA accreditation framework and will consider the findings of the customer satisfaction survey for any areas that might improve the current system. The Executive Committee shall consider all findings of the customer satisfaction survey and address those matters of interest to all IAF members and stakeholders.

IAF will meet in Cape Town, South Africa, for its 18th Annual Meeting, between 4th and 13th October, 2004. Members accepted invitations to hold the 2005 meeting in New Zealand. 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 Secretariat at email <secretary@accreditationforum.com>.