

COMMUNIQUÉ
24 January 1997

Sixty-two (62) representatives of industry, certification/registration bodies, and accreditation bodies from 30 countries or economics attended the ninth meeting of IAF at Kwa Maritane, South Africa on 22-24 January 1997.

Actions taken move IAF towards its goal of establishing confidence in the accreditation programs of its members and in the programs accredited by them. This will enable conformity assessment results produced in one place to be accepted world wide.

In its meeting, IAF and representatives of the board for the Quality Systems Assessment Recognition (QSAR) program of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), reached agreement to establish a task group in order to determine how they can best serve the conformity assessment needs of industry. The customer-oriented task group will clearly identify the market requirements, propose a solution and validate that solution.

Reports on IAF working groups provided a basis for significant results. An IAF guidance document for certification/registration bodies, based on international guidelines was completed and will be considered for approval by the members. Work on a similar document for accreditation bodies was continued prior to its use in upcoming LAX sponsored evaluations. Additionally, the IAF noted the application of recently ratified policies and procedures for arriving at a multilateral recognition agreement among accreditation bodies, to enable it to begin the work of forming the agreement. Finally, IAF heard reports on the status of trial implementations of alternative methods of assessment as part of the registration process, and of progress on documentation for environmental management systems, survey results related to the development of procedures for evaluation of IAFs progress and value, and other important application activities.

IAF began implementation of its program for multilateral recognition agreement in September, 1996 with acceptance of applications from accreditation bodies who wish to participate in the first evaluations to take place in 1997, to become the first members of the agreement group.

During the course of the meeting, IAF noted that accreditation bodies from twenty-one (21) countries or economics had signed the IAF Memorandum of Understanding committing themselves to IAFs objectives.

The IAF participants elected Harry Gundlach of the Netherlands as its new chairman and John Hulbert, from Australia was elected Vice-Chairman. The IAF also decided to continue its current secretarial arrangement with the US accreditation body representative, while representatives of the IAFs leadership develop a plan for the formal structuring and administration of the IAF, to take effect in 1998.

The next meeting of IAF will be held in Kazusa, Japan on May 28 to 30 1997.