

MULTILATERAL RECOGNITION AGREEMENT (MLA)

1. This Agreement is based on the results of evaluations carried out in accordance with the relevant rules and procedures of the International Accreditation Forum (IAF).
2. The parties to this Agreement are the accreditation bodies on whose behalf the Agreement has been signed (the "participating bodies", collectively the "MLA Group").
3. Each participating body shall agree to abide by the terms and conditions of the MLA.

Each participating body shall:

- (i) maintain conformance with ISO/IEC Guide 61, and related IAF guidance documents;
 - (ii) ensure that all accredited bodies comply with ISO/IEC Guide 62 or ISO/IE Guide 65, as appropriate, and related IAF guidance documents.
4. On the basis of the perceived equivalence of the systems for the accreditation of management system bodies and/or product certification bodies (hereinafter referred to as "systems") operated by the participating bodies, each participating body will:
 - (i) recognize the operation of the other systems - within the programs as defined in this Agreement - as equivalent to its own;
 - (ii) recommend and promote the acceptance of the certificates of conformity or certificates of competence within the recognized scopes from the bodies accredited by the participating bodies as being on an equal basis with those of its own accredited bodies.
 5. Each participating body shall:
 - (i) investigate all complaints initiated by a participating body resulting from certificates of conformity or certificates of competence issued by the bodies it has accredited within its accreditation programs;
 - (ii) notify all other participating bodies as soon as possible of any significant changes that have occurred or will occur in its status, in the operational practices of its system or in its accreditation programs;
 - (iii) contribute as appropriate to the work of the MLA Group;
 - (iv) participate as appropriate in the meetings of the working group(s) of the MLA Group;

- (v) provide auditors/assessors for the evaluation, re-evaluation and surveillance to the accreditation programs of the MLA Group members and applicants;
 - (vi) co-operate with other accreditation bodies so that the MLA may be extended;
 - (vii) use all information in a confidential and professional manner.
6. If, in accordance with the relevant rules and procedures, it is agreed that an additional accreditation body that operates a system may participate in the Agreement, an MLA Signature Sheet shall be signed by the new accreditation body and duly authorized by the IAF Chair. The new signatory shall be added to the list in Annex A of this Agreement. The same procedure shall be followed if it is agreed that a participant to the Agreement may extend its accreditation programs.
 7. If a participating body wishes to withdraw from this Agreement or withdraw parts of its accreditation program for any reason whatsoever, that body shall notify the other participating bodies to this Agreement in writing through the MLA Management Committee not later than three months in advance of withdrawing. Upon withdrawal of a body or changing the extent of its accreditation programs, that body's MLA Signature Sheet shall be obsoleted and the list in Annex A revised accordingly.
 8. Any amendment of the text of this Multilateral Recognition Agreement shall be made in accordance with the MLA Group rules of procedure.
 9. This Agreement consists of ten (10) Clauses plus an Annex listing each participating body, along with the extent of its accreditation programs.
 10. This Agreement came into force on: 22 January 1998

INTERNATIONAL ACCREDITATION FORU

Annex A

Areas of accreditation activity of participating bodies:

- (1) products
- (2) quality systems
- (3) environmental management systems

Signatories to the IAF MLA, with areas of accreditation activity:

Date

(Signature)

Name), IAF Chair

This text is extracted from Document IAF 96-041 (Rev)