

COMMUNIQUE

During its seventh meeting, held in Geneva, January 16-18, 1996, the IAF, with participants representing accreditors and other organizations from twenty-two countries or economies and three international organizations took significant action toward its goal of establishing confidence in the accreditation programs operated by its members. This will enable quality system registration certificates issued in one place to be accepted worldwide.

The IAF Memorandum of Understanding came into force on August 23, 1995 after ten accreditation bodies had signed it. The MOU commits its signatures to the objectives of the forum and with three organizations signing during the meeting, it has now been signed by 17 accreditation bodies and 4 associated organizations*. More organizations are expected to sign in the near future, including most of those now participating in its activities.

IAF has as its objectives:

- To establish confidence in its members and bodies accredited by them;
- To support development and use of ISO/IEC documents;
- To establish the equivalence of its members' programs based on a multilateral agreement among them;
- To promote regional multilateral agreements.

At its meeting the IAF completed work on the document it will use for its multilateral agreement; ratification will be completed by correspondence. Discussions were also held with representatives of the Quality System Assessment Recognition (QSAR) program, currently under development by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC); IAF is giving consideration to supporting the program, with its members possibly taking responsibility for the operational component of the program. The IAF agreed to continue work to this end.

To its continuing work program, the IAF added new tasks on Environmental Management Systems (EMS) - to adopt existing registration guidelines for use on EMS - and on supplier audit confirmation - to monitor progress of pilot applications of this alternative approach. The IAF also completed discussion of sector-specific programs, resolving to commit to such developments only for those sectors where customers and suppliers support it.

The IAF expects to begin implementation of its multilateral agreement in 1996. Also this year, the IAF will reach a decision on cooperation with ISO and IEC on their joint program.

*Accreditors are from Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Chinese Taipei, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, Malaysia, Netherlands, New Zealand, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and the United States, Other signatories are the Independent Association of Accredited Registrars, Independent International Organization for Certification, the Information Technology Industry Council, and EQNET.