



**REPORT OF MEETING OF ACCREDITATION BODY EXPERTS OF THE COMESA-EAC-SADC
TRIPARTITE**

**16-17 May 2012
PRETORIA-SOUTH AFRICA**

TRIPARTITE COOPERATION IN ACCREDITATION

INTRODUCTION

1. A meeting of Accreditation Body(AB) experts of the COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite took place at the Protea Hotel Centurion Waterfront, in Pretoria South Africa from the 16 to 17 May 2012.
2. The purpose of the meeting was to develop a strategic framework and a work plan for Tripartite Cooperation in Accreditation.

WELCOME AND OPENING STATEMENT (Agenda item 1)

3. The meeting was initially chaired by COMESA, the Chairperson of the Tripartite assisted by the incoming chair SADC.
4. Delegates from the Southern African Development Community Accreditation (SADCA) Secretariat, the South African National Accreditation Service (SANAS), the Kenya National Accreditation Service (KENAS), the Southern African Accreditation Service (SADCAS), the Mauritian Accreditation Service (MAURITAS), the SADC, EAC, COMESA Secretariats. Provided is a list of participants (Annex I).
5. Mr Andrew Ngone, Senior Standards Expert at COMESA welcomed the delegates on behalf of the Chairperson of the Tripartite Task Force to the meeting of the AB experts and noted the current Tripartite Chair's hope that the meeting would produce a well thought-out strategic framework and work plan for Tripartite Cooperation in Accreditation.
6. He informed the meeting that the meeting was a follow-up meeting to the Accreditation Expert Working Group meeting held in Lusaka Zambia from 26 to 27 October 2011 which was attended by experts from Standards Bodies, Ministries of Trade and Industry, Secretariats of the EAC and SADC and the SADCA Secretariat. No Accreditation Body experts participated in the working group.
7. Members of the Expert Working Group developed
 - a. a draft Tripartite Conformity Assessment Cooperation Model and made recommendations on its structure and functions;
 - b. a Tripartite Accreditation Cooperation Model and made recommendation on the activities that should be carried out to achieve this object; and,
 - c. a Tripartite Accreditation Work programme
8. He informed the meeting that the expert working group recommended that Accreditation Body experts in the COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite should be given the opportunity to review the recommendations made during the Lusaka meeting, particularly as none of them were represented at the Lusaka meeting.
9. Following a request from the SADCA Secretariat to TMSA to organise a meeting of AB experts, a meeting of AB experts was organised and held on the 16 and 17 May 2012 to:
 - a. Carefully consider and review the work plan developed by the EWG in Lusaka on the 26-27 October 2011;
 - b. Consider the recommendations made by the EWG.
 - c. Discuss the approach to accreditation in the Tripartite.
10. A total of 9 Accreditation body experts from Libya (2), Ethiopian National Accreditation Office (ENAO) (1), the Libyan National Centre for Standardization and Metrology, Mauritius Accreditation Service (MAURITAS) (1), SADCA Chair(1),SADC Accreditation Service(1),Kenya Accreditation Service(1),

South African National Accreditation Service (1) and Egyptian Accreditation Council (1) and 4 REC representatives were invited to the meeting.

11. He informed the meeting that the Libyan and Egyptian AB experts were unable to attend and declared the meeting opened.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

12. The following Agenda was adopted by the meeting:

- i. Welcome and opening statement
- ii. Status of the COMESA-EAC-SADC FTA Agreement
- iii. Objective and expected outcome of the meeting
- iv. Feedback from Accreditation Workshop Expert Working Group Meeting held in October 2011 (for noting)
- v. Consideration of existing accreditation models in COMESA, EAC, SADC
- vi. Deliberation on cooperation in accreditation between COMESA, EAC, SADC.
- vii. Accreditation Programmes/actions in COMESA/EAC/SADCA
- viii. Identification of key components for tripartite accreditation infrastructure implementation
- ix. Consideration of draft accreditation work programme
- x. Implementation arrangements
- xi. Way Forward

STATUS OF THE COMESA-EAC-SADC FTA AGREEMENT

13. In order to appraise the AB experts on the status of discussions on the COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite Free Trade Area, the TMSA representative, made a presentation prepared prior to the training of Tripartite trade negotiators in Zimbabwe in April 2012.

14. The presentation was well received; however, a question was raised as to the wisdom of preparing work plans prior to the negotiations being finalized.

FEEDBACK FROM ACCREDITATION WORKSHOP EXPERT WORKING GROUP MEETING HELD IN OCTOBER 2011

15. Ms Kuenia Molapo, SADC SQAM Programme officer presented the Tripartite Accreditation work plan developed by Accreditation Expert Working Group in Lusaka in October 2011.

16. Delegates noted the important work of the delegates at that meeting and agreed to keep work done by the EWG in mind.

CONSIDERATION OF EXISTING ACCREDITATION MODELS IN COMESA, EAC, SADC

17. The CEO of SADCAS, Mrs M. Mutasa, gave an overview of **SADCAS**.

She pointed out that:

- a. A precondition for participating in world trade and for ensuring the protection of consumers and the environment is that traded goods and services must meet standards that have been agreed upon and comply with these standards;

- b. Realizing the cost of establishing and operationalizing and taking into account sustainability of an accreditation body, SADC Member States (MS) agreed to the establishment of a multi economy Accreditation Body (AB) SADCAS.
- c. SADCAS is the first multi-economy AB in the world;
- d. SADCAS is recognized by SADC Council of Ministers as a subsidiarity organization of SADC;
- e. SADCAS is an associate member of ILAC and an observer member of the IAF;
- f. National Accreditation Focal Points have been established in 14 SADC MS except South Africa and that going forward.
- g. SADCAS is due to undergo an ILAC/IAF peer review in 2014.
- h. SADCAS intends to consolidate service delivery, focusing on areas of demand and that there is a conscious strategic intent to ensure that SADCAS develops into a sustainable accreditation body, and
- i. Unfortunately, SADCAS now faces serious lack of financial support for its operations.

The delegate from KENAS requested that SADCAS share its experiences as it advances towards membership of ILAC and IAF.

18. The presentation on accreditation in the **EAC** was split such that, Willy Musinguzi, Principal Standards Officer gave an overview of the activities of the **East African Accreditation Board (EAAB)** and the CEO of KENAS, Sammy Milgo, gave a presentation on the current status of KENAS.

19. It was emphasised that;

- a. Unlike SADCAS, the EAAB is not a multi economy Accreditation Body.
- b. The EAAB is responsible for the coordination of accreditation activities in the EAC.
- c. It also facilitates the accreditation of Conformity Assessment Bodies in the EAC.
- d. The EAAB is also responsible for overseeing the functions of designated laboratories in the EAC.
- e. The EAAB functions as a facilitator, promotes accreditation and has regulatory functions.

20. Managing Director of KENAS spoke specifically on **KENAS**. He informed the meeting that;

- a. KENAS was not yet a signatory to ILAC and IAF;
- b. Work on acquiring international recognition for KENAS began in 1984
- c. There was a need to improve the mandate of KENAS, and
- d. That the bulk of KENAS' clientele was made up of testing and calibration laboratories.

21. The delegate from COMESA, Andrew Ngone pointed out that due to the overlap of membership among the three RECs, only four countries in the Tripartite were excluded from the existing structures. The challenge going forward would be how to ensure that these four countries are included in the Tripartite cooperation on accreditation.

DELIBERATION ON COOPERATION IN ACCREDITATION BETWEEN COMESA, EAC, SADC. ACCREDITATION PROGRAMMES/ACTIONS

22. The representative from the SADCA Secretariat, Dr E Steyn, gave a presentation on the programmes currently underway in SADCA as well as an overview of work done to date.

23. She explained that

- a. The ultimate aim of SADCA is to be a Recognised Regional Accreditation Cooperation by becoming a signatory to the ILAC and IAF Arrangements.

- b. SADCA aims to assist governments & the private sector by providing an assurance to national, regional & international trade partners that its MRA signatories are technically competent.
- c. The SADCA MRA is a voluntary agreement amongst ABs that operates on the basis of recognition of equivalence of operations amongst signatories;
- d. SADCA aims to promote the use of accreditation in the removal of TBTs
- e. National Accreditation Focal Points are the administrative links between SADCAS and clients/potential clients in MS.
- f. National Accreditation Focal Points (NAFPs) have been launched & appointed in SADC Member States which do not have a National Accreditation Body (NAB).

Finally she informed the delegates that the SADCA Business Plan (2012 – 2016) aims to operationalize SADCA's MRA with a focus on two areas:

- Operationalizing the Cooperation;
- Establishment of the MRA.

IDENTIFICATION OF KEY COMPONENTS FOR TRIPARTITE ACCREDITATION INFRASTRUCTURE IMPLEMENTATION and CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT ACCREDITATION WORK PROGRAMME

Prior to developing a work programme for the COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite, the AB experts discussed and agreed a Goal and then went on to have a brain storming session to identify the key components of the work programme. It was also agreed that a one of the delegates should prepare a background document (Annex II) to ensure that there is an understanding of the rationale behind the activities for the next five years. Also attached is a Diagram (Annex IV) showing the desired end result.

24. The AB experts agreed on the following as their **Goal**:

‘To enhance competitiveness and improve market access of goods and services from the Tripartite region and support the protection of health, safety and environment through accreditation’.

25. It was agreed that the **key** components of the Tripartite accreditation infrastructure implementation programme would involve:

1. Articulation in the FTA and relevant annex of accreditation. The meeting felt that the wording in the FTA document needs recording.
2. Awareness campaigns-this should involve the compilation of case studies to create awareness on the strategic importance of accreditation.
3. The strengthening CABs to prepare them for accreditation to ensure that when CABs request an AB assessment there are no delays due to a lack of preparation.
4. Strengthening **existing** accreditation bodies and National Accreditation Focal Points(**Governmental support to Abs to achieve international recognition, Joint collaborations, twining agreements, regional role of accreditation bodies**) and the Training and mentoring of trainers and assessors (**maintenance and sustenance of expertise**) and,
5. The development of internationally recognized MRAs (**SADCA, AFRAC** peer evaluators)

COMPONENTS FOR CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT

1. Development of client base by capacitating conformity assessment bodies

RESOLUTIONS

The Tripartite Accreditation Experts Working Group :

1. Recommends that Accreditation Experts be included in the national negotiating teams.
2. Encourages Member States to build on the existing accreditation infrastructure and as far as possible avoid creating new structures..
3. Encourages Member States to develop programmes to prepare Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) for accreditation.
4. Recommends that a Tripartite Expert Working Group on Conformity Assessment be established as a matter of urgency, and recommends that the following issues be considered by the CA working group:
 - Coaching of CABs to prepare them for accreditation;
 - Skills & competence development in CABs;
 - Provision of Equipment to CABs;
 - The development of Proficiency Testing Schemes; and
 - The Establishment/strengthening of CABs associations.
5. The Tripartite Accreditation Expert Working Group presents the Tripartite Accreditation Strategic Framework and Roadmap for consideration by the Tripartite Task Force based on the following principles:
 - Work towards an Internationally recognized African regional accreditation cooperation;
 - No duplication of structures in order to optimize limited resources;
 - The Use existing cooperation structures ie AFRAC/SADCA/EAAB;
 - Mutual recognition through AFRAC + SADCA by ILAC and IAF;
 - The use of the EAAB, SADCA & COMESA for cooperation at REC level.

The Tripartite Accreditation Expert Working Group extends its gratitude to TMSA for coordinating and supporting the meeting of Tripartite Accreditation Experts.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

TABLE 1: TRIPARTITE STRATEGIC ACCREDITATION FRAMEWORK

SL	Objective	Reference Annex 9	Expected Output	Activity	Performance indicators	Responsibility	Approval route/process	Timeline
	1. Entrench accreditation needs and significance in the Tripartite policy documents		Revised and approved Tripartite FTA and relevant annexes	Review and revise TFTA and relevant annexes Submission of the revised draft to the relevant structures	Submission of the recommendations for revision of the TFTA and annexes for consideration.	Tripartite Accreditation Expert Working Group	TBT Technical Working Group	6 months
	2. Increased awareness on the need and importance of accreditation amongst stakeholders		Developed and Implemented Marketing and communication strategy	Develop & publish communications to raise awareness on accreditation activities	Communications published	Abs, NAFFPs, EAAB, SADCA & COMESA	N/A	On-going
				Support the celebration	Number of celebrations at national level.	Member States, Abs, NAFFPs, EAAB, SADCA &	N/A	On-going

				of World Accreditation Day at national level.		COMESA		
				Support & coordinate awareness workshops with stakeholders.	Number of workshops held at national/REC level.	Abs & NAFFPs to coordinate; Member States, EAAB, SADCA & COMESA to support	N/A	On-going
	3. Improved readiness of CABs for accreditation		Increased number of accreditation	Generic training of CABs at the national level on relevant conformity assessment standards.	The number of CAB personnel trained.	Member States	N/A	On-going
				Develop an accreditation toolkit.	Finalised accreditation toolkit available.	Tripartite Accreditation Expert Working Group	N/A	24 months
	4. Strengthen existing		Abs conform to the	Do a gap analysis.	Pre-peer evaluation	Abs supported by regional		2015

accreditation bodies and National Accreditation Focal Points.	requirements of ISO/IEC 17011	AB development programmes (eg development of staff, trainers assessors, QMS development and implementation and sustenance of Abs)	report/recommendations	accreditation cooperation (SADCA/AFRAC)		
		Pre-peer evaluations				
	Established & operational NAFPs	To develop instruments for the establishment of NAFPs	Appointment letter of NAFP	RECs, Governments, NAFPs and Abs as applicable		2014
		Establish NAFPs				
		Gap Analysis of NAFPs	% realization of national action plan implementation			On-going
	Capacity development for existing NAFPs					

				Develop performance monitoring system of NAFPs				
	5. International recognition of certificates issued by CABs from the Tripartite region		AFRAC and SADCA obtain signatory status to the ILAC/IAF MRA.	Set up an MRA structure for SADCA and AFRAC	Registration of AFRAC/SADCA as a Recognized region by ILAC/IAF.	SADCA, AFRAC		2017
			Qualify Peer Evaluators					
			Undertake peer evaluations for the minimum requirement of three Abs					

				Undergo peer evaluation by ILAC/IAF for recognition under the ILAC/IAF Arrangement				
			Abs become signatories of the ILAC/IAF/AF RAC /SADCA MRA**	Undergo peer evaluation by ILAC/IAF/AFRAC/SADCA for recognition under the ILAC/IAF/AFRAC/SADCA Arrangement	Signatory status certificate from SADCA/AFRAC/ILAC/IAF	Abs		2015

***Note: ILAC/IAF prefer that this is done at regional level.*

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENT

ACCREDITATION EXPERT WORKING GROUP (AEWG) OF THE SADC-COMESA-EAC TRIPARTITE DISCUSSIONS HELD ON 16 TO 17 MAY 2012 IN CENTURION, SOUTH AFRICA

1. INTRODUCTION

In response to the forces and momentum of globalization, many countries are reforming their economic systems in an endeavour to move from systems based on trade preferences to those based on global competitiveness. In Africa and elsewhere, countries have integrated and formed regional economic communities thus increasing market sizes and collaboration across borders.

The success of goods and services traded on the global arena and between African countries often depends on the confidence that the market has in respect of the product's quality, its health and safety risks as well as potential impact on the environment. Consequently, one of the effects of this increasing trend towards regional integration has been that confidence in the results produced by conformity assessment bodies in areas such as testing, calibration, inspection and certification, is now required not only to facilitate national and international trade and industrial development, but also to safeguard the health and safety of the public, and for the protection of the environment. Products that are affected include almost all manufactured goods, agricultural commodities and raw materials.

It is therefore very important for Africa to establish infrastructure such as accreditation co-operation to assist African enterprises to prove compliance with different standards, technical regulations and conformity assessment requirements.

2. INTERNATIONAL ACCREDITATION COOPERATION

Mutual recognition is when two or more countries agree to accept the results of conformity assessment carried out in the partner country based on the criteria of the country and vice versa, even though the conformity assessment procedures in each country may in fact be different. In most developed and developing countries, outside the African region, harmonization of accreditation and conformity assessment schemes through establishing mutual recognition among trading partners is well underway.

To enhance the efficiency and cost effectiveness of mutual recognition, a Multi-lateral Recognition network has been established and is managed by International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) and the International Accreditation Forum (IAF). Membership to these bodies is through regional accreditation cooperation schemes such as the European Cooperation for Accreditation (EA) in Europe, the Asia Pacific Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (APLAC) in the Asia Pacific region, and the Inter-American Accreditation Cooperation (IAAC) in the Americas. Members of regional accreditation cooperation bodies are normally the accreditation bodies of the countries in that region.

In Africa, only the Southern African Development Community Cooperation in Accreditation (SADCA) and the African Accreditation Cooperation (AFRAC) are Members of the IAF and ILAC. African Accreditation

Cooperation AFRAC and SADCA however do not have operational co-operations. The implication is that any accreditation body in Africa that wants to be recognised has to get it through the ILAC and IAF at great cost. Some African accreditation bodies have successfully managed to obtain signatory status of the IAF/ILAC MLA; however this came at a very high cost to the countries concerned.

Depicted below is the ILAC and IAF membership status of the accreditation bodies in Africa.

3. PROGRESS ON ACCREDITATION COOPERATION IN AFRICA

AFRAC

The African Accreditation Cooperation (AFRAC) was launched on 29 September 2010 in Cairo, Egypt. The launch was followed by the inaugural General Assembly meeting held from 29 to 30 September 2010 in Cairo. The second General Assembly was held in October 2011 in Mauritius.

The initial phase of the operationalization of AFRAC focused on the establishment of AFRAC and holding an inaugural GA meeting and the creation of institutional structures. To ensure synergy in African quality infrastructure (QI), the other continental QI institutions ARSO and AFRIMETS, as well as the sub-regional QI structures in the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) were invited to participate in the formation of AFRAC.

In order to actively operationalise AFRAC and for it to fulfil its objectives and functions, the AFRAC Business Plan for the period 2012/13 – 2016/17 focuses on the operationalization of AFRAC. The aim is to enable Accreditation Bodies in Africa to reach a globally accepted MRA through AFRAC, which will facilitate the acceptance of the validity of certificates/reports issued by African laboratories, inspection bodies, certification bodies and other related services. The AFRAC MRA aim is to facilitate international recognition of AFRAC's capacity to run and manage an MRA through the AFRAC MRA Committee.

SADCA

The SADC Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Annex requires the establishment of cooperation in accreditation, called the Southern African Development Community Cooperation in Accreditation (SADCA). The focus of SADCA over the past years was mainly on the establishment of a multi-economy accreditation body called SADC Accreditation Services (SADCAS), supported by National Accreditation Focal Points (NAFPs) within the Member States. SADCAS was launched in March 2009.

SADCA requires the membership of at least three operational Accreditation Bodies to begin the process to achieve international recognition as a recognised Regional Accreditation Body. The launch of SADCAS therefore enables SADCA to pursue its objective of becoming a recognised Accreditation Cooperation under the ILAC and IAF MLA/MRA arrangements over the next five year period.

The focus for the next five years will be on the operationalisation of SADCA and the establishment and roll-out of a SADCA Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) between Accreditation Bodies that want to become signatories to the SADCA MRA.

EAAB

The Eastern African Accreditation Board (EAAB) WAS created under section 11 comprises of chief executives of the national accreditation bodies and national focal points in 2009. The Board facilitates cooperation and coordinates accreditation activities to avoid duplication of functions of the national accreditation bodies and national focal points. It also promotes the acceptability of test, certification and inspection results from accredited organisations within the Eastern African Community.

COMESA, SADC, EAC

It should be noted that the formation of accreditation cooperation in Africa has been generally welcomed across the continent. For example the Accreditation Expert Working Group (AEWG) of the SADC-COMESA-EAC Tripartite technical workshop that took place in Nairobi, during the period 27th-31st October 2008 endorsed the need to urgently establish an African Regional Accreditation Cooperation Body as part of its recommendations.

Annex III



