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CAB/483/INF

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INTERNATIONAL ELECTROTECHNICAL COMMISSION

CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT BOARD (CAB)

Meeting 15, Geneva, 2004-06-08

SUBJECT

Agenda item 6.5

Scheme comments in response to Item 6.6 of CAB/454A/RM, Minutes of the CAB Montreal 2003 meeting, concerning financing and cost synergies of the Schemes

ACTION

This is for information.

Scheme comments in response to item 6.6 of CAB/454A/RM,
Minutes of the CAB Montreal 2003 meeting,
concerning financing and cost synergies of the Schemes

In consideration of the CAB Montreal discussions relating to proposal CAB/448/MTG, the following information concerning the current level of sharing and cooperation of Scheme Secretariat resources is provided for the benefit of CAB members.

General Comments

The following 3 Schemes are currently operating within the IEC Conformity Assessment System:

- IECEE
- IECQ-CECC
- IECEX

While being regarded as individual Schemes, it can be said that each operates individual schemes/systems within their Scheme structure; for example, IECEE:

- Operates the CB Scheme providing for the mutual acceptance of testreports for a wide range of product categories,
- Provides for an FCS Scheme (Full Certification) being an ISO Type 5 system, and
- Is exploring other programmes to properly serve the market needs.

while IECEX provides for:

- The Issuing of IECEX Test Reports and/or IECEX Quality Assessment Reports both of which can be used to “Fast Track” Ex approval at the national level in a wide range of product groups and types;
- The issuing of a single International Certificate of Conformity for access to markets that accept this without the intervention of a national approval or certification agency
- Now developing schemes for Ex related services, e.g. Ex Repair and Overhaul.

For IECQ-CECC the services broadly cover:

- Industry-to-industry (not to consumer) quality assurance and procurement of electronic components, related materials and services, and component management, in harmony with the IECEE and IECEX as the occasion arises,
- Approval of electronic component manufacturers, distributors, specialist contractors and independent testing laboratories, based on ISO 9001 and ISO/IEC 17025 respectively,
- Certification of the performance of electronic components to IECQ-CECC specifications based primarily but not exclusively on IEC Standards,
- Certification of Original Equipment Manufacturers' electronic component management plans to IEC 62239, and
- Accreditation of Supervising Inspectorates.

Each of the Schemes operates within a framework that is managed by its Certification Management Committee within which the participation of the industries whom they serve is effective.

The Scheme Secretaries are generally assigned the function of Chief Executive Officer and are entrusted with day-to-day activities including technical, financial, promotion and growth.

The routine work comprises but is not limited to the following:

- a) provide the secretarial services for the CMC,
- b) handle the daily financial matters,
- c) accept applications from candidate Certification Bodies or Testing Laboratories for further handling,
- d) organize initial assessment and reassessment of Certification Bodies and of Testing Laboratories, including the appointment of assessors,
- e) handle requests for extension of acceptance to further products or standards for Certification Bodies and of Testing Laboratories,
- f) edit and publish Bulletins,
- g) deal with technical inquires specific to the fields covered by the Schemes.

To effectively manage these matters, priorities are set by the Schemes' Executive in coordination with its officers and members in order of the individual Scheme and industry needs.

Sharing and cooperation of Scheme Secretariat Resources

On many occasions, it has been acknowledged that the schemes operate in a commercial environment and hence must be in a position to respond to the needs of their members and client base, served by the Scheme members.

In order to do this effectively, the Schemes require the services of dedicated Secretariats that are proactive, able to respond in a timely fashion and can do so with a sense of empowerment and authority.

In operating as businesses, the Schemes are mindful of their costs and those of their members, with considerable time devoted, during annual meetings of Scheme management, to matters of finance both in reflection of accounts for the preceding year as well as likely costs and revenue for the year ahead and also establishing special projects to explore current and future scheme financing.

It is in this respect that a great deal of work has already been done, by the Scheme Secretaries, to minimize costs to the schemes while preserving the integrity, timely progression of work and the overall professional image that one would expect of an activity associated with the IEC brand.

As with any business there is always the constant juggle of setting world's best practice within tight budgetary constraints. It is with this in mind that, despite the differences among products offered by Schemes and their operation, Scheme Secretaries and management have already taken steps to centralize resources for the more common aspects of the Schemes' operations.

The following two items identify areas where consolidation of resources currently exists and then areas for possible future cooperation.

Current sharing of Secretariat Resources

In a bid to contain Scheme costs, the Scheme Secretaries, with the assistance of the IEC Central Office, have established a level of cooperation that has resulted in many areas and services being centralized through the Central Office, to the benefit of all three Schemes, their members and communities.

In addition to centralizing a number of resources, cooperation among the Schemes to date has enabled the sharing of documentation, ideas and intellectual property. All of which have resulted in considerable cost savings among the Schemes.

The areas and services for which consolidation and cooperation currently exists include:

- Accounting – All payments to and from Schemes accounts are coordinated by the accounts department who also arrange for their auditing and compliance with Swiss Law.
- Internet Websites – Provided and maintained by the CO with the Schemes' "On-Line" Certificate system developed and maintained by CO, where they exist.
- Sale of Scheme Publications – Sale of Scheme publications is handled by CO resulting in savings to the Schemes by not having to develop individual e-commerce sites.
- Scheme Stationery – Letterheads, business cards, envelopes and the like are all coordinated by CO for all 3 schemes
- Promotion and Marketing – While Schemes do conduct individual marketing and promotion, there is an overall consolidation of high-level marketing by CO, e.g. Scheme brochures, published articles, promotional CD ROM etc.
- Meeting facilities – Schemes' management and other meetings utilize the meeting facilities at CO resulting in savings to Schemes, including use of the IEC-APRC in Singapore.
- Operational Documents – The sharing of Scheme Operational Documents to prevent "re-inventing the wheel". An example of this is the current work by IECEx on witness testing where work done by IECEE is being considered for adoption prior to any tailoring for the Ex industry.

Possible future areas for sharing of Secretariat Resources

In noting the many areas where sharing and consolidation of Scheme resources currently exist, there may be other areas that could be targeted for the future including:

- Product Recognition – The possibility for product recognition among the Schemes, including current discussions between IECEx and IECQ-CECC on components for Intrinsic Safety products.
- Access to IP – Promote greater use of Schemes' Intellectual Property among Schemes.
- Marketing and Promotion – Cross marketing of schemes by the various lectures provided by the Scheme Secretaries around the world.

The Schemes' managements are constantly considering ways to improve the overall efficiency of their operations. One such success has been the introduction of on-line certificates by both the IECEE and IECEx Management, which provides considerable savings in time and cost to both

Scheme members and users, where all information is entered by the Scheme Certifiers. IECQ-CECC is now exploring the capability of this system for its needs.

The Scheme Secretaries see the proposal considered during the CAB 2003 Montreal meeting as both an opportunity to focus on cooperation among Schemes but also as an opportunity to inform CAB of the measures already in place, for the sharing of resources and minimizing of Scheme costs.

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