



INTERNATIONAL ELECTROTECHNICAL COMMISSION

CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT BOARD (CAB)

Meeting 16, Seoul, 2004-10-19

SUBJECT

Agenda item 9.4

Cooperation with the International Accreditation Forum (IAF)

BACKGROUND

Acknowledging the establishment of a successful cooperative working arrangement with ILAC the CAB, at its meeting in Geneva in June 2004, discussed the potential for a mutually beneficial relationship with the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) and resolved:

Decision 15/19 – Cooperation with IAF

The CAB notes the comments from the Schemes on the potential benefits of cooperation with IAF, requests the Chairman to initiate discussion with the IAF Officers on possible areas for co-operation, and report to the CAB at its next meeting.

The CAB Chairman has held several discussions with the IAF Secretary (John Owen) to explore areas, where cooperation between IAF (and its members) and the CAB (and the Schemes) could provide benefits to both parties and to their respective customers. Until recently the only overt cooperation with IAF is in the CASCO environment, where the CAB Chairman represents IEC/CAB on the Joint ISO/ILAC/IAF Joint Working Group.

Both IECEE and IECEx include recognition of national accreditation as part of the procedures for assessment of certification bodies, however what is not clear is the extent to which this recognition is utilised in practice. Recently IECQ-CECC instituted a pilot programme for assessment of NSIs in the USA, which is reliant upon acceptance of national accreditation and is to be carried out in cooperation with the national accreditation body.

Possible areas of cooperation with IAF, which have emerged in discussion, are developing a common understanding and application of ISO/IEC Guide 65, enhancing the understanding of the respective assessment procedures and undertaking joint assessments (and/or the use of the results of each other's assessments) where that is efficient and cost effective.

As IAF is on the verge of extending its mandate into the area of product certification, it is a very appropriate time to initiate cooperation.

Following upon this initial contact with IAF it is suggested that an informal ad hoc group, comprising three "technical" representatives from the CAB (one from each Scheme?) and from the IAF meet to explore in detail possible areas for cooperation, to identify the benefits which could accrue both for each body and for their customers and to propose a structure for progressing the cooperation. One possible structure is the establishment of a Joint Technical Panel and a Joint Policy Panel as has been done in the case of the CAB/ILAC relationship.

It has been suggested that a convenient time for an initial meeting of the ad hoc group would be adjacent to the CASCO Plenary meeting, which is to be held in Amsterdam on 9 & 10 November 2004. Another possible time is adjacent to the meeting of the CASCO Chairman's Policy and Coordination Group scheduled for Geneva early in February 2005. A meeting of the ISO/ILAC/IAF Joint Working Group is to be held in conjunction with both meetings.

ACTION

The CAB is invited to discuss the potential for and desirability of cooperation with IAF, agree to the establishment of an ad hoc group to explore areas for cooperation, invite each of the Schemes to nominate a "technical" representative to the ad hoc group and identify a time for the first meeting.