

## **ANNEX 1: THE TBT WORKSHOP ON THE DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT**

### Statement made by the Chairman<sup>1</sup>

1. We held, yesterday and this morning, a workshop on the different approaches to conformity assessment, including on the acceptance of conformity assessment results. To recall, the organization of the workshop was mandated in the Third Triennial Review as part of a Work Programme on conformity assessment. We heard extremely interesting presentations by 27 speakers representing a broad range of conformity assessment institutions in all parts of the world. We had identified three main focus areas for this workshop.

2. Following a presentation by the WTO Secretariat on the TBT Committee's work on conformity assessment procedures and the relevant provisions of the TBT Agreement, the first session focussed on conformity assessment procedures at the national level. In the first part of the session, speakers provided concrete examples of existing approaches at the national level and explained the mechanisms in place to make the conformity assessment procedures both effective and well-suited to the regulatory purpose at hand. ISO made a presentation on their standards on conformity assessment and their relevance to regulatory requirements; the speaker from Colombia presented the regulatory framework created to facilitate the use of the appropriate conformity assessment scheme; a representative of the US private sector provided a concrete perspective and stressed the importance of consumer confidence and brand recognition. We also heard presentations on the experience of Mexico and Brazil in working towards a more efficient and market-relevant conformity assessment system. The second part of the first session presented sector-specific approaches to conformity assessment. Speakers identified the benefits and possible problems of the different conformity assessment approaches in relation to the following sectors: Vehicle emission and noise in Chinese Taipei; electricity in Argentina; and forest certification in Canada. In addition, we heard a presentation from the US private sector on the implementation of voluntary conformity assessment market programs.

3. Session II focussed on mechanisms to facilitate the acceptance of conformity assessment results (pursuant to Article 6 of the TBT Agreement). In the first part, speakers addressed the advantages of, and possible difficulties with, various approaches in this respect. Following a report by the OECD on the results of a survey of conformity assessment bodies (CABs), two presentations were made on the work of accreditation bodies, one in New Zealand and Australia (JAS-ANZ) and the other in Mauritius (MAURITAS). The European experience of cooperation among accreditation bodies at a regional level was also discussed. The second part of Session II dealt with the negotiating of mutual recognition agreements (between governments) and the acceptance, by regulatory authorities, of results of conformity assessment bodies participating in voluntary arrangements. With respect to the former, presentations were made on experiences in Japan and Europe. On voluntary arrangements, participants heard a presentation from the electronic & IT industry's perspective and the IEC IECCE and IECEx schemes were discussed as examples in this respect.

4. Finally, this morning, the programme focused on developing countries. There were presentations on the experiences of a number of developing countries in either administering existing conformity assessment systems (e.g. India, Brazil) or working to build such infrastructure (e.g. Nigeria). We learnt of the operations of these systems and key challenges and problems faced (resource constraints, technical and infrastructural needs, etc). We were also informed of the views of

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<sup>1</sup> The programme (G/TBT/GEN/31) as well as presentations are available on the TBT webpage: [http://www.wto.org/english/tratop\\_e/tbt\\_e/tbt\\_e.htm#events](http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/tbt_e/tbt_e.htm#events). A summary report of the Workshop will be issued separately.

some developing countries on the utility of conformity assessment systems (facilitating trade, disseminating information, protecting consumers) and on the developmental potential of such infrastructure. Fundamentally, significant support to developing countries is needed to support their objectives in the area of conformity assessment. A number of international agencies (UNIDO, ILAC) informed the Workshop of their role and work to assist developing countries in the identification of conformity assessment-related needs and in the provision of technical assistance. The importance of regional coordination was also well reflected during this session. The Economic Community of West African States presented its experience in building a quality system at the regional level and a representative from Trinidad and Tobago highlighted the efforts made in the Caribbean to establish a regional conformity assessment infrastructure.