



# **Forum: Metrology – Trade Facilitator**

*25 October 2004, Berlin, Germany*

## **SESSION 2**

**Questions and discussions**





## **Questions and discussions – Session 2**

### **Mr John Birch, CIML Honorary Member, APLMF Past President**

Mr Birch said that the expanding scope of legal metrology had been highlighted in Mrs Annabi's presentation, in particular the challenges this creates for developing countries. If this challenge is going to be met, he felt that a considerable increase in the resources devoted to metrology, both by national governments and by overseas development and assistance organisations. He went on to say that he believed that this assistance will only come about if the developing countries can identify the economic and social benefits which will result from this increased commitment in resources. One of the key elements of this will be to ensure that metrology has been incorporated into the national development plans of those countries. He explained that this is important in the new ways in which aid has been delivered over the last few years and an additional requirement, which some Members here may have difficulty with, is to ensure that a poverty focus for metrology has also been identified, which he said that he believed was possible.

He went on to observe that, in identifying these benefits, it is also important to recognise resource exports from developing countries, as mentioned by Mrs Annabi. This had been raised in an UNCTAD experts meeting which he had attended on behalf of the OIML in 2002, which recognised the importance of metrology in adding value, which he believed to be something which should be taken into account at this Forum. He explained that good measurements add value by ensuring that countries receive the full benefits from exporting their resources, and that governments receive the full revenue due from these commodity exports. Developing countries receive a lot of revenue from these exports; a fact which metrology authorities often do not bring to the attention of their governments.

He finished by saying that there was also a need to ensure that the development assistance organisations are aware of the role of metrology. In 2002, the World Bank issued a report on institutions facilitating trade, very much a topic related to the theme of this Forum, but metrology was not recognised anywhere in this report as facilitating trade. There is therefore a great deal of work for metrologists to do to make sure that the institutions which can assist developing countries are aware of the value that metrology can add to those activities.

### **Francis Karani, SADC MEL**

Mr Karani reminded delegates that the Southern African Development Community had 14 Member States and that SADC MEL was the Regional Legal Metrology Body.

Mr Karani agreed with Mrs Annabi that one of the problems faced by developing countries is trying to balance training needs and equipment needs, since personnel cannot be trained to use equipment which they don't have. Within the Southern African region, individual SADC MEL members' needs in both areas have been identified and a database has been constructed. Mr Karani asked that when such an exercise had already been undertaken, such as in his region, that donors should channel their enquiries and assistance through the regional body, who had a better understanding of needs in the area.

### **Mr Dieudonné Lewamou, Gabon**

Referring to Mr Seyni's presentation (UEMOA) and comments made by Mr Karan (SADC MEL), he congratulated other regions of Africa for their success in organising regional coordination of legal metrology activities. He reported that in Central Africa, attempts to organise legal metrology were more individual. He went on to say that although there had been much said about developing countries, he felt that it was important to distinguish between developing countries at different levels of development. There were some countries which have some infrastructure, and others where metrology was in an embryonic state, such as in Gabon and other countries in its region.

He then asked if the comments which had been made about exports related to the export of products or of measuring instruments. As a producer of raw materials which does not have metrology laboratories, his country has to import measuring instruments from elsewhere to undertake controls on these exports according to international requirements. He wished to know how they could guarantee the quality of these imported instruments, and how they could verify them, and how mutual acceptance agreements could help them.

### **Mr Issac Ngatia, Kenya**

Coming from a developing country which had some infrastructure, he felt that sometimes donor countries and organisations assume that those countries which have some basic equipment do not need much support as those who have none at all. He explained that this is a false assumption. Most developing countries depend on agriculture, their markets being industrialised countries. These countries place many metrological (and other) requirements on imported agricultural products and the equipment required to ensure that these requirements are satisfied is not basic equipment. Legal metrology has thus become a barrier to trade.

The problem is that those countries which already have a low level of metrological infrastructure, but who therefore receive no external support, are in the same situation as those countries which have no infrastructure at all. In concluding his comments, Mr Ngatia said that since agriculture in developing countries was often on a small scale, involving rural communities and family farms, support for legal metrology in developing countries did not just facilitate trade in trade in agricultural products, but had a direct effect on relieving poverty in the rural economy.

### **Mr Kwasi Owusu Boadu, Ghana**

Observing that regional training programmes were organised in the Asia-Pacific and Southern African regions, and that there were the beginnings of such programmes in Francophone West African countries, Mr Kwasi suggested that English-speaking West and Central African countries should organise themselves to get training underway in the region at lower cost than undertaking training elsewhere. He suggested that Ghana might be willing to host such events, having already some metrological expertise.

### **Panel reactions**

Mrs Annabi noted that the comments had centred on the four themes of equipment, personnel, training and traceability. Referring to Mr Lewamou's comments, she said that developing countries were generally importers of measuring instruments which were then verified after having been imported, and these instruments were then used to control exports of raw materials and agricultural products. She reiterated his comment that this level of control was very important to ensure that the exporting country received the full revenue which was due to it.