



Forum: Metrology – Trade Facilitator

25 October 2004, Berlin, Germany

SESSION 3

Questions and discussions



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Mr Issac Ngatia, Kenya

Mr Ngatia asked for clarification of whether CEN undertook assistance work in Africa, since he had not seen Africa mentioned in Mr Kaiser's presentation.

Mr Kaiser replied that his presentation had focussed on projects currently underway, and in no way had he intended to say that CEN's work was restricted to these projects, even in the near future. He added that even the current programmes included some Northern African countries.

Mr Ismael Castellazo, BIPM

Mr Castellazo asked Mr Kaiser if conformity assessment certificates from bodies outside Europe were currently accepted within the European Union.

Mr Kaiser replied that the initial phase had been to get mutual recognition of conformity assessment results within Europe, but that there was also now the political will to extend this to include the acceptance of results from outside the EU. He reminded delegates of what had been said by Ms Schmieg: that conformity assessment always means building confidence and that this cannot be reached by regulation, but must be built through mutual confidence, first bilaterally, then within regions, before going further.

Mr Helge Kildal, Norway

Mr Kildal asked Mr Kaiser whether EFTA funding had been considered in the CEN programmes which he had described, in addition to that obtained from the EU.

Mr Kaiser apologised for not having mentioned EFTA. CEN had 29 Members throughout the "larger Europe" and of course this included those who were in EFTA.

Mr Terry Kahuma, Uganda

Mr Kahuma thanked the speakers from individual countries and from organisations offering assistance to developing countries for the information they had supplied during the Forum. He went on to say that, although he recognised that the development of a metrology infrastructure was the responsibility of the governments of developing countries, it would be helpful if donor countries and organisations could give it the same profile as was given to health, roads, environment, etc. This would then assist those pressing for government funding for the MSTQ infrastructure from within the country, in order to facilitate trade for the country as a whole.

Mr Loesener felt that two issues were relevant to this question. Firstly, high ranking officials within developing countries always said that MSTQ issues are not the highest priority for their country. Secondly, when considering issues of health or education, it is very well understood what measures are required, what the costs will be and what benefits will result. When talking about metrology, it is very difficult to evaluate the economic

impact that the proposed measures will have on alleviating poverty. The gap between these two issues, which was largely one of awareness, was what UNIDO was trying to tackle in its programmes.

Ms Schmieg added that this was exactly the kind of problem which she had been trying to explain that the BMZ tried to address in its projects when she had mentioned in her presentation that they tried to approach issues from the micro-economic, macro-economic and political levels. It was very often necessary to work at the political level to ensure that resources would be available to fund work in the area of MSTQ. However, the basic assumption of development cooperation was that beneficiary countries themselves had to formulate their priorities, and it was not for those interested in a particular subject within a developing country to dictate to donors that they should tell their governments what was important to that country. However, she agreed that it was very difficult to make senior politicians interested in MSTQ problems since they don't really understand them. The only solution to this was for both donors and recipients to try to raise awareness at all levels, and to speak in language which could be understood by politicians, otherwise they would not be reached.

Mr Seiler reminded delegates that Mr Birch had earlier made the remark that it was up to them to convince their politicians that metrology was an essential infrastructure element, backing their arguments up with figures which show the economic benefits. He felt that metrologists as a whole were too silent in this respect.

Mr Bruno Vaucher, Switzerland

Mr Vaucher agreed with Mr Seiler, saying that Swiss assistance projects were agreed with the governments of developing countries according to their priorities. It was therefore very important that bodies within those developing countries made their governments aware of the importance of their metrological needs, so that these needs were taken into account in requests for assistance.

Mr Martin Birdseye, UK

Mr Birdseye introduced the National Weights and Measures Laboratory's work with developing countries in training, both specialist subjects and in general legal metrology. In connection with the previous comments, he added that they also had the capability of offering training to senior government officials, who are responsible for legal metrology departments, but who do not always have the expertise or knowledge on the importance and necessity of metrology. This training, typically delivered on two day courses, had been shown to go a long way to overcoming the "political resistance" which had previously been mentioned.

Mr Jean-François Magaña, BIML

Mr Magana informed delegates that it had been partly in order to work on this problem of increasing awareness at the political level that the OIML, the Metre Convention, IAF, IEC, ILAC, ISO, ITC, ITU-T and UNIDO had come together to form the Joint Committee on Coordination of Assistance to Developing Countries in Metrology, Accreditation and Standardization (JCDCMAS). This Committee intended to try to coordinate the different programmes which were operated by its members, and to show that they were interdependent. One of the first actions was to address the problem of awareness raising,

including common presentations and documentation which would be available for use in and by developing countries. Mr Loesener added that there was currently a proliferation of mutual recognition agreements, and that UNIDO strongly supported the actions of the JCDCMAS so as to ensure that developing countries were able to benefit from these agreements.