

RLMO INFO**SADC MEL News**

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The Southern African Development Community Cooperation in Legal Metrology (SADC MEL) was established in 1996 mainly to give effect to the SADC Protocol on Trade which aims to promote trade within the Region. SADC MEL meets bi-annually to discuss issues pertaining to the aims of the Organization. Briefly these aims are as follows:

- 1 Harmonize legislation to promote trade and ensure compatibility with international requirements.
- 2 Facilitate training.
- 3 Arrange intercomparisons to ensure uniformity.
- 4 Exchange metrology-related information and provide assistance to members where possible.

The present priority is the drafting of harmonized legislation dealing with prepackages.

Meetings

Activities covered in this article concern discussions held during the last two meetings of SADC MEL. These were held in Arusha, Tanzania on 30 November and 1 December 2000 and Maseru, Lesotho on 26 April 2001. SADC MEL Technical Committees met on 24 April 2001. The OIML was represented in Arusha by Mr. Bernard Athané and in Maseru by Mr. Jean-François Magaña who both gave valuable input. Forty-three delegates attended the Maseru meeting and these included associate members and observers from non member countries and international organizations.

Harmonization of legislation**Quantity declaration on prepackages**

A draft document has been prepared using the requirements of OIML R 79 but also including Annexes

which give more details regarding the sale of specific commodities. The Annexes follow the generic requirements of OIML R 79 but specify exemption from marking, units of measurement to be used and prescribed package sizes. Problem areas discussed at the last meeting of TC 1 which deals with this matter include the following:

- i) Height of prescribed markings for which two alternative models are given in OIML R 79 meaning that packages marked according to one may not comply in countries requiring the other. More research needs to be done to determine most common practice and when OIML R 79 is amended we will strongly support a single normative requirement.
- ii) The requirement that the declared quantity shall be on the principal display panel seems to be ignored by various countries judging by the markings on many products imported into the SADC Region. It appears that the definition of "Principal display panel" is interpreted very loosely and this will be discussed with our largest trading partners.
- iii) Misleading packaging appears to be on the increase and further research into legislation of other countries must be conducted to determine how best to legislate in addition to R 79 and R 87 requirements, to prevent such practices.

2 Tolerances on prepackages

The SADC MEL document dealing with this issue has been put on hold until the Revision of OIML R 87 is completed. During our November 2000 meeting comments to the 1st Committee Draft were discussed, as were comments to the 2nd Committee Draft during the meeting of TC 1 in April 2001. We are now awaiting with interest, the distribution of international comments to the 2nd CD of R 87.

3 Instruments

TC 2 deals with harmonization of legislation for instruments. OIML Recommendations are being adopted by members but for certain instruments such as mechanical equal armed counter and beam scales, which are still extensively used in the SADC Region, stand-alone technical requirements are being drafted. This is not a priority and at present documents for the aforementioned instruments are in rough draft form only.

Training

TC 4 deals with training issues. A document setting out a training curriculum for inspectors is being drafted and a list of possible training institutions compiled. Various international courses have been attended by legal metrologists from member countries and it is the intention to institute “train the trainer” courses within the region.

A two day seminar on the requirements of the new OIML R 49-1 was held in Arusha prior to the November 2000 meeting. The seminar was funded by the PTB and presented by Mr. Frank Schink of Spanner - Pollux, Germany. As the accuracy of water meters is becoming the responsibility of the legal metrology organization in most member countries, the seminar was of great assistance to the Region.

At the time of writing an in-depth analysis of training and infrastructural needs of member countries is being undertaken in order to prepare a project proposal for the securement of donor funding to uplift legal metrology within the region.

Exchange of information

A directory of legal metrology within the SADC Region was published in March 2001. Information is covered in

a similar format to that of the OIML document. Within the Region assistance is given wherever possible at the request of member countries and type approval documentation is exchanged. At present the legal metrology organizations of Kenya and Uganda are associate members of SADCMEML.

Contact details

The current Chairperson of SADCMEML is Mr. Ali Tukai of Tanzania and the Regional Co-ordinator is Brian Beard of South Africa.

Information about SADCMEML can be obtained from the Regional Co-ordinator at the following address:

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