

RLMO MEETING

Report on the 11th SADC MEL Meeting

8–9 April 2002
Mahé, Seychelles

BRIAN BEARD, SABS (South Africa)

The 11th SADC MEL and Technical Committee meetings formed part of the annual series of meetings of SADC organizations dealing with Standardisation, Quality Assurance, Accreditation and Metrology (SQAM).

The 11th SADC MEL meeting was attended by 41 delegates representing 13 of the 14 SADC countries and observers from Kenya (associate members), NWML (UK), BIML, PTB, UNIDO and COMESA.

Technical Committee Meetings (8 May 2002)

Technical Committee meetings are normally held prior to the SADC MEL meeting in order to discuss issues that have not been resolved by correspondence. Full reports on activities are then tabled at the main meeting.

- ▶ TC 1 *Packaging and Sale of Goods* - discussed outstanding issues in the SADC MEL labelling of goods document.
- ▶ TC 2 *Instruments* - discussed the almost complete draft of a document including stand alone on requirements for mechanical non self indicating counter scales and beam scales based on the requirements of OIML R 76.
- ▶ TC 4 *Training* - Comments to a draft document on minimum training requirements for legal metrology practitioners were discussed. Once completed, train the trainer courses will be developed after attending similar courses offered internationally.

11th SADC MEL Meeting (9 May 2002)

Mr. Ali Tukai, SADC MEL Chairperson, opened the meeting by welcoming all present. He had a special word of welcome for the international observers.

The meeting agenda and minutes of the 10th SADC MEL meeting were then approved.

Among matters arising it was noted that:

- ▶ Kenya had formally been accepted as an associate member.
- ▶ Members had been invited to join SABS subcommittees dealing with legal metrology issues which included the adoption of OIML Recommendations as National Standards, which in turn, could be adopted as Regional Standards if so agreed.

Addresses by invited guests

Mr. Chris Rosenberg (NWML, UK) gave an overview of the history of legal metrology in the UK and the present activities of the NWML. EU legislation is fast changing in line with the “New Approach” directives and it is important that the NWML be involved and give input to ensure that UK needs are incorporated. Legal metrology legislation is currently being liberalized in the UK and moving from total regulator control to allowing private industry to carry out certain tasks such as verification, and relying on quality systems to prove confidence. The NWML participates in OIML and WELMEC activities including 30 technical committees and hosting several secretariats.

The following points of interest to members were highlighted during question time:

- ▶ Training courses offered, especially the seminar on the benefits of legal metrology aimed at senior government officials.
- ▶ The implications of the Measuring Instrument Directive.
- ▶ ISO 9000 and not ISO 17025 was used to prove competence and quality in private verification companies.

Mr. Attila Szilvássy (BIML) briefly outlined current OIML activities that included the replacement of Mr. Athané by Mr. Magaña as BIML Director and matters discussed at the February OIML Presidential Council Meeting. He also mentioned forthcoming events - the seminar on *What will Legal Metrology be in the Year 2020*, the CIML and the Development Council meetings - to be organized in France in September–October 2002.

Further he dealt with the requirements for applying for OIML membership as well as membership fees and obligations and rights of Member States and Corresponding Members. He stressed that it was easy and inexpensive (1 828 € entry fee plus 914 € subscription fee for the current year) to become a Corresponding Member when compared with the complete set of OIML

documents and services received in return. A document dealing with fees, obligations and rights was distributed.

Letters addressed to SADCMEML by Mr. Bernard Athané as outgoing BIML Director and Mr. Jean-François Magaña, the new BIML Director, were read.

Report on SQAM funding proposal

A needs analysis within member countries was carried out and a project proposal to secure donor funding for the development of legal metrology infrastructures within the region, has been completed. This project forms part of a greater project covering all SQAM structures (Standards bodies, Accreditation bodies, National Metrology bodies and Legal Metrology bodies).

It appears that the EU will be a likely donor and the proposals will now be edited to reflect EU terminology and give a clear link to SADC policy frameworks. This will require a technical regulation framework acceptable to SADC members and in line with international best practices. It is expected that the editing process and linkage to policies will be completed by September 2002.

Technical activities

Packaging of goods

Mr. Beard, TC 1 Chairperson, reported on committee activities and the following discussion points were highlighted:

- ▶ The SADCMEML document on labelling and sale of goods requirements has recently been circulated to industry within member countries; discussions with industry should continue as a matter of urgency in order to accommodate industry requirements and to ensure acceptance.
- ▶ Members will discuss the need for harmonization of requirements for fresh fruit and vegetables with their Departments of Agriculture.

The TC 1 Chairperson mentioned that the 3 CD of revision of OIML R 87, that deals with tolerances, sampling methods and other aspects of the sale of goods, has recently been distributed. There were over 500 comments to the 2 CD and many of these appear to have been incorporated in the latest draft. It appeared however as if several requirements requested by SADCMEML and incorporated in the 2 CD have now been omitted. This is of great concern as it means that due to a lack of consensus there will be no international harmonization on aspects such as a standard temperature at which prepacked liquids should be correct

(packed) or requirements for commodities that are susceptible to moisture loss and therefore weight loss, after packing. It seems that SADCMEML will have to develop regional requirements for such issues.

Members were reminded that comments to 3 CD should be submitted to the TC chairperson by 17 May so that they could be sent to other members for comment and submitted to OIML TC 6 as SADCMEML comments. In addition the document will be discussed with South African industry and comments made to OIML TC 6.

Instruments

Mr. Zulu of Zambia, TC 2 Chairperson, gave a report on the activities of the committee and various issues were discussed. The following points were highlighted:

- ▶ The document on requirements for mechanical non-self indicating counter scales will be amended and distributed within industry for comment and industry requirements will be discussed at the next TC meeting.
- ▶ A target matrix for implementation, including target dates for acceptance of relevant OIML Recommendations by members, has been distributed to members for completion. The target dates are intended to set priorities for adoption of Recommendations in order to establish training and other infrastructural needs. The final date for completion of the matrix was set as 31 May 2002.

Training

Mr. Molefe of Botswana, TC 4 Chairperson, reported that the document on minimum training requirements will be amended and distributed for comment and the revision of OIML D 14 will also be followed and used as input when completed.

In connection with the PTB proposal for a regional training course the Regional Coordinator mentioned that after Angola and DRC requested funding to attend a course on the verification of Non Automatic Weighing Instruments, the PTB had suggested holding a regional course that would be more cost effective. The PTB had generously offered to assist with costs and members would be expected to provide counterpart funding to ensure ownership, as follows:

- ▶ Least developed countries (UN list): 15 %
- ▶ Other members: 30 %

The course would be offered in South Africa and would include a visit to a weighbridge and practical

testing of single and multi interval electronic scales. The course would be held in July or August and cater for about ten people who could then train others in their respective countries. At the end of the course a PTB representative would hold an evaluation workshop at the PTB's expense to establish needs to start a verification activity (equipment, etc.) and possibly assist with further funding where appropriate. Course arrangements will be made if there is sufficient interest.

Dr Stoll-Malke (PTB) said that he felt that the region would benefit more by holding the course under local conditions and using local expertise. The PTB wanted to assist institutions to get started at a basic level and support self-sustainable functions which is why countries are required to pay a portion of training costs.

Long term strategy for SADC MEL

Mr. Carstens (SABS) gave a presentation on how he viewed the future role and activities of SADC MEL. He gave an overview of the benefits of Legal Metrology to the economy, including promotion of trade, and stressed the need for harmonized technical requirements. He then mentioned how technical regulations were being dealt with in South Africa and put forward his thoughts on how the harmonisation process should proceed within SADC MEL. Initiatives should be put in place to assist with the uniform interpretation, implementation and maintenance of regulations and he proposed an annual Regional Workshop on Legal Metrology.

Mr. Pamacheche (SADC Secretariat) noted that the information given ties in with overall SADC thinking.

General

Dr Hengstberger (Regional Coordinator of SADC MET - the grouping of National Metrology Laboratories) mentioned that it was important that the SADC Resource Centre for Metrology Education (SRCME) started functioning according to the signed MOU.

It was confirmed that Mr. Beard would be the SADC MEL board member and SADC MEL will give its full support to the SRCME.

Date and venue of next meeting

Mozambique's offer to host the 12th SADC MEL meeting in late October or early November was accepted unanimously. Malawi and Namibia offered to host future meetings.

Election of new SADC MEL Chairperson

The SADC MEL chair rotates every two years and the term of office of Mr. Tukai expired in April 2002. Mr. Kimon Zulu of Zambia was elected as chairperson for the next two years.

Closure

Mr. Tukai closed the meeting after thanking delegates for their input and the regional coordinator for a well organized meeting.

Mr. Zulu as the new chairperson thanked members and delegates for the confidence shown in electing him to chair SADC MEL and promised to give of his best and trusted that he will receive the same loyal support accorded to Mr. Tukai over the last two years.

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