

REPORT BY THE CONVENOR

MR JOHN BIRCH AM

**To delegates to the Fifth APLMF meeting
in Seoul, Republic of Korea**

In the four years since the Forum was established the program activities have shown a rapid expansion. This has been possible because of the strong commitment that members have made to support the Forum activities. Whilst enhancing technical capability through training courses has been a major focus, of equal importance have been the raising of the profile of legal metrology and developing policies for modernisation of legal metrology in the region.

Following on from the training courses held in Tsukuba in 1997, further training courses were held in Shanghai in September this year, on Introduction to High Capacity Weighing and a train-the-trainer course on the Pattern Approval of Non-automatic Weighing Instruments, in accordance with OIML R76. These courses were attended by 27 officials from 16 economies. In addition, a further train-the-trainer course on the verification and reverification of non-automatic weighing instruments is currently being developed.

Mutual recognition will be a major focus of the 1998 Forum and CIML meetings. A meeting in Washington in April this year that developed a draft agreement on mutual recognition of pattern approval tests results has provided a framework to finalise an agreement on this issue which will complement the OIML Certificate System.

Mutual recognition is being driven by globalisation and highlights the important role that measurement will play in that process. The great virtue of physical measurement is its ability arising from its objective and numerical characteristics. Trust on the national measurement system is provided by governments legislating the requirements and ensuring that they are met. Globalisation requires this trust to be extended beyond national borders and the Forum programs on Legislation and Administration aims to contribute to this process.

Legal metrology's responsibility for mutual recognition is very broad and includes:

- measurement for international trade in bulk commodities. This is an area where disputes still occur between exporters and importers;
- testing of measuring instruments for approval and certification;
- measurement labelling of pre-packed goods that are traded internationally. This is a rapidly expanding area of international trade;

- regulatory measurements conducted to meet international treaty requirements. Greenhouse gas emissions is just one example where nations will need to show they are meeting treaty obligations. Such measurements are also fundamental to any emission treaty scheme.

However success in this process of globalisation will only be possible if national measurement systems are sufficiently integrated and coherent. Legal metrology authorities have a major responsibility in this regard in coordinating their national measurement system, particularly through legislative provisions.

Dr Birkeland, who conducted the Review of Technical Infrastructure for the Forum has recently completed a discussion document for CIML on the challenges facing the Global Measurement System I am sure that discussion on this document will stimulate new programs within the Forum.

Having reached our fourth year it is appropriate that we consider a more formal structure for the Forum. The draft MoU to be discussed at this Forum meeting has drawn on the experience of other regional organisations (APMP, APLAC) and a number of important issues still need to be finalised by this Forum meeting.

Last year the Forum established an Executive Committee and whilst there is still much to be done in developing the operation of this committee, I have found it very valuable to be able to contact the members to obtain their advice on a range of issues.

Finally I would like to express my appreciation of the contribution that Mrs Loon Khoo continues to make to the effective functioning of the Forum.

John Birch AM
Convenor

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