IAF/ILAC Multi-Lateral Mutual Recognition Arrangements (Arrangements): Requirements and Procedures for Evaluation of a Regional Group

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PREAMBLE

The international accreditation community comprising Regional Groups, recognized accreditation bodies, and their stakeholders cooperate through the International Accreditation Forum, Inc. (IAF) and the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC). A principal objective of IAF and ILAC is to put in place world-wide, multilateral Mutual Recognition Arrangements (Arrangements). Both IAF and ILAC aim to demonstrate the equivalence of the operation of the recognized Regional Groups and their member accreditation bodies through these Arrangements. As a consequence, the equivalent competence of conformity assessment bodies (CABs) accredited by these accreditation bodies is demonstrated. The market can then be more confident in accepting certificates and reports issued by the accredited conformity assessment bodies.

IAF and ILAC are linking the existing Arrangements of the Regional Groups (also called regional accreditation cooperations or regional cooperations) and are encouraging the development of new Regional Groups to complete world-wide coverage. For the purposes of their Arrangements, both IAF and ILAC delegate authority to their "recognized" Regional Group Members for the evaluation, surveillance and re-evaluation of full Member Accreditation Bodies within their defined territory and associated decision making relating to the membership of the IAF and ILAC Arrangements in that territory. Formal "Recognition" of a Regional Group with respect to the IAF and ILAC Arrangements is based on an external evaluation of the Regional Group's competence in mutual recognition Arrangement management, practice and procedures by an evaluation team composed of regional evaluators from other IAF and ILAC Member Regional Groups and accreditation bodies.

Evaluations relating to the development and maintenance of the IAF and ILAC Arrangements operate at two levels:

- the evaluation of the competence of single Accreditation Bodies to perform accreditation of CABs (see IAF/ILAC A2);
- the evaluation of a Regional Group's competence in managing the operations of regional mutual recognition Arrangements.

The requirements to be used by IAF and ILAC when evaluating the competence of a Regional Group in managing, maintaining, and extending a regional mutual recognition Arrangement for the purposes of IAF and ILAC Recognition are set out in the following chapters of this document.

This version adds no new requirements to the last (March 2020) version. The only change from the March 2020 version is 'IAF PR 4' being changed to 'IAF PL 3' in the note accompanying para. 2.6.9 a), in reference to where the definition of 'Levels' can be located in IAF documentation.

Date of publication: 29 June 2023
Date of mandatory application: To be used for all peer evaluations commenced from the date of publication.

PURPOSE

To provide IAF and/or ILAC with requirements or criteria for evaluating Regional Groups for the purpose of recognition.

AUTHORSHIP

This publication was prepared by a joint IAF/ILAC working group on Harmonization of Peer Evaluation Processes and endorsed for publication by the respective General Assemblies of IAF and ILAC in 2004 and reviewed by a joint IAF/ILAC working group on maintenance of A-series documents in 2006, 2009, 2013, 2015, 2017 and in 2019.

The March 2020 version of this document was endorsed via letter-ballot in IAF and ILAC.

This June 2023 secretarial revision includes only the minor editorial change described in the preamble.

SECTION 1: Introduction

1.1 Scope

This document identifies requirements and procedures for evaluation of Regional Groups of accreditation bodies operating a multilateral mutual recognition Arrangement. It includes requirements for the organization, management system and procedures for evaluating Regional Group's multilateral, mutual recognition Arrangement(s). Section 3 of this document is a framework for use by IAF and ILAC in order to provide (joint) evaluations with harmonized procedures. There are nine annexes of this document to describe in more detail the major steps of the process.

1.2 Definitions

For the purpose of this document the following definitions apply:

1.2.1 *Accreditation Body (single or multi economy AB):* an organization that operates an accreditation system for one or more types of conformity assessment bodies.

1.2.2 *Accreditation scheme:* rules and procedures specified in a standard or normative document included in IAF and/or ILAC Arrangements that address the process for the accreditation of conformity assessment bodies (Level 3).

1.2.3 *Arrangement:* The IAF Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA) or ILAC Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA). The term can also refer to the Arrangements of recognized Regional Groups which pre-date the establishment of the IAF and ILAC Arrangements and which, as a consequence of the recognition process, will be accepted as a subset of the IAF and ILAC Arrangements.

1.2.4 *Arrangement Group:* All signatories to an Arrangement (In IAF: MLA Group; In ILAC: Arrangement Signatories).

1.2.5 *Decision Making Group:* A body that decides on the status of membership of an Arrangement (In IAF: MLA Group; In ILAC: Arrangement Council).

1.2.6 *Evaluation Team Leader (TL):* A person responsible for leading an Arrangement peer evaluation team in the evaluation of an accreditation body.

1.2.7 *Evaluation Team Member (TM):* A person serving on an Arrangement peer evaluation team in the evaluation of an accreditation body.

1.2.8 *Standard:* A standard or other normative document related to accreditation and conformity assessment bodies.

1.2.9 *Management Committee (MC):* A small member group responsible for the everyday management of the Arrangement process (In IAF: IAF MLA MC; In ILAC: ILAC Arrangement MC.)

1.2.10 *MC Secretariat:* Secretariat for the Management Committee (In IAF: IAF MLA MC Secretariat; In ILAC: ILAC Secretariat).

1.2.11 *Peer Evaluation:* A structured process of evaluation of a Regional Group or accreditation body by representatives of accreditation bodies.

NOTE: In ISO/IEC 17040, instead of peer evaluation, the term peer assessment is used and is defined slightly differently.

1.2.12 *Regional Arrangement Group:* All signatories to an Arrangement of a Regional Group.

1.2.13 *Regional Evaluation Team Leader (TL-R):* A person responsible for leading a team in the evaluation of a Regional Group.

1.2.14 *Regional Evaluation Team Member (TM-R):* A person serving on a team to evaluate a Regional Group.

1.2.15 *Regional Group:* A regional cooperation body member of IAF and/or ILAC. This term can also refer to a group of accreditation bodies (possibly involving other stakeholders) whose purpose is to develop and maintain an Arrangement and is a group of different accreditation bodies representing different economies.

1.2.16 *Signatory:* A Member of IAF and/or ILAC who has signed one or more of the Arrangements of a Regional Group or has signed the IAF and/or ILAC Arrangement.

SECTION 2: Requirements for Regional Groups

2.1 Regional Group - General

2.1.1 The Regional Group shall define the scopes of its Arrangement.

2.1.2 The Regional Group shall make its services concerning its Arrangement(s) accessible to all accreditation bodies whose activities fall within its declared field of operation and geographic area.

2.1.3 The Regional Group shall confine its requirements, evaluations and decisions on accreditation bodies wishing to join its Arrangement to those outlined in the ISO/IEC 17011, other normative documents relevant to the function performed and, where appropriate, supplementary requirements and guidance of the Regional Group harmonized with those of IAF and ILAC.

2.1.4 The Regional Group shall:

2.1.4.1 identify the management which will have overall responsibility for each of the following:

a) performance of Peer Evaluation of accreditation bodies as defined in this document,
b) formulation of policy matters relating to the operation of the Regional Group,
c) decisions on Signatories to the Arrangement, and
d) oversight of the implementation of its policies.

2.1.4.2 ensure that each decision on the acceptability of an applicant to sign the Arrangement is taken by persons representing all Arrangement Signatories.

2.2 Management System

2.2.1 The Regional Group shall establish and maintain a management system to operate an Arrangement in accordance with the relevant parts of this document and appropriate to the type, range and volume of work performed. The Regional Group shall ensure effective implementation of the documented management system procedures and work instructions. The Regional Group shall periodically audit and review the management system as a basis for improvement of the system.

2.2.2 The following elements of the management system shall be documented:

- Mission, policies, and objectives;
- Organization chart and description of the organization;
- Procedures for peer evaluation of a single accreditation body that are consistent with those specified in IAF/ILAC A2 and its relevant annexes and mandatory use of IAF/ILAC A3 Peer Evaluation templates for single or unaffiliated ABs;
- Conduct of internal audits and management reviews;
- Control of documents;

- Selection, training, qualification and monitoring of Peer Evaluators;
- Records related to Peer Evaluation;
- Arrangements for ensuring confidentiality of Peer Evaluation information;
- Policies and procedures for the resolution of complaints and appeals received from accreditation bodies or other parties about the handling of Peer Evaluations and Arrangement Signatory status or any related matters;
- Policy and procedure for suspension and withdrawal, including the subsequent actions by the Regional Group and the consequences of suspension or withdrawal; and
- Procedure for extending into new scopes of recognition, addressing development of the program, requirements for evaluation and decision making.

2.3 Documentation

2.3.1 The Regional Group shall document, update at regular intervals, and make available (through publications, electronic media or other means) upon request:

2.3.1.1 information about the Peer Evaluation and MLA/MRA recognition process;
2.3.1.2 requirements, restrictions or limitations on ways the signatories of the Regional Group's Arrangements(s) can refer to that recognition and to the accreditation body's signatory status;
2.3.1.3 information on how to submit complaints and appeals;
2.3.1.4 information on Arrangement Signatories describing the scope of recognition of each signatory; and
2.3.1.5 list of evaluation requirements.

2.3.2 The Regional Group shall control all documents and records that relate to its Peer Evaluation functions. These documents shall be reviewed and approved for adequacy by appropriately authorized and competent personnel prior to the issuing of any documents, following initial development or any subsequent amendment or change being made. A listing of all appropriate documents with the respective issue and/or amendment status identified shall be maintained. For all documents describing the performance of any function related to the activities of Arrangement applicants and Arrangement signatories, the distribution shall be controlled to ensure that the appropriate issue is made available to Arrangement applicants and signatories and to personnel of the Regional Group.

2.4 Confidentiality

2.4.1 All oral and written information received relating to evaluations, re-evaluations, appeals and complaints (except that information which is already publicly accessible) shall be treated confidentially by all parties and persons concerned. This includes information relating to applicants and/or signatories of the Arrangement Group.

2.4.2 Declarations of confidentiality shall be signed by all persons before being given access to confidential information, including:

- all members and observers of the regional evaluation teams;

- all members, observers and secretariat personnel of the MC and (where relevant) the Appeals Panels;
- all applicants and signatories of the Arrangement Group who request or are given access to any report on pre-evaluation, evaluation and re-evaluation of other applicants and members;
- other persons having access to confidential information.

2.4.3 The Regional Group under evaluation shall advise the regional team members how to treat the documents it has provided. This advice may require the regional team members to:

- return all documents to the Regional Group; or
- destroy the documentation, when it is determined there is no further need to maintain the documents.

2.4.4 Rules for the publication of evaluation reports are outlined in Annex 9

2.5 Regional Group personnel

2.5.1 The personnel of the Regional Group involved in a peer evaluation process including Arrangement applications, on-site evaluations and decision making shall be competent for the functions they perform.

2.5.2 In order to ensure that the peer evaluations are carried out effectively and uniformly, the relevant criteria for competence of peer evaluators, including trainees if necessary, shall be defined by the Regional Group.

2.5.3 Peer evaluators shall meet the requirements as presented in Annex 1 in IAF/ILAC A2.

2.6 Other obligations

2.6.1 The Regional Group shall effectively implement tasks assigned to it by IAF and/or ILAC.

2.6.2 The Regional Group shall have evidence of promoting the Arrangement with major stakeholders.

2.6.3 The Regional Group shall provide appropriate technical support and enhance harmonization and education within the region through activities such as workshops, conferences, task groups, etc.

2.6.4 The Regional Group shall provide peer evaluator training and/or workshops as necessary, taking into account any changes made to the peer evaluation criteria and to the availability of peer evaluators.

2.6.5 The Regional Group shall contribute its fair share of personnel resources for carrying out peer evaluations at the global level. A fair share of personnel resources is based in proportion to the number of MLA/MRA members of a Regional group compared to all

ILAC MRA/IAF MLA members and the MLA/ MRA members of other Regional groups.

2.6.6 The Regional Group shall ensure that all signatories of the Arrangement shall continually fulfil the obligations in IAF/ILAC A2.

2.6.7 The Regional Group shall periodically report technical activities to support continuing demonstration of equivalence within the Regional Group and between Regional Groups (see also Annex 7).

2.6.8 See obligations in maintenance, suspending and withdrawal of Regional Groups (see Annex 8).

2.6.9 Conditions for application:

a) Sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the Regional Group's activities for implementing and maintaining an Arrangement of at least 3 members as full signatories to the Regional Group's arrangement for level 3.

Note: For extensions to the scope of recognition, each application will be treated on a case by case basis by the respective Management Committee

For IAF additional level 4 and/or 5 extensions under the same level 3 scope will be granted on the basis of region self-declaration that the level 4/5 scope has been introduced and relevant requirements as defined by IAF have been met.

The additional level 4 and/or 5 scope will be evaluated at the next regional evaluation. In exceptional cases, inclusion of a level 4/5 scope may need evaluation as specifically defined by IAF for the particular level 4/5 scope.

Note: For definitions of Levels, please refer to IAF PL 3 or ILAC R6, as applicable.

b) The Regional Group shall fulfil the criteria for the Membership of IAF and/or ILAC.

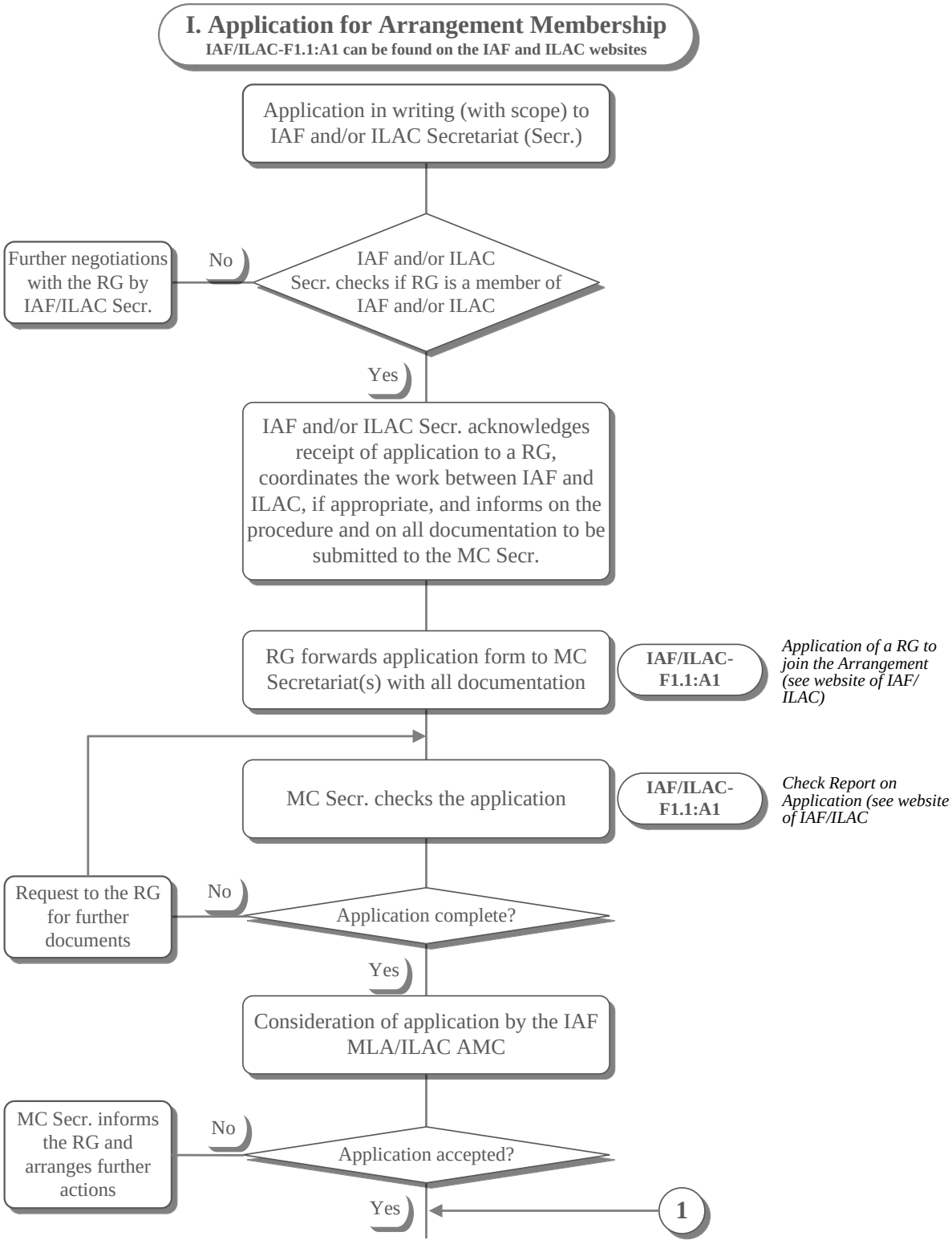
c) The Regional Group shall demonstrate the implementation of the IAF and/or ILAC requirements.

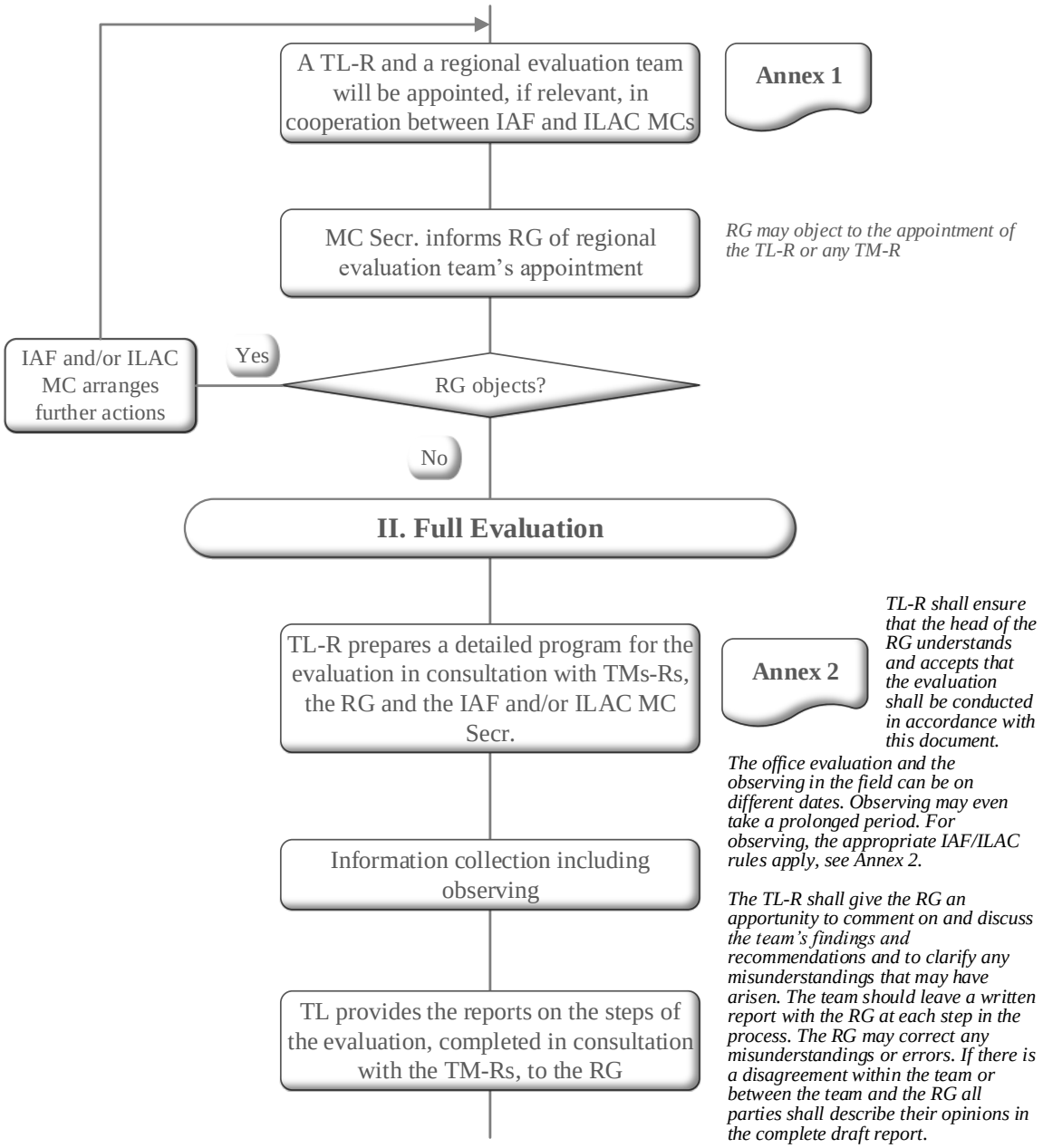
d) The Regional Group agrees to pay for the hotel costs, meals and all travel costs of the regional evaluation team.

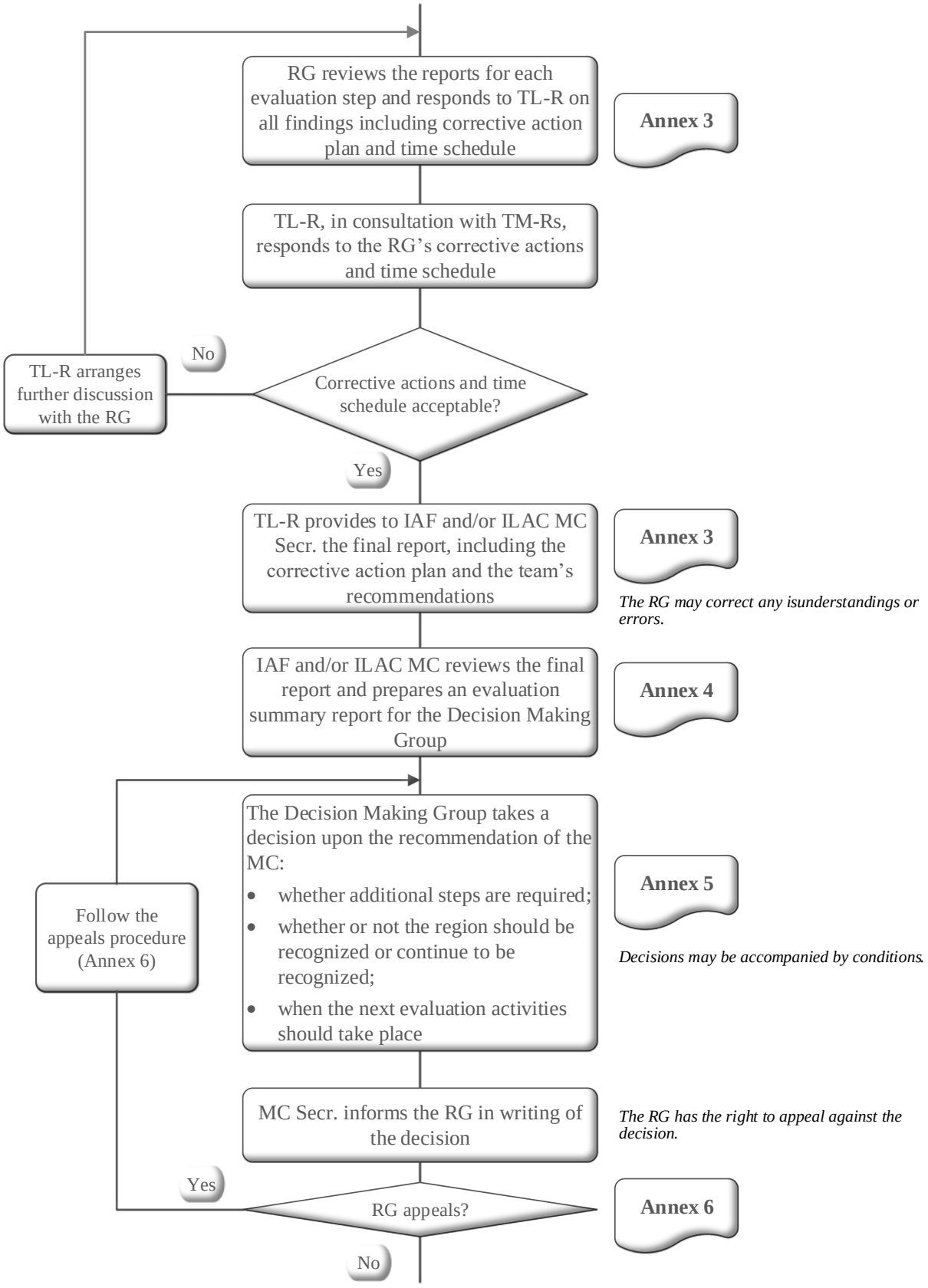
e) Travel shall be normally done in economy class unless the continuous flight time exceeds nine hours. Then the Regional Group under evaluation may specify the flight conditions.

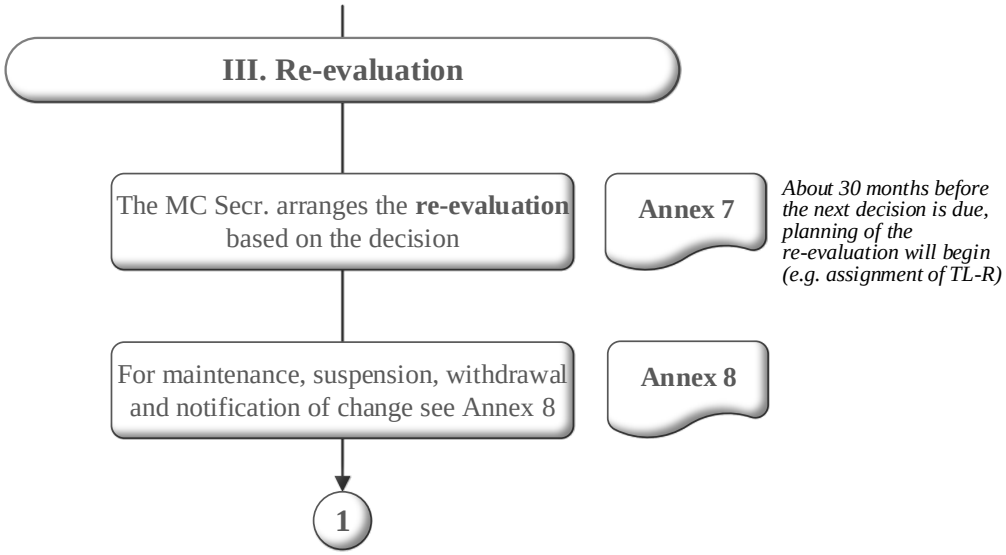
f) The observers and trainees pay all of their own costs.

SECTION 3: Flowchart for the Peer Evaluation of a Regional Group (RG)




A TL-R and a regional evaluation team will be appointed, if relevant, in cooperation between IAF and ILAC MCs
Annex 1
MC Secr. informs RG of regional evaluation team's appointment
RG may object to the appointment of the TL-R or any TM-R
IAF and/or ILAC MC arranges further actions
Yes
RG objects?
No
II. Full Evaluation
TL-R prepares a detailed program for the evaluation in consultation with TMs-Rs, the RG and the IAF and/or ILAC MC Secr.
Annex 2
TL-R shall ensure that the head of the RG understands and accepts that the evaluation shall be conducted in accordance with this document.
The office evaluation and the observing in the field can be on different dates. Observing may even take a prolonged period. For observing, the appropriate IAF/ILAC rules apply, see Annex 2.
Information collection including observing
The TL-R shall give the RG an opportunity to comment on and discuss the team's findings and recommendations and to clarify any misunderstandings that may have arisen. The team should leave a written report with the RG at each step in the process. The RG may correct any misunderstandings or errors. If there is a disagreement within the team or between the team and the RG all parties shall describe their opinions in the complete draft report.
TL provides the reports on the steps of the evaluation, completed in consultation with the TM-Rs, to the RG


RG reviews the reports for each evaluation step and responds to TL-R on all findings including corrective action plan and time schedule
Annex 3
TL-R, in consultation with TM-Rs, responds to the RG's corrective actions and time schedule
No
TL-R arranges further discussion with the RG
Corrective actions and time schedule acceptable?
Yes
TL-R provides to IAF and/or ILAC MC Secr. the final report, including the corrective action plan and the team's recommendations
Annex 3
The RG may correct any isunderstandings or errors.
IAF and/or ILAC MC reviews the final report and prepares an evaluation summary report for the Decision Making Group
Annex 4
The Decision Making Group takes a decision upon the recommendation of the MC:
whether additional steps are required;
whether or not the region should be recognized or continue to be recognized;
when the next evaluation activities should take place
Annex 5
Decisions may be accompanied by conditions.
Follow the appeals procedure (Annex 6)
MC Secr. informs the RG in writing of the decision
The RG has the right to appeal against the decision.
Yes
RG appeals?
Annex 6
No


III. Re-evaluation
The MC Secr. arranges the **re-evaluation** based on the decision
Annex 7
About 30 months before the next decision is due, planning of the re-evaluation will begin (e.g. assignment of TL-R)
For maintenance, suspension, withdrawal and notification of change see Annex 8
Annex 8
1

ANNEX 1: Requirements for the qualifications and personal attributes of regional evaluation team leaders and members, and appointment and composition of regional evaluation teams

1. Appointment and duties of the regional evaluation team leader

1.1 In appointing a regional evaluation team leader (TL-R) for a specific evaluation, the IAF and/or ILAC MCs should not appoint the same TL-R for two successive evaluations of the same applicant.

NOTE: It is normal practice that regional evaluators are appointed from as many IAF and/or ILAC members as possible.

1.2 The TL-R shall be approved and chosen from a list of available TLs on the basis of the TL names and their qualifications provided by the Regional Groups or unaffiliated IAF/ILAC members. Each TL record shall be accompanied by the scope of experience of the TL. The minimum qualifications of TL-R shall be as described in Clause 3.2.

1.3 The TL-R shall have ultimate responsibilities for all phases of the evaluation and is delegated authority by the IAF and/or ILAC MC to make final decisions regarding the conduct of the evaluation.

1.4 The IAF and/or ILAC MCs shall arrange periodic training for TL-Rs in order to improve and maintain the harmonization of the regional evaluations.

1.5 When the evaluation of a Regional Group includes both ILAC and IAF, either ILAC or IAF shall provide the TL-R; the other shall provide a Deputy TL-R.

1.6 The Deputy TL-R for a regional group evaluation shall have demonstrated that he/she fulfils the conditions referred to in section 3.3 below and performs as an experienced TM-R capable to act as a TL-R.

NOTE: The role of Deputy TL-R may be used as training for future TL-R.

1.7 Alternately, a Deputy TL-R may be an approved TL-R but if assigned to a regional team, the Deputy TL-R shall have different competences than the TL-R to cover as much as possible of the accreditation scopes of the Regional Group under evaluation.

1.8 The role of the Deputy TL-R is to assist the TL-R in planning, preparing, and managing the regional evaluation, ensuring that the issues and requirements of their global Arrangement (ILAC MRA or IAF MLA) are met and the Deputy TL-R can also replace the TL-R in case of illness or similar circumstances.

2. Composition of the regional evaluation team

2.1 For the full regional evaluation visit, members of the regional evaluation team shall be chosen as needed to cover the types of accreditation, and the size and complexity of the Regional Group under evaluation.

2.2 Regional evaluation team members (TM-Rs) shall be approved and chosen from a list of available TM-Rs provided by the regions or unaffiliated bodies. Each region or unaffiliated body shall provide the scope of experience for the TM-R. The qualifications of TM-Rs shall be as described in Clause 3.3.

2.3 The regional evaluation team (including the TL-R) chosen shall consist of representatives from a cross-section of Regional Groups and/or unaffiliated IAF and/or ILAC members. The regional evaluation team shall be chosen to provide a balanced set of skills so as to be able to conduct an effective evaluation of the key components of the system under examination.

2.4 No team member shall have provided consultancy to the Regional Group under evaluation within three years prior to the evaluation.

NOTE 1: There should be no more than one member from each accreditation member body represented in the regional evaluation team.

NOTE 2: The TM-Rs should have working knowledge of the English language. Knowledge of the local language should be taken into account.

NOTE 3: Some of the TM-Rs may have as their only task the observing of peer evaluations at different geographical places or at different times than the rest of the team. In the case of observing joint peer-evaluations, a TM-R should not observe a person from the same region.

3. Requirements for Qualifications of Regional Peer Evaluators

3.1 Selection of Regional Evaluators

3.1.1 The IAF and/or ILAC MC shall approve and oversee the performance of regional evaluators in accordance with the criteria in Annex 1, section 3.

3.1.2 The Regional Groups and unaffiliated IAF and/or ILAC members may nominate regional evaluators (i.e., TL-R and TM-R) in writing, including a description of their qualifications and the scope covered by each proposed regional evaluator to the IAF and/or ILAC MC.

3.2 Regional evaluation team leaders

3.2.1 A TL-R shall meet the requirements of IAF/ILAC A2, Annex 1, Clause 1.5.3. and:

3.2.1.1 have successfully participated in at least three peer evaluations of accreditation bodies as a TL and have participated in at least two decision making processes at the regional/international level;

3.2.1.2 have knowledge of the application of IAF and/or ILAC requirements that apply to Regional Groups; and

3.2.1.3 be able to understand and to express himself/herself clearly, in spoken and written English.

3.3 Regional evaluation team members

3.3.1 A TM-R shall meet the requirements of IAF/ILAC A2, Annex 1, and be able to evaluate whether a Regional Group complies with the requirements of this document (IAF/ILAC A1).

3.3.2 A TM-R shall be an experienced person within an accreditation body who has relevant working experience with accreditation and shall be a TL or have been a TM in two accreditation body peer evaluations. In case the TM-R is tasked with observing a meeting of the Decision Making Group, the TM-R shall have participated in at least one decision making process at the regional/international level.

3.4 Regional evaluator attributes

3.4.1 Regional Evaluators shall meet the requirements of IAF/ILAC A2, Annex 1, Clause 1.5.3.

4. Monitoring of Regional Evaluators

4.1 With the objective of continual improvement of the IAF/ILAC peer evaluation as an important part of the IAF/ILAC MLA/MRA, the team members of the IAF/ILAC evaluation team must review the performance of the team leader for their evaluation team, and the team leader must review the performance of the team members for the team.

4.2 The team members shall complete IAF/ILAC Form *Performance Log for an ILAC/IAF Team Leader, (IAF/ILAC F1.7-A1/A2),* and the team leader shall complete IAF/ILAC form *Performance Log for an IAF/ILAC Evaluator (TM) or IAF/ILAC Technical Expert (TE), (IAF/ILAC F1.8-A1/A2).* The team members and team leader shall send these completed forms for their team leader or team member(s), respectively to the IAF MLA MC/ILAC AMC Secretariats, as appropriate within 30 days of the completion of the decision making process for the regional group under evaluation.

4.3 The Regional Group being evaluated shall complete ILAC/IAF Form *for Evaluation Team Performance Review by the Evaluated Regional Group, (IAF/ILAC F1.9-A1/A2),*with comments on the performance of the TL-R and each TM-R within 30 days of completion of the peer evaluation, including the team's final response to the corrective actions.

4.4 The results of these reviews shall be collected by the IAF MLA MC/ILAC AMC Secretariats and the results shall be reported to the ILAC AMC and IAF MLA MC Chairs. ILAC and IAF shall also forward these reviews to the appropriate regional representative in a timely manner.

ANNEX 2: Typical evaluation program of a Regional Group

1. Introduction

The task of an evaluation of a Regional Group is to collect sufficient information about the evaluation and decision-making processes of the Regional Group to have confidence in the results from conformity assessment bodies accredited by signatory accreditation bodies of the Regional Group.

It is the task of the TL-R to create a timetable (in a timely manner) prior to the evaluation of the Regional Group that allows sufficient time to collect information for obtaining such confidence. The names of the accreditation bodies and the region's evaluators for the observed evaluations shall not be identified in the full evaluation report and that includes the evaluation timetable and the observed evaluation reports. However, a full record of the names of the accreditation bodies and the region's evaluators for the observed evaluations shall be separately maintained and provided to the IAF MLA MC and/or ILAC AMC secretariats.

The evaluation process of a Regional Group involves the evaluation of the operations of the Regional Group Secretariat and decision-making process, and the collection and analysis of information gained from observing evaluations of accreditation bodies done by the Regional Group.

2. Evaluation program

2.1 The process for the initial evaluation of a Regional Group

A regional evaluation team of at least two persons, depending on the number of scopes of Arrangements handled by the Regional Group Secretariat (one of whom shall be the TL-R) shall be appointed by the relevant MC. This regional evaluation team shall evaluate the region to ensure it complies with the requirements of IAF/ILAC A1. The regional evaluation team will also ensure the region follows the requirements of IAF/ILAC A2 in undertaking evaluations of accreditation bodies.

For the evaluation of the Regional Group Secretariat three days should be sufficient. The regional evaluation team shall also observe at least three evaluations done by the region. These shall be evaluations that collectively encompass the scopes of the Arrangement applied for by the region.

In addition, the TL-R or a designate shall observe at least one process of the Decision Making Group, preferably involving the decision making for an observed evaluation. The planning of such processes and their frequency will determine the total duration of the evaluation.

2.2 The process for the re-evaluation of a recognized Regional Group

A regional evaluation team of at least two persons, depending on the number of scopes of Arrangements handled by the Regional Group Secretariat (one of whom shall be the TL-R) shall be appointed by the relevant MC. This regional evaluation team shall re-evaluate the region to ensure it continues to comply with the requirements of IAF/ILAC A1. The regional evaluation team will also ensure the region follows the requirements of IAF/ILAC A2 in undertaking evaluations of accreditation bodies.

For the re-evaluation of the Regional Group Secretariat two days should be sufficient.
The regional evaluation team shall, in consultation with the region being evaluated, select at least two evaluations to observe. As far as practicable, these should be evaluations of full scope accreditation bodies. Such observations should occur as closely in time as possible (preferably less than six months apart).

During this process the regional evaluation team shall also evaluate the Decision Making process preferably involving the decision making for an observed evaluation.

Consideration could be given to using electronic techniques/via teleconference (i.e. remote processes) for some of these evaluation activities.

These re-evaluation activities (secretariat, observations, and decision making) shall be completed, reported on, and considered by the decision making group separately.

2.3 Other factors

Factors that may influence the duration of the evaluation of the region include:

- Need for translators;
- Extensive travel and travel circumstances; and
- Cultural differences in a region.

3. Managing the regional evaluation

3.1 Preparation and planning

The time for the regional evaluators to spend on preparation of an initial, renewal or scope extension evaluation largely depends on the quality of the documents that the Regional Group provides. The documents that are required are specified in the *Application from a Regional Group to join the Arrangement, (IAF/ILAC F1.1-A1).* Accurate translation of the documents into English by the Regional Group is essential.

The Regional Group shall complete the relevant portions of the Report Template for the Evaluation of a Regional Group (IAF/ILAC form IAF/ILAC F1.6-A1), and the Regional Group's documentation references in the Report on the Evaluation of the Secretariat (IAF/ILAC F1.3-A1) for the report on the regional evaluation of the Secretariat as part of the documents provided for document review by the regional evaluation team.

The regional group will submit their completed Report Template to the IAF/ILAC team as part of the application documents. The evaluation team, as part of its preparation, shall review the narrative framework and the related/referenced documents provided by the Regional Group to determine, in principle, conformance to the requirements and revise or comment on the narrative, as appropriate. The output of this process, an amended narrative, functions as a summary of the policies and process found in the Regional Group's documents.

A complete document review is performed by the regional evaluation team resulting in a report on conformity to the requirements. The Regional Group should be provided an opportunity to respond to the report before proceeding with the evaluation of the Regional Group Secretariat.

The following timeframes apply for the review of Regional Group documentation:

(1) Within eight weeks of receiving the required documentation from the IAF/ILAC MLA/MRA Secretariats, the evaluation team members shall submit their completed document review outcomes to the TL-R for review and comment.

Timeline: 8 weeks

Note: One week is equivalent to seven natural days.

(2) Within two weeks of receiving the team member's document review outcomes, the TL-R shall review the findings and submit the completed document review report to the Regional Group MLA/MRA Chair and secretariat.

Timeline: 10 weeks in total

(3) Within two weeks of receiving a document review report, the Regional Group, shall provide a written response to the TL-R and relevant TM-R:

a. identifying any finding(s) that the Regional Group does not agree with including an explanation of why the Regional Group does not agree with the finding(s).

b. with the proposed corrective actions and timeframes for implementation for each of the agreed nonconformities. It is preferably to respond before the Secretariat visit and if not, the corrective action should be sent with the responses of the secretariat's visit.

Timeline: 12 weeks in total

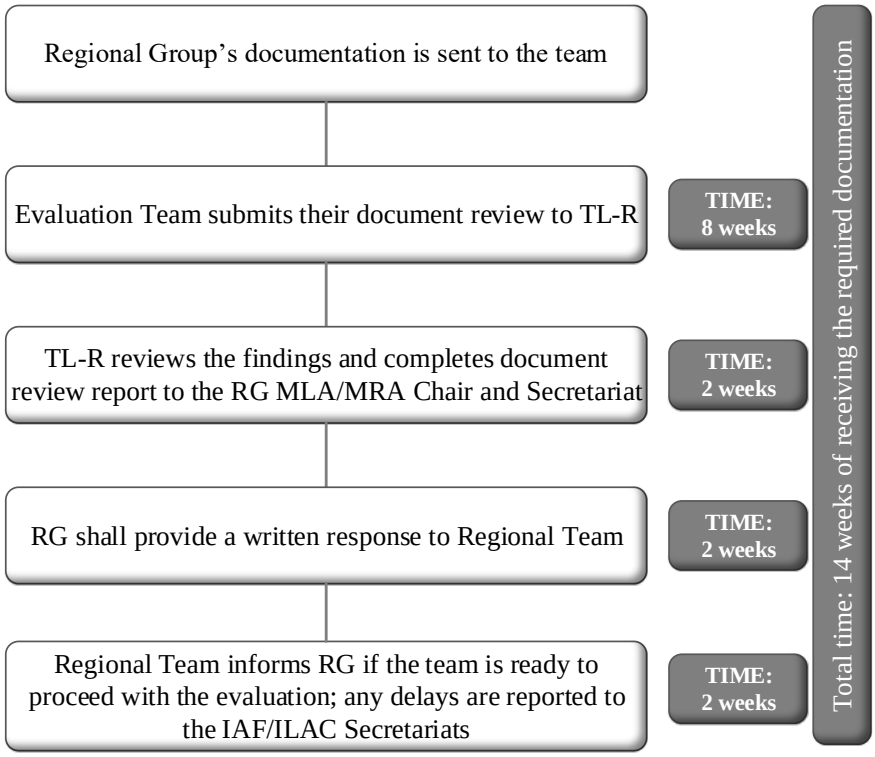
(4) Within two weeks of receiving the written response from the Regional Group, the TL-R shall inform the Regional Group on whether the regional evaluation team has agreed that the Regional Group is ready to proceed with the evaluation; any delays are reported to the IAF MLA MC/ILAC AMC secretariats.

Timeline: Within 14 weeks of receiving the required documentation.

The TL-R shall provide a copy of the proposed timetable for the evaluation to the Regional Group Secretariat in a timely manner prior to the visit.

NOTE: It is preferable to perform the evaluation of the Regional Group Secretariat before any observing.

Typical evaluation program of a Regional Group – Document Review –



3.2 Evaluation of the Regional Group Secretariat

The visit to the Regional Group Secretariat typically consists of:

- Opening meeting, presentation by TL-R outlining aims, objectives and procedure to be used by the regional evaluation team;
- Evaluation of the Regional Group's management system and administration of the Arrangement, including review of files and records;
- Closing meeting to present a brief written summary report using the template for the Report on the Regional Evaluation of the Secretariat found on the IAF and ILAC websites, and discuss findings (both confirmed and provisional) with the Regional Group Secretariat; and
- Observation of decision making group processes. When performed before the Regional Group Secretariat visit, the observations should be discussed at this occasion; they need to be incorporated into the final report, as well.

Hours Scheduled	Actions	Evaluators
4 hours	Preparation with the regional evaluation team	TL-R + 1 TM-R
8 -10 hours	Office, opening meeting + studying records (split regional evaluation team)	TL-R + 1 TM-R
8 -10 hours	Studying records (split regional evaluation team) + preparing brief written summary report and the list of findings (office part) + closing meeting	TL-R + 1 TM-R

3.3 Additional activities

In addition, the following activities shall be accomplished by the TM-Rs or TL-R:

- Observing of evaluations by the region;
- Providing feedback to the peer evaluation team being observed to obtain clarification and/or express initial observations that may or may not result in a finding;
- Reporting the observations and any findings for each observed evaluation to the rest of the regional evaluation team and the region as soon as possible using the Observation Report template found on the IAF and ILAC websites;
- Observing and reporting on Decision Making Group processes, preferably those where the decision will be taken on one or more of the evaluations observed; The template for the evaluation of the decision making group shall be used for this report;
- Observing other meetings (e.g. training/technical committees) if given the opportunity;
- Reviewing corrective actions proposed by the Regional Group and commenting on the proposals;
- Preparing the final full evaluation report with opportunity for the Regional Group to comment; and
- Amending the report and writing the recommendation to the IAF and/or ILAC Management Committee(s).

ANNEX 3: Evaluation Reporting on a Regional Group

A. Steps in Evaluation Reporting on a Regional Group

Each one of the reports listed below shall be finalized and provided to the IAF MLA MC and/or ILAC AMC secretariats, as appropriate within the timelines specified below.

1 Preparation of findings and reports on evaluation activities

The reporting of all regional evaluation activities shall be done in the report templates provided by IAF/ILAC for the following activities:

- Regional Group Secretariat visit (IAF/ILAC F1.3-A1)
- Observations of peer evaluations (IAF/ILAC F1.4-A1)
- Observation of the decision-making (IAF/ILAC F1.5-A1)

The following timeframe applies to the reporting of all regional evaluation activities listed above:

(1) Providing oral feedback at the completion of each evaluation activity to obtain clarification and/or express initial observations that may or may not result in a finding. In the case of the Regional Group Secretariat visit, in addition to the oral feedback the TL-R and/or TM-R shall prepare a brief written summary report, including as an appendix, the non-conformities and comments presented, preferably in a table format, and provide this to the Regional Group at the closing meeting.

(2) With respect to the observation and decision making steps, within two weeks of the evaluation activity, the responsible TM-R shall provide a written report of the nonconformities using the appropriate template, to the TL-R including advising the TL-R of any areas of disagreement between the region's peer evaluation team and the TM-R arising from the feedback.

(3) Within two weeks of receiving the written report of the findings, the TL-R shall, after reviewing the findings with the TM-R, forward the findings to the Regional Group's MLA/MRA Chair and Secretariat with a copy also sent to the IAF/ILAC MLA/MRA Secretariat(s) as applicable.

Timeline: 4 weeks in total

2 Formal response of the Regional Group to findings and reports

(1) Within eight weeks of receiving a written non-conformity or report from an evaluation activity, the Regional Group shall provide a written response to the TL-R and relevant TM-R:

a) *The evaluated regional group must respond to each non-conformity by undertaking a required cause analysis, including the extent of the finding and its impact, and by taking appropriate action (correction and/or corrective action). The regional group must provide the regional peer evaluation team with evidence of the cause analysis and an action plan and time schedule for implementation of the action (s) related to the non-conformity (ies).*

Based on the risk associated with a finding, the regional group may also be required to provide evidence of the effective implementation of the action(s) (timelines see (2)

and (3) below). Wherever possible, the need for the provision of such evidence will be stated in the summary report prepared at the end of each evaluation activity.

Note: 1. Although this paragraph allows eight weeks to respond to the non-conformity, it is important that the region commence action as soon as the non-conformity is identified.

2. The evaluated Regional Group is encouraged to respond to comments.

Timeline: 8 weeks

b) Identifying any finding(s) that the Regional Group does not agree with including an explanation of why the Regional Group does not agree with the finding(s). If a Regional Group does not agree with a finding, the finding shall be forwarded by the TL-R to the IAF/ILAC MLA/MRA Secretariat(s) for advice by the relevant Chair. The relevant Chair, may advise that the finding be changed or simply identified in the report as an unresolved issue for consideration by the **IAF and/or ILAC MC or TFG**. Irrespective of any advice given, it remains the responsibility of the TL-R to decide on how the finding is to be treated in the report.

(2) For re-evaluations, within twelve weeks from the date of receipt of the combined table of non-conformities, the Regional Group shall provide its initial evidence of implemented corrective actions.

Timeline: 12 weeks from the receipt of the combined findings.

(3) For initial evaluations, the Regional Group should seek to achieve the same timeframes as expected for re-evaluations; however, it is understood that this may not always be possible. Extended timeframes for implementing corrective actions may indicate a need for additional regional evaluation activities. The Regional Group shall provide its evidence of implemented corrective actions no later than nine months from the date of receipt of the combined table of non-conformities. Except in exceptional circumstances, an evaluation shall lapse if the applicant Regional Group is unable to provide acceptable evidence of implemented corrective actions within nine months of the date of issue. When a regional evaluation has lapsed, the IAF/ILAC MLA/MRA Secretariat(s) shall seek advice from the relevant MLA/MRA Chair(s) on how to proceed.

Timeline: 3-9 months from the combined table of findings

3 Formal reply by the regional evaluation team to formal responses of the Regional Group

(1) Within two weeks of receiving a formal response from the Regional Group, the TM-R shall provide a formal reply to the TL-R.

(2) Within two weeks of receiving the formal reply from the TM-R, the TL-R shall, after reviewing the report or non-conformities with the TM-R, forward the formal reply to the report or non-conformities to the Regional Group MLA/MRA Chair and Secretariat.

Note: It is recognised that this process may go through a number of iterations. Regional Groups must remain mindful of 2, (2) above which states that within three months from the date of receipt

of a written report or non-conformity, the Regional Group shall provide its initial evidence of implemented corrective actions.

Timeline: 4 weeks after receiving a formal response from the Regional Group

4 Compilation of the full report

(1) Within four weeks of receiving all Regional Group responses to non-conformities and reports, the TL-R shall combine the reports and with the consent of the evaluation team members, send the combined draft full report (IAF/ILAC F1.6-A1) to the Regional Group MLA/MRA Chair and Secretariat for review and comment.

(2) Within four weeks of receiving the draft combined report, the Regional Group shall provide a written response to the TL-R confirming acceptance or otherwise of the report.

(3) Within four weeks of receiving the Regional Group's responses to the combined draft full report, the TL-R shall seek the consent of the TM-R(s) to submit the final report to the Regional Group MLA/MRA Chair and Secretariat.

Timeline: 12 weeks after receiving a formal response from the Regional Group

B. Classification of Findings

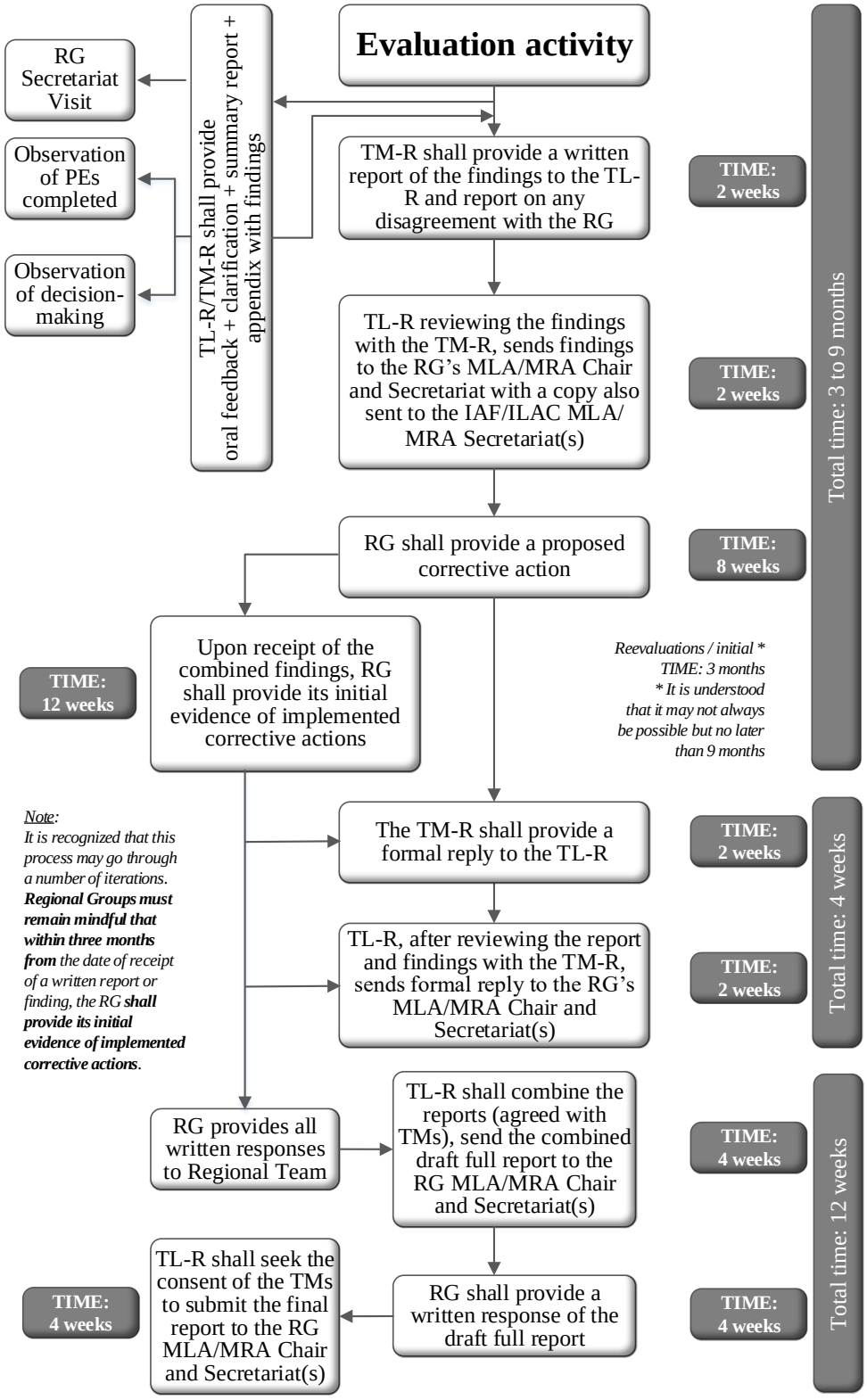
Finding: To be used as a general term

Non-conformity: Finding where the Regional Group does not meet a requirement of any applicable standard(s), its own management system or the Regional Group requirements (IAF/ILAC A1).

Comment: Finding where the requirements related to the Regional Group's practices or documented information are fulfilled but there is potential for improvement.

Typical evaluation program of a Regional Group (RG)

- Evaluation reporting on a Regional Group -



ANNEX 4: Evaluation Summary Report for Decision-making Purpose

(This report is prepared by the IAF and/or ILAC MC for presentation to the Decision Making Groups)

Regional Group:

Regional evaluation team:

Identification of the full report:

Evaluation sites and dates:

Regional Group's secretariat:

AB evaluations observed:

Regional Group's Decision Making Group meeting(s):

Scope of evaluation:

General Information regarding the Regional Group:

Number of Arrangement signatories:

Scopes of the Arrangement:

Number of members:

Organizational structure:

Decision making process:

Findings of the regional evaluation team (non-conformities and comments):

Conclusions:

Statements of closeout of non-conformities:

Unresolved issues:

Conclusion and recommendation:

Note: In cases where a task force group (TFG) reviews the report and completes an evaluation summary report on behalf of the MC, this report may address TFG remarks and conclusions, composition of the TFG, and comments on the process. Issues for consideration may include:

- *Were IAF/ILAC procedures followed?*
- *Were the appropriate normative documents applied?*

- *Does the report contain sufficient information to support a decision?*
- *Are the conclusions and recommendations supported by the report?*
- *Are the non-conformities appropriately classified, clear and concise?*
- *Is the proposed/implemented corrective action appropriate to the non-conformity?*
- *Were the non-conformities appropriately resolved and documented?*
- *Were there any issues raised by the TFG that required a response from the team?*

ANNEX 5: Decision making regarding evaluations of Regional Groups

1. Decision making regarding IAF or ILAC regional evaluations

1.1 The evaluation report, the corrective actions and the recommendations of the regional evaluation team shall be submitted as the final report to the IAF and/or ILAC MC.

1.2 The IAF and/or ILAC MC may prepare a summary report for the respective Decision Making Groups of IAF and/or ILAC which shall decide:

- in the case of an initial evaluation, whether or not the Regional Group will be recognized under the appropriate scopes of the Arrangement;

- in the case of a re-evaluation, whether or not the Regional Group will remain recognized under the appropriate scopes of the Arrangement. Positive decisions can be accompanied by conditions (see Clause 2 of this annex).

  NOTE 1 The Decision Making Group may decide to carry out a re-evaluation, partly or totally prior to the normal 4-year period. Normally this would be the case after initial evaluations or fundamental re-organizations.

  NOTE 2 For voting rules see the Bylaws of IAF and/or ILAC.

1.3 IAF and/or ILAC shall ensure that there are no conflicts of interest involved in the decision making process (i.e. excluding from the voting any member of the Regional Group being voted upon and any persons directly involved in the evaluation of that region).

2. Decision making regarding joint IAF/ILAC regional evaluations

2.1 When IAF and ILAC carry out a joint evaluation of a Regional Group, both IAF and ILAC will need to review and make a decision on that particular evaluation. This section provides a process for the IAF MLA MC and ILAC AMC to jointly review reports from those joint regional evaluations, while ensuring that each organization will make its own separate decision.

2.2 The IAF MLA MC and ILAC AMC will appoint a Task Force Group (TFG), with four to six members to review the evaluation report. The IAF MLA MC and ILAC AMC will appoint one of the members of the TFG to be the convener (see point 3 below). The role of convener for these TFGs will alternate between IAF and ILAC. The TFG members shall be members of the IAF MLA MC or members of the ILAC AMC. It is also possible for the IAF MLA MC to assign other experienced IAF members from outside the IAF MLA MC. Members of the TFG will have signed a confidentiality statement. The evaluation team and the evaluated body should be informed about the establishment of the TFG and the members.

2.3 All members and observers of the IAF MLA MC and the ILAC AMC will have access to the evaluation report and may send their comments to the TFG for their consideration.

2.4 The task of the TFG is to evaluate the report for comprehensiveness, clarity and the classification of findings. The TFG is to complete a proposal for an Evaluation Summary

Report. The TFG shall provide the proposed Evaluation Summary Report to the IAF MLA MC and ILAC AMC within 30 days of the TFG receiving the evaluation report. The Evaluation Summary Report template can be found in IAF/ILAC A1, Annex 4.

2.5 The TFG is expected to communicate with the evaluation team and, if necessary, with the Regional Group under evaluation; in cases where there are open, missing or unclear issues in the report, in order to solve or clarify them. The Chair of the IAF MLA MC and the Chair of the ILAC AMC shall be copied on all communications.

2.6 TFG Competencies

2.6.1 The TFG will need to have an understanding of what should be in a report from a generic and specific perspective. The TFG shall have collective expertise at levels 1, 2 and 3 of the IAF MLA and the ILAC Arrangement.

2.6.2 The TFG needs to understand the planning and conduct of the evaluation, its breadth and depth, the findings and their classification, and the adequacy of the conclusions, and recommendations. The competencies required would be consistent with that of an individual with experience as a CB auditor or an AB assessor, and exposure to the A series documents, IAF MLA P&P, ILAC P-Series as well as practical experience in the peer evaluation process.

2.6.3 To be able to effectively correspond with the team, the TFG convener requires good communication skills and an understanding of the criteria and process. The competencies would be similar to those listed in point 2.6.2 above.

2.6.4 At least one member each from IAF and ILAC appointed to the TFG, shall be a qualified peer evaluator.

2.6.5 There should be a balance of members with competencies on the IAF MLA and on the ILAC Arrangement.

2.6.6 The IAF MLA MC and the ILAC AMC will review the draft Evaluation Summary Report prepared by the TFG within 30 days after the reception, and make any changes as necessary before submitting it to the IAF MLA Committee and to the ILAC Arrangement Council for the separate decision making process. Issues of common interest for both organizations will be discussed jointly by both management committees, while issues that apply only to IAF or ILAC may either be discussed in a joint meeting or in separate meetings of the respective management committee.

3. Hierarchy of decisions

3.1 Decisions made as a result of peer evaluations of Regional Groups can take many forms. Implicit in these decisions is the possibility of a variety of "conditions". This guidance outlines a hierarchy of the major types of decisions from the most positive decision to the least positive decision (i.e., conditions of increasing severity are imposed).

3.2 Decisions on applicant Regional Groups are made by either or both of the decision-making bodies of IAF and/or ILAC. Decisions on the on-going re-evaluations of recognized Regional Groups also reside with the respective Decision Making Groups. Recognition of a Regional

Group is a prerequisite for signatories of its Arrangement to attain and maintain signatory status with the respective IAF and/or ILAC Arrangements.

3.3 The IAF MLA Committee and/or ILAC Arrangement Council make all decisions on recognition of a Regional Group, the decision shall be made in a period of 30 days after the review made by IAF MLA MC and/or the ILAC AMC . The persons participating in the decision making shall have an understanding of the objective and purpose of the arrangement, the criteria used for the evaluation, the evaluation process and the arrangement structure. There are primarily two situations to address: *New Applicant Regional Groups* and *Recognized Regional Groups*. A third situation that is not addressed below is the possibility of adverse decisions or conditions imposed on a recognized Regional Group which fails to abide by its obligations for recognition.

3.4 Decisions on New Applicant Regional Groups:

- Approval without conditions (re-evaluation to occur 4 years hence);
- Approval with conditions (e.g., shortened interval for re-evaluation);
- Defer recognition pending submittal of required evidence of corrective actions and/or re-visit by one or more members of the regional evaluation team to confirm implementation of corrective actions; or
- Delay the decision on recognition pending a new evaluation;
- Disapproval for New Applicant Regional Groups should rarely happen since an evaluation report is only submitted for a decision once a consensus of the regional evaluation team and the IAF and/or ILAC MC has concluded that all requirements have been met.

3.5 Decisions on recognised Regional Groups:

- Approval without conditions (re-evaluation to occur 4 years hence);
- Approval with conditions (e.g., shortened interval for re-evaluation);
- Defer re-approval pending submittal of required evidence of corrective actions and/or re-visit by one or more members of the regional evaluation team;
- Reduction of recognition for one or more types of Arrangements; or
- Withdrawal of Regional Group recognition, subject to Appeals Process. (A new application and evaluation of the Regional Group would be required to reinstate recognition. Re-evaluation of signatories of the formerly recognized Regional Group would become the responsibility of IAF and/or ILAC.)

ANNEX 6: Appeals

1. Scope

This annex describes the procedures for appeals, to ensure that matters related to the MRA and/or MLA are settled objectively and impartially.

2. Handling of appeals

2.1 When an applicant Regional Group or recognized Regional Group does not agree with the decision it may appeal in writing to the IAF and/or ILAC Secretariat within 30 days from notification of the decision.

2.2 After authentication of the appeal, the IAF and/or ILAC Secretariat shall inform the IAF and/or ILAC Chairperson, who will, in conjunction with the Chairperson of the Management Committee (MC), appoint an Appeals Panel comprising two impartial representatives of full members of IAF and/or ILAC and one IAF and/or ILAC evaluator from outside the appellant Regional Group to investigate the appeal.

2.3 No member of the Appeals Panel shall have been involved in the regional evaluation team that evaluated the appellant, or have a direct interest in the subject of the appeal, in any form. The IAF and/or ILAC Chairperson shall ensure that the composition of the Appeals Panel satisfies the requirements of objectivity and impartiality and no conflict of interests exists. The Appeals Panel should normally be set up within 30 days after its authentication.

2.4 The appellant has the right to object to the appointment of any member of the Appeals Panel for valid reason(s). The IAF and/or ILAC Chairperson, in conjunction with the Chairperson of the MC, shall make a decision on any objection by the appellant to an appointment. That decision shall be final.

2.5 During the course of the Regional Group's appeal against suspension or withdrawal of its recognition, the recognition shall remain in effect.

3. Recommendation and decision

3.1 The Appeals Panel shall decide its recommendation on the appeal within six months after setting up the panel and inform the IAF and/or ILAC Chairperson, the Management Committee, in writing, of the recommendation not later than five (5) business days after the date of decision.

3.2 The Management Committee shall forward the recommendation to the IAF and/or ILAC Arrangement Groups for a decision.

3.3 That decision shall be final and communicated to the appellant.

ANNEX 7: Re-evaluation of Regional Groups and On-going Confidence Building Activities

1. Periodic monitoring and re-evaluation of the Regional Group is necessary (see also Annex 2).

2. All recognized Regional Groups shall be formally re-evaluated at maximum intervals of four years from the last day of the previous evaluation of the Secretariat.

3. The Regional Group under re-evaluation shall provide the regional evaluation team with all the documents which are required for an initial evaluation (see the Application from a Regional Group to join a Region, IAF/ILAC-F1.1:A1, item 18) at least 3 months prior to the re-evaluation visit. In addition, the regional evaluation team shall get the full evaluation report from the last evaluation (re-evaluation) or any special evaluation from the IAF MLA MC/ILAC AMC secretariat.

4. Partial to total re-evaluation may be conducted at an earlier date as directed by IAF and/or ILAC Decision Making Groups, should there be due cause such as notification of significant changes in administration, finances, operational practices or an extension of the scope(s) of Arrangement.

5. The impact of changes notified by a recognized Regional Group shall be evaluated (see Annex 8, Clause 1.1).

6. Re-evaluation visits should be led by a TL-R other than the one who led the previous evaluation.

7. To the greatest extent possible, in the absence of a specific evaluation objective, the scope of each re-evaluation should seek to avoid simply duplicating the preceding evaluations in terms of both the regional peer evaluators being observed and the accreditation bodies being evaluated by the region.

8. On-going joint evaluations (evaluations of accreditation bodies by more than one Regional Group) to maintain confidence in the regional evaluations are conducted and reported on as agreed by the IAF/ILAC Decision Making Group.

9. In addition to attending IAF and/or ILAC General Assembly and Committee Meetings, Regional Groups are encouraged to take part in a number of joint activities.

Examples of such activity include:

- Joint signatory membership of Regional Groups (e.g., some signatories to the APLAC MRA are also signatories to the IAAC MLA). This includes joint participation in evaluations.
- Attendance (by invitation as an observer) at other Regional Group MRA Council meetings/Regional Decision Making Group meetings (especially by members/Chairs of such Committees/Councils).
- Participation in other Regional Group' peer evaluator training courses.
  All Regional Groups also provide a report each year to the respective IAF MLA Management Committee (MC) and/or ILAC Arrangement Management Committee (AMC) on their MLA and/or MRA activities. Such reports should include any joint activities, as outlined above and be provided to the next TL-R who will evaluate the Regional Group.

ANNEX 8: Maintenance, suspending and withdrawal of Regional Groups

1. Notification of change

1.1 Each recognized Regional Group shall report any significant changes in its status and/or its operating practices (e.g. as listed below) and the impact of the change without delay to all IAF and/or ILAC signatories through the Management Committee(s).

- Legal status;
- Management personnel;
- Contact person or liaison officer for the Arrangement;
- Operational Arrangement program;
- Criteria and procedures, related to the Arrangement;
- Office address (and postal address, if different), including head office and any offices; and
- Other changes that significantly affect the competence or credibility of the Regional Group.

1.2 The Regional Group shall notify the IAF and/or ILAC MC Secretariats without delay of any significant changes that have occurred or will occur in its status. The Regional Group shall report to the IAF and/or ILAC Secretariats on new signatories and/or withdrawal of existing signatories of its Regional Group and provide information on new signatories as required by the IAF and/or ILAC Secretariat. Upon request by the IAF and/or ILAC MC, the Regional Group shall inform the Management Committees about the decisions on evaluations and re-evaluations including providing access to the evaluation reports, as well as the plan for future evaluations within this Regional Arrangement.

1.3 The Regional Group shall give an annual update to the IAF and/or ILAC MC for consideration of the changes and, if necessary, for recommendation to the IAF and/or ILAC Arrangement Group. The IAF and/or ILAC Arrangement Group shall be informed about the annual updates of the Regional Group (see Annex 7, Clause 8).

2. Maintenance, suspension and withdrawal

2.1 It may be that the Management Committee cannot accept the significant changes notified by a Regional Group, or the corrective action taken by a Regional Group on non-conformities which have been found, or substantiated complaints from interested parties. The Management Committee shall report the situation to the Arrangement Group with a recommendation and ask the Arrangement Group to take appropriate action. This action can be suspension for a maximum period of 6 months or withdrawal from the Arrangement Group.

2.2 Maintenance, suspension or withdrawal of a recognized Regional Group shall be decided by the IAF and/or ILAC Arrangement Group after receipt of the recommendation by the

Management Committee in accordance with the same procedures used for acceptance of a Regional Group. Any suspension or withdrawal decided by the IAF and/or ILAC Arrangement Group shall be accompanied by an appropriate explanation stating the reason for suspension or withdrawal to the Regional Group.

2.3 In the case of suspension or withdrawal, the Regional Group may appeal against the decision in accordance with Annex 6.

2.4 A Regional Group that has been suspended or withdrawn from IAF/ILAC shall no longer be recognized by IAF/ILAC.

2.5 In the event of suspension, the IAF/ILAC shall:

a) officially notify the Regional group of the suspension, the reasons for the suspension, the period of the suspension, and the conditions for lifting of the suspension;
b) prior to taking further action on the decision to suspend, notify the Regional Group of their right to Appeal the decision;
c) if the appeal is not upheld, amend the list of Arrangement signatories to identify that the Regional Group is suspended;
d) notify all Arrangement signatories of the suspension; and
e) remind the Regional Group of the consequences of suspension.

2.6 The consequences of suspension shall be decided by the Decision Making Group on a case-by-case basis, depending on the reason for suspension. The consequences of suspension may include, for the applicable main scope and/or sub-scope that the Regional Body shall:

a) not actively promote the fact that they are a signatory to the Arrangement;
b) advise that the signatories do not participate in any ballots associated with the Arrangement;
c) notify all signatories to the arrangement of the suspension and the consequences of the suspension as it relates to them; and
d) notify stakeholders in their economies of the suspension.

2.7 The obligations of the Regional Group while suspended are to:

a) continue to comply with the obligations of full membership;
b) cooperate fully with the MC and the Decision Making Group to enable a speedy resolution of the suspension;
c) maintain oversight of their signatories; and
d) advise that the signatories continue to vote on IAF/ILAC ballots, other than those associated with the Arrangement.

2.8 If the recognition of the Regional Group is suspended the Regional Group shall inform its recognized signatories and applicants that their signatory status will remain unchanged during the suspension period. Any new signatory and applicant to the regional Arrangement during the suspension period are not covered by the Arrangement and not recognized by IAF and/or ILAC.

2.9 In the event of withdrawal, the IAF/ILAC shall:

a) officially notify the Regional Group of the Regional Group’s withdrawal and the reasons for the withdrawal;

b) Prior to taking further action on the decision to withdraw, notify the Regional Group of their right to Appeal the decision;
c) If the appeal is not upheld, amend the list of Arrangement signatories to identify that the body is withdrawn;
d) notify all Arrangement signatories of the withdrawal.

2.10 If the recognition of the Regional Group is withdrawn the Regional Group shall inform all applicant and signatories of the regional Arrangement that the Regional Group and its signatories are no longer accepted under the IAF and/or ILAC Arrangement and shall no longer make reference to the IAF and/or ILAC Arrangement.

2.11 When a withdrawn Regional Group applies to become a recognized Regional Group again, the procedure for new applicants shall be followed.

ANNEX 9: Disclosure of Evaluation Reports

IAF and/or ILAC, as applicable, are the owners of the reports on the peer evaluations of the regional groups that they manage. Reports from regional evaluations managed by IAF and/or ILAC shall not in general be made available in the public domain

An evaluated Regional Group may, however, choose to make the full report available to its interested parties with the purpose of promoting the acceptance of the IAF/ILAC MLA/MRA under the conditions detailed below:

1. The evaluation report shall not be disclosed until it has been formally considered by the IAF MLA Group and/or the ILAC Arrangement Council and a decision has been confirmed.

2. The IAF/ILAC MLA/MRA Secretary shall provide to the Regional Group the documents that may be disclosed to the relevant interested parties on request from the Regional Group. The documents shall include the full evaluation report, including the responses to the findings and all other annexes, and the IAF MLA Group and/or ILAC Accreditation Council resolution(s) related to the peer-evaluation. All references to any specific Accreditation Bodies, CABs and names of evaluators or assessors, as applicable, shall be removed by the MLA/MRA Secretary from the documents.

3. The documentation provided by the MLA/MRA Secretary to the Regional Group shall be disclosed collectively together with an appropriate statement as to the confidential nature of the information, i.e. the information shall remain confidential to the Regional Group evaluated and the recipient.