IAAC History

In terms of background it is important to describe the evolution of the environment of Global Free Trade prevalent in the 1980 and 1990's. This is demonstrated by key events such as the TBT agreement under the Uruguay Round and as well as bilateral or regional Free trade agreement (e.g. NAFTA, MERCOSUR, and Andean Community). One clause of the TBT agreement is emphases place upon the acceptance of the concept of conformity assessment results by the agreement signatories. Accreditation offers one vehicle to achieve the acceptance of conformity assessment results.

In the context of the trade liberalization, and the beginning of the IAF meetings in 1993 some leaders from Accreditation bodies from South America and North America initiate discussion on the need for the creation of regional cooperation among accreditation bodies.

During the COPANT meeting in Buenos Aires in 1995, a ~~chance~~ happenstance conversation among representatives of INMETRO (Brazil), INDECOPI (Peru) and IBNORCA Bolivia planted the seed for the creation of a regional cooperation among accreditation bodies. The representative from INDECOPI was given the task of bringing this topic forward to the COPANT General Assembly.

The first step on formal discussion of the creation of a regional accreditation cooperation entity was during a COPANT General Assembly in Buenos Aires in 1995. This item was raised for discussion at that COPANT general assembly. After discussion the representative of Andean Community offer to host a meeting with interested stakeholders and Accreditation bodies in the Americas to discus in more detail the benefits to create a Regional Accreditation Cooperation in the Americas. The host of this meeting in Lima Peru the Andean Community together with the Brazilian Accreditation Body (INMETRO), Peruvian Accreditation body (INDECOPI) and COPANT Secretariat were responsible for the development of the draft agenda for this meeting and to invite representatives from countries in the Americas with interesting in Accreditation.

This meeting took place in Lima Peru in August 1995 at Andean Community Headquarters. This meeting was attended by representatives from all the American Regions (North America, Central America, Caribbean, Andean Community and South America). One of the most important tasks during this meeting was to review the draft of the MOU which defines the main responsibilities and operations of regional accreditation cooperation. One recommendation that ensued from the discussions was to continue the dialogue related to the formation of regional accreditation cooperation in the Americas. This cooperation would cover all types of accreditation activities of conformity assessment bodies.

To prepare for the the first accreditation bodies event in the Americas, we held a meeting in Rio de Janeiro to draft the main documents that would be discussed in the meeting in Montevideo.

With the participation of 45 delegates representing 17 countries from the Americas. IAAC was created on November 20th - 22nd, 1996, in the Latin American Integration Association (ALADI) headquarters in Montevideo, Uruguay. In this meeting, ten full members and six associate members signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the creation of IAAC, and the signatories of this MOU expressed their commitment to work toward a Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA).

The first Chair and Vice Chair of IAAC elected were representatives of the Brazilian accreditation body (INMETRO) and the Superintendence of Commerce of Colombia respectively. The Executive Committee and the WGs were created at that meeting. The first tasks of this Committee and WGs were to refine already existing terms of reference and to identify priorities to be implemented. Therefore, the IAAC was created as the first regional cooperation ~~to~~to cover accreditation bodies of testing/calibration laboratories, inspection bodies and certification bodies (Product and Management System).

One of the main goals of IAAC during its inception was to create a platform to disseminate the principles of accreditation and conformity assessment and as well, to train emerging accreditation bodies. IAAC WG was responsible to identify the main needs of the accreditation bodies in their region. IAAC also support associate members accreditation bodies during the launch of their programs. Another objective was to demonstrate to regulatory bodies in the Americas and the organizations that manage regional trade agreements the importance of conformity assessment and accreditation as tools to demonstrate conformance to public health, safety and environment requirements defined in regulations and in voluntary standards.

The Organization of American States was one of the entities that supported IAAC through financing of member participation in IAAC general assembly and international meetings, training courses promoted by the IAAC, and participation in on-the-job training in established accreditation bodies in the Americas. At the outset, OAS support of IAAC was invaluable for the success of its objectives. In addition to the benefit of funding, the OAS also provided recognition of IAAC as a regional cooperation among accreditation bodies in the Americas. Another key organizations that supported the IAAC in its first years was INMETRO (Brazil's national accreditation body) and the US-based ANSI and NIST as well as (INDECOPI-Peru and **Superintendencia** de **Industria** y **Comercio of Colombia)**.

Provided for information is a list of projects and activities that were completed by the IAAC Executive Committee, Working Groups and IAAC members with the support of entities that supported IAAC activities during 1996-2000:

- IAAC Strategic plan (Mission, Vision and Strategies) through facilitation by an INMETRO expert during the IAAC meeting in Colombia in 1997;
- ALADI Project "Conformity Assessment Infrastructure in ALADI Member Countries"
- Signature on the IAF and ILAC MOUs as regional cooperation representing the Americas
- Training courses for Accreditation Body quality managers
-

Formatted: Indent: Left: 0.5", No bullets or numbering

Participation in:

- IAF and ILAC Executive Committee and Plenary meetings
- FTAA Committee on Standards and Conformity Assessment meetings
- MERCOSUR SGT-3 On Standards and conformity assessment meetings
- Andean Community on Conformity Assessment dialogue meetings
- Projects submitted to the Inter- American Development Bank/Multilateral Investment Fund "Program for Overcoming Technical Barriers to Trade through the Strengthening of Accreditation Systems". This project served as foundation for the Mexican Accreditation Entity (EMA) to develop a similar project that assisted ABs from Latin America;
- IAAC Chair supported a UNIDO project "Pre-peer Evaluation to Emerging Accreditation Bodies" that was later implemented by ILAC and IAF;
- Facilitated the IAF-ILAC to complete the MOU with UNIDO
- IAAC conducted three pre-peer reviews of accreditation programs (Trinidad and Tobago, Chile and Uruguay);
- Provided Lead Assessor Training on ISO/IEC 17025
- Implemented WGs activities under IAAC
- Adopted IAF and ILAC documents related to the implementation of the MLA process
- Created IAAC web site as a tool to disseminate information to members in 1997.

IAAC was the first Regional Accreditation Cooperation in the world to cover accreditation body members who accredit all types of accreditation (certification bodies, laboratories, and inspection bodies).

Another major achievement of IAAC was to approve the IAAC logo that was created by INMETRO's staff. The logo emphasizes the integration between North American and South America as mirrored on the IAAC symbol. Therefore, the objective was achieved to show the ~~regions~~Americas as an integrated whole.

In 2000, the election of the second IAAC chair (from EMA) led to a smooth transition from the term of the first IAAC Chair. This resulted in the continuity of leadership of the IAAC that has enabled it to continue to grow as regional cooperation.

I would too let you know that I recently became an American Citizen and my sincere objective is continue to integrate south and North American perspectives into to the work of IAAC.

The following organizations contributed to the IAAC creation:

- INMETRO
- NIST
- ANSI
- A2LA
- OAS
- ALADI
- ANDIAN Community
- UNIDO
- Colombian Superintendence of Commerce

I would like to acknowledge the contribution of the following people:

- John Donaldson
- Peter Unger
- Carmina Londono
- Esther Josefina B.
- Wilson ...
-

IAAC was incorporated in 2001 as a civil association according to Mexican law. The MOU was updated in 2004.

International recognitions

IAAC has been accepted as a signatory to the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) for the scope of Testing and Calibration Laboratories and to the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) Multi Lateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA) for the scopes of Quality Management Systems (QMS) since 2006.

Following in 2011, IAAC has been accepted as a signatory to the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) Multi Lateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA) for the scopes of Environmental Management Systems (EMS) and Product Certification Bodies.

More recently, IAAC has been accepted as a signatory to the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) for the scope of Inspection Bodies as of October 2012.

