

COMMUNIQUE

23 April, 2002

Co-operation between ISO/CASCO, IAF and ILAC for protecting Image and Integrity of Conformity Assessment

Background

Representatives of the International Accreditation Forum, Inc. (IAF), International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) and the Conformity Assessment Committee (CASCO) of ISO formed the IAF-ILAC-ISO/CASCO Joint Working Group on Image and Integrity of Conformity Assessment in December 2000, to discuss what contribution IAF, ILAC and CASCO could collaboratively make to protect the customers and users of conformity assessment services from unethical or inappropriate practices. The JWG recognizes that, whilst those conformity assessment bodies¹⁾ accredited by Members of IAF and ILAC are committed to operate ethically and in accordance with ISO/IEC Guides and Standards, there are some conformity assessment bodies that do not operate ethically and so damage the image and integrity of conformity assessment.

In this regard, the JWG has identified three kinds of problems:

- malpractices (unethical and dishonest practices) of conformity assessment bodies
- misleading advertising of the status of conformity assessment results, including misuse of marks of conformity
- confusion in the market place between “certification” and “accreditation”

and also identified a number of measures to help users of conformity assessment services to select conformity assessment bodies which operate ethically and competently. The implementation of the measures identified is in progress. This communiqué is to highlight the common commitment of ISO, IAF and ILAC to ensuring that the users of conformity assessment services are able to find and employ ethical and competent conformity assessment bodies, and to draw attention to existing systems for handling complaints relating to conformity assessment services, which is one of the measures proposed to deal with the identified problem of malpractice by conformity assessment bodies. Further communiqués and other publications will be issued as the work being undertaken by the JWG progresses.

Common View

ISO, IAF and ILAC share the same goal to help users of conformity assessment services to select conformity assessment bodies which operate ethically and competently, and to eliminate malpractice in conformity assessment.

Existing Systems for handling Complaints relating to Conformity Assessment Services

Accredited conformity assessment bodies must have complaint handling systems, based on relevant ISO/IEC Guides and Standards. Customers of conformity assessment services dissatisfied with the service they receive are encouraged to lodge their complaints with the relevant conformity assessment bodies. When accreditation bodies have proof that an accredited conformity assessment body has behaved inappropriately, they will take the necessary action, including the suspension or withdrawal of accreditation, according to their documented complaint handling procedures.

¹⁾ Conformity assessment bodies include testing and calibration laboratories, inspection bodies, product certification bodies, management system certification/registration bodies and personnel certification bodies.

IAF and ILAC together with their Members and ISO have procedures in place to receive complaints about the practices of Accreditation Bodies and accredited conformity assessment bodies, to investigate these complaints (via the relevant Accreditation Body where the complaint is against an accredited conformity assessment body) and advise on the appropriate action to be taken.

In particular, ISO and IAF have agreed to share information about complaints received by ISO and/or IAF relating to ISO 9000 certification/registration and to share information on actions taken by ISO and/or IAF in response to the complaints, as appropriate.

Participants

Chairman:

Mr. J.L. Donaldson (CASCO Chairman)

Members:

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