

Conformity Assessment Bodies Encouraged To Work Together



Monday, November 2, 2015. Trinidad. Conformity Assessment Bodies across CARIFORUM States were encouraged on Monday to work together to build a stronger network to improve the quality and ease of regional and international trade.

The advice came from CEO of the CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality (CROSQ), Mr. Deryck Omar, as the first ever Caribbean Conformity Assessment Week kicked off in Trinidad and Tobago this (Monday) morning.

Mr. Omar further emphasized the need for harmonization of standards, processes and procedures, along with mutual recognition of conformity assessment procedures covering goods and services as critical to facilitate trade.

Conformity Assessment Week, from November 2 – 6, is being hosted in Trinidad and Tobago, with support from the 10th European Development Fund Technical Barriers to Trade Programme, which is managed in the Caribbean by CROSQ, the Dominican Republic's Institute for Quality (INDOCAL) and German Metrology Institute, Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt (PTB). The week's events are being held in collaboration with the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards (TTBS), under the theme "Advancing Caribbean Trade Through Quality Assurance".

CEO of the TTBS, Mr. Theodore Reddock told the more than 40 participants in the workshop that, "the road to regional quality infrastructure", actually started with the metrology group trying to develop a regional project and along the way attracted assistance from Germany, and North America and eventually broadened to include other aspects of quality infrastructure as well as the Economic Partnership Agreement and the European Union.

"I think we also need to reflect on the significance of what is happening now because in the process of developing regional quality infrastructure, conformity assessment is where the rubber really starts to hit the road. The theory is finished and the esoteric ideas have been discussed and now we getting down to the nitty-gritty – how are we going to be really positively affecting the region as a whole . . . When we talk about health and safety, the protection of the environment, education, all of these things that are important to us are major conformity assessment activities," the CEO noted.

CROSQ Council Sponsor for regional quality assurance schemes, Mr. Robert Medford, also CEO of the Grenada Bureau of Standards, stated: *"As our market space becomes more challenged, integrating the role of conformity assessment will be a critical factor, and we must ensure that proper systems or processes are in place. Without these conformity assessment systems and processes, realizing the full benefits of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) will be difficult."*

PTB's Head of Technical Cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean, Dr. Valqui noted the growth in quality

infrastructure in the region, as he congratulated the St. Lucia Bureau of Standards which recently claimed the International Organisation for Legal Metrology (OIML) Award for Excellent Achievement in Legal Metrology in Developing Countries. Dr. Valqui underscored the importance of conformity assessment in further advancing quality infrastructure in the region and thanked the European Union for all their development support in this respect.

The key event during this week of activities is the launch and inaugural meeting of the Caribbean Network of Conformity Assessment Bodies (CANCAB) Committee.

The newly formed committee, which falls under the ambit of CROSQ, was established with the responsibility to develop the regional conformity assessment infrastructure as it relates to testing, inspection, certification and market surveillance. This meeting will provide the definition, scope and goals of the CANCEAB, along with developing the strategic framework of the regional conformity assessment infrastructure.

Additionally, the week will include an Organisation of American States (OAS) FEMCIDI Programme sponsored regional workshop entitled "Conformity Assessment in National Processes – Building Regional Competence in the Disciplines of Conformity Assessment". The workshop will bring together both private and public sector, including regulators and business support institutions, to introduce participants to the national, regional and international considerations for the preparation and application of conformity assessment.

The working meetings will end on Friday, with the 3rd Meeting of the Technical Implementation Group for Conformity Assessment under the 10th EDF TBT Programme, which will develop a work plan for the period January 2016 to March 2017.

Caribbean Conformity Assessment Week 2015 represents a major milestone for the development of quality infrastructure within the region, as efforts are made to advance Caribbean trade through quality assurance.

CROSQ's Technical Officer for Conformity Assessment, Mr. Trumel Redmond, expressed joy at the high turnout of the conformity assessment bodies from both the private and public sector across the region for this important week of activities.



Conformity Assessment Week: Participants at the Opening of Caribbean Conformity Assessment Week in Trinidad and Tobago.



Conformity Assessment Week: Director of the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards, Mr. Theodore Reddock (standing) addressing participants at the opening of Caribbean Conformity Assessment Week. Looking on from left are, Mr. Robert Medford of the Grenada Bureau of Standards; Mr. Deryck Omar, CEO of CROSQ; Dr. Alexis Valqui of PTB and Mr. Trumel Redmond of CROSQ.

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