Joint Statement from Pete Unger and Randy Dougherty

ILAC and IAF Chairs—World Accreditation Day 2013

**Accreditation: Facilitating world trade**

World Accreditation Day is on 9 June 2013 and this year the focus is on the important role accreditation plays in facilitating trade around the world, both within and across national borders.

Nowadays, globalization means that most of us enjoy and rely on a vast number and range of products and services supplied from overseas. International trade represents a significant share of the gross domestic product of most countries—latest figures from the World Trade Organization (for 2011) put the dollar value of world merchandise trade at $18.2 trillion and the value of world commercial services exports at $4.1 trillion.

At the same time, all countries, and all market sectors, have seen an increase in the number of voluntary and mandatory technical regulations, standards, testing, inspection and certification procedures. Generally, these are introduced to meet the legitimate requirements of quality and safety that consumers, businesses, regulators and other organisations demand of goods and services, whatever their country of origin.

It is vital, not only for individuals and organisations but for national and international economic health, that products and services can cross borders to meet global demand without causing undue risk to the health and security of individuals or the environment.

But in these challenging economic conditions it is also vital that these same regulations and standards—which can vary from country to country—are not prohibitively costly or burdensome to businesses and that they do not represent technical barriers that prevent access to domestic markets or export opportunities.

Accredited conformity assessment is one tool that is helping businesses not only to comply efficiently and effectively with regulations and standards but also to gain competitive advantage from doing so and to expand into new markets, including those overseas.

Operating in the public interest across all market sectors, accreditation determines the technical competence, reliability and integrity of conformity assessment bodies, which are organisations that check conformity and compliance with standards and regulations through testing, verification, inspection, and calibration. It does this through a process of transparent and impartial evaluation against internationally recognised standards and other requirements.

Businesses that supply or receive accredited conformity assessment results can show credible evidence of conformance with international standards which can be used to distinguish them from their competitors. Indeed, an increasing number of organisations, in both the public and private sectors are specifying accredited testing, inspection or certification as a precondition to tendering for contracts.

In addition to increasing potential markets, accredited conformity assessment can save businesses time and money in other ways. For example, by providing a basis on which they can make efficient and informed choices about suppliers, allowing them more time to concentrate on business development.

Furthermore, as accreditation is recognised internationally, it can open doors abroad equally as well as those in the domestic market.

The primary purpose of both IAF and ILAC is to establish multilateral arrangements between their member accreditation bodies based on mutual evaluation and acceptance of each other’s accreditation systems. These arrangements enhance the acceptance of products and services across national borders by removing the need for them to undergo additional tests, inspections or certification for at each country of entry. This helps to reduce bureaucracy and the costs to businesses and contributes to operational efficiency.

Accreditation therefore acts as catalyst to national economies in two ways--by helping domestic companies pitch for business abroad and by promoting confidence in imports from other countries.

The multilateral arrangements also provide governments and regulators with an internationally recognised stamp of approval to demonstrate compliance with standards and other requirements. With confidence in the conformity assessment process underpinned by accreditation, standards can be used to support a lighter touch approach to regulation, which in turn means that businesses spend less time tied up with bureaucracy.

Major events, press campaigns, workshops and seminars will take place in conjunction with the celebration of World Accreditation Day in over 90 countries to raise awareness of the value that accreditation plays in supporting global trade. For further details, contact your local accreditation body.

A promotional brochure to celebrate the day is available for download from the ILAC and IAF websites.