



GUIDANCE FOR THE PROMOTION OF THE APLAC MRA

PURPOSE

This document provides guidance on activities on how accreditation bodies could promote the inclusion of a new signatory in the APLAC MRA or the continuation or extension of signatory status of an existing signatory

AUTHORSHIP

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GUIDANCE FOR THE PROMOTION OF THE APLAC MRA

Each accreditation body that is signatory to the APLAC MRA has a responsibility to promote the APLAC MRA. It is important that relevant authorities are aware of the APLAC MRA as a working arrangement that assists facilitation of international trade.

APLAC MR 002 (the MRA text), requires that, “each APLAC signatory recommends and promotes the acceptance by users in its economy of test, calibration and inspection body reports issued by organisations accredited by other signatories” (clause 1 (iv)), and that APLAC MRA signatories “promote to their governments the use of this Arrangement in support of recognition arrangements in the regulated sector” (clause 10).

There are promotional activities that an APLAC MRA signatory can do to support international trade and promote the international acceptance of test, calibration and inspection body reports in their own economy, following the inclusion of a new MRA signatory or after the successful re-evaluation of a current signatory.

Signatories to the APLAC MRA can write to the following organisations acknowledging the achievement of the MRA newcomer or re-evaluated accreditation body in relation to their own economy.

Organisations with a specific interest in trade between an accreditation body’s own economy and another signatory’s economy would be:

Within the local economy

- the desk officer/official specifically responsible for the MRA signatory economy in the local economy’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs/State Department.
- the desk officer/official specifically responsible for the the MRA signatory economy at the Ministry of Trade and Industry/Department of Commerce/Ministry of Economic Development.
- the most senior diplomatic representative of the signatory economy in the local economy, usually represented by an Ambassador or High Commissioner (if part of the British Commonwealth) at the signatory’s Embassy or High Commission in your capital city.
- the most senior trade representative of the signatory economy, usually represented by a Trade Commissioner, at the signatory’s Embassy or High Commission, often in the local economy’s political capital or business capital.
- business Associations and Business Councils that have members who are specifically interested in trade between the local economy and the economy of the MRA signatory. These can often be found in the telephone book or through the local Chamber of Commerce or similar organisations that coordinate the interests of business people.

Within the economy of the MRA signatory

- the most senior diplomatic representative for the local economy in the economy of the signatory. This would usually be the Ambassador or High Commissioner at the Embassy or High Commission of the local economy in the signatory’s economy.

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- the trade representative for the local economy in the economy of the signatory. This would usually be the Trade Commissioner at the Embassy/High Commission/Consulate/Trade Office of the local economy in the signatory's economy.

Appendix 1 provides an example of the kind of text that could be used for such MRA promotion letters and would be generically suitable for all of the above organisations.

If the above guidance is followed, trade officials receiving correspondence would be aware of the impact of the APLAC MRA on international trade for specific economies, and further assist regulator awareness of the MRA and accreditation in general. Appendix 2 is an example of a desirable reply to a MRA promotion letter.

APPENDIX 1

Date

Name
Title (Ambassador)
Embassy
Address in local economy

Dear Ambassador,

I write to draw your attention to a recent development in the trading relationship between our two economies.

The (*local economy*) national accreditation authority, (*local accreditation body's name*) and (*the name of the other accreditation body*), now recognise (*insert "test", "calibration" or "inspection" as appropriate*) reports issued by each other's accredited laboratories (*insert "and inspection bodies" as appropriate*) as being technically equivalent. This will have a significant impact on the trading relationship between our economies and you may find our success in this area a useful example to be cited on appropriate occasions. Clearly, acceptance of such reports by regulators in either economy is now a key trade facilitation issue. The reduction in technical barriers to trade (acceptance of reports) has become a significant factor, following the removal of most tariffs and import quotas.

(*Local accreditation body's name*) accredits testing and calibration laboratories and inspection bodies against international standards.

At the most recent meeting of the Asia Pacific Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (APLAC) Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) Council in (*insert venue of MRA Council meeting*), on (*date*), (*the name of the other accreditation body*) became a signatory to the APLAC Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) bringing the number of economies in the Asia-Pacific region participating in this arrangement to (*insert current number*). This will assist in minimising trade barriers in the Asia Pacific region, by eliminating the need for duplicate testing, calibration or inspection of products before they can be sold in different countries. (*Local accreditation body's name*) has been a signatory to this arrangement since (*insert the year the local accreditation body became a signatory*).

All signatories of the APLAC MRA are regularly evaluated by their peers against the international standard ISO/IEC 17011: *General requirements for the operation of laboratory accreditation bodies*. All signatories of the APLAC MRA accredit laboratories to the international standard ISO/IEC 17025: *General requirements for the operation of calibration and testing laboratories* (*insert "and inspection bodies to ISO/IEC 17020: General criteria for the operation of various bodies performing inspection" if appropriate*). Mutual recognition means that each MRA signatory agrees to recognise accreditations granted by the other partner(s) as equivalent to their own. (*Local accreditation body's name*), for example, would recognise reports issued by laboratories (*insert "and inspection bodies" if appropriate*) accredited by (*name of other accreditation body*). Similarly, (*name of other accreditation body*) would recognise test reports issued by laboratories accredited by (*local accreditation body's name*).

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APLAC is formally recognised by the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) as a Specialist Regional Body (SRB).

The APEC leaders, as part of the Osaka Action Agenda, established a goal that all APEC economies should be signatories to the APLAC MRA by the end of 2005. At the end of 2005, APLAC met that goal for all APEC economies that have APLAC members, with the exception of Papua New Guinea. We are proud to be able to say that our sector of international trade, accreditation, has worked hard to achieve this goal.

The participation of (*name of other economy*) in the APLAC MRA simply means that (*name of local accreditation body*) and (*name of other accreditation body*) will accept reports issued by one another's laboratories (*insert "and inspection bodies" when appropriate*), thereby reducing a "technical barrier to trade". Indeed, I am the point of contact for importers in (*local economy*) who ask if (*other economy*) reports are acceptable under the APLAC MRA. In some instances, the (*local economy*) Government relies on (*name of local accreditation body*) to provide regulators with guidance on reports, and the participation of (*name of other accreditation body*) in the APLAC MRA provides the basis for me to do this.

I attach for your consideration a copy of an APLAC document entitled "International Recognition of Accredited Test, Calibration and Inspection Reports" (or "What to look for on reports to make sure they are from an accredited laboratory or inspection body"), which I trust will provide you with an explanation of the extensive MRA network that is in place. I hope you enjoy reading about the fruitful relationship (*name of local accreditation body*) enjoys with (*name of other accreditation body*) in (*name of other economy*). If you have any questions about this arrangement, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Name
Title

APPENDIX 2

Other Economy's Embassy In
Local Economy

Date

Name
Title
Local accreditation body
Address

Dear

I thank you for your letter dated XXXX, keeping me posted on the participation of (*local economy*) and (*other economy*) in the Asia Pacific Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (APLAC) Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA). The APLAC MRA will help reduce transaction costs for our businesses and further boost trade flows between our two economies. This initiative will also bring APEC economies closer to the Bogor goals of free and open trade and investment in the region.

Allow me to congratulate (*local accreditation body*) for your fruitful relationship with (*other accreditation body*) of (*name of other economy*) and to express my hope that such relations be strengthened in the future.

On my part, I shall certainly cite this as an excellent example of our cooperation when the opportunity arises.

Yours sincerely,

Ambassador