

AFRAC MRA COUNCIL HOLDS 11TH MEETING

The African Accreditation Cooperation (AFRAC) is a cooperation of accreditation bodies, National Accreditation Focal Points (NAFP), sub-regional accreditation cooperations and stakeholders whose objective is to provide internationally recognised and accepted accreditation in support of industry and to contribute to the protection of health and safety of the public and the environment, thereby facilitating trade and contributing to the improvement of Africa's competitiveness within the global market.

AFRAC is one of the four pillars of the Pan-African Quality Infrastructure (PAQI) established by the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency. AFRAC operates a Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) that enhances the acceptance of products and services across national borders. The purpose of this Arrangement, is to create a continental framework aligned to the international framework to support both continental and international trade through the removal of technical barriers. The AFRAC achieved recognition status to the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) and the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) Multi-Lateral Arrangement (MLA) on 22 May 2018.

The AFRAC MRA Council is responsible for making decisions on the acceptance of applications to the AFRAC MRA and decisions regarding the status of membership to the MRA, including the granting, maintenance, extension to or suspension or withdrawal from the MRA. The MRA Council also oversees the implementation of AFRAC, ILAC and IAF resolutions relevant to the AFRAC MRA Signatories.

The 11th AFRAC MRA Council meeting was held on 17 June 2021 and was attended by 8 members. The meeting was very ably chaired by Mrs Maureen Mutasa, Chair of the AFRAC MRA Council who is also the SADCAS representative.



MRA Council in Session

A total of 12 resolutions were passed during the 11th AFRAC MRA Council meeting. Some of the key resolutions passed were as follows:

- **MRA Council Terms of Reference (TORs)** - In Line with good corporate governance the MRA Council reviewed its TORs to establish execution and compliance. The members concluded that the MRA Council is fully and properly constituted and undertakes its functions and responsibilities in line with the TORs. The MRA Council however identified areas requiring revision as follows:
 - To explicitly clarify the role of the MRA Council in making decisions for the expansion of the AFRAC MRA.
 - To avoid conflicting timelines with that of the Secretariat's procedure by referring to A019 in the MRA Council TORs.

The draft revised A020-05 has already been taken to ballot.

- **Consideration of MRA Committee Recommendation on ISO/IEC 17025:2017 Transition Issues** - Based on the recommendation of the MRA Committee and taking into consideration the feedback provided by ILAC Secretariat, the MRA Council resolved that accreditation bodies (ABs) whose conformity assessment bodies (CABs) had not transitioned by 1 June 2021, report to AFRAC on actions taken which actions must be aligned to the AB's policies as well as ILAC resolution on transition to ISO/IEC 17025. Noting that AFRAC has to submit a report to ILAC on the same, ABs whose CABs did not meet the transition timeline were requested to submit their reports to the Secretariat by 28 June 2021. It was noted that the five (5) AFRAC ABs have CABs that did not meet the transition deadline namely: NiNAS (Nigeria); SADCAS (14 SADC Member States); SANAS; SDAC Sudan); and TUNAC (Tunisia). SADCAS submitted its report on the actions taken on the one CAB that did not transition by the deadline of 1 June 2021.
- **Application to Join the AFRAC MRA** - Some time was spent discussing an application from one of the ABs to join the AFRAC MRA in the scope testing to ISO/IEC 17025. This application is being considered jointly with ARAC as the AB member has also applied to join the ARAC MRA. The applicant's document review was completed on 15 April 2021, with a recommendation to the AFRAC MRA Council/ARAC MLA Group for decision. AFRAC's decision will be communicated to the AB as well as ARAC in order for the joint process to continue.
- **Proposals for Sub-Scope extensions to the AFRAC MRA** – In line with AFRAC procedures, feasibility studies undertaken on EGAC's proposals for extension of AFRAC MRA sub-scopes under the Main Scope ISO/IEC 17021-1:
 - **ISO 21001:2018** – (Educational organizations – Management systems for educational organizations)
 - **ISO 13485: 2016** (Medical devices - Quality management systems)
 - **ISO 28001** and ISO 28003 (Security management systems for the supply chain – Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of supply chain security management systems).
 In all 3 cases the MRA Council agreed that the MRA Committee and TC proceed with a full review.
- **AFRAC MRA Membership List** – Going forward Scopes of recognition will only make reference to the standard whilst the details of the versions of the standard will be recorded in the MRA Council's resolutions. This position has been made following a finding raised in the Peer evaluation of the Secretariat undertaken in February 2021 and the finding cleared based on this corrective action
- **Adoption of ILAC and IAF Resolutions Relevant to the AFRAC MRA** – The MRA Council noted that all resolutions made at the 2020 annual ILAC IAF meetings were for noting.
- **Extending AFRAC Scopes** – AFRAC is currently undergoing a peer evaluation of which the evaluation of the Secretariat was undertaken in February 2021 and the witnessing being

conducted in July and August 2021. The witnessing includes scope extensions of recognition of the AFRAC MRA as follows:

- IAF Main scope Product certification (ISO/IEC 17065);
- IAF Main Scope – Person Certification (ISO/IEC 17024);
- ILAC Proficiency Testing (ISO 17043); and
- ILAC Reference Materials Producers (ISO 17034)

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