

Dear Reader,

I am delighted to introduce this first edition of the KCDB newsletter. We intend to make it a regular publication and to use it to keep you in touch with news and developments which relate to the CIPM MRA and its implementation. In this and future editions, we shall be reporting decisions and discussions which take place at the Joint Committee of the BIPM and the Regional Metrology Organisations (JCRB) - the main international committee which deals with the day to day policies which relate to the CIPM MRA. We shall also include other news such as details of new Signatories and the steps which are now being made to promote the use of the KCDB and the MRA to Regulators, Accreditors and other users.

The launch of the CIPM MRA in October 1999 was a major step for the Metre Convention - some said it was as important as the 1875 Convention itself! Looking back, I am impressed by the progress made in the last four years. NMIs are now much more confident of the technical basis for their calibration services and they, as well as we at the BIPM, have learned a great deal about some of the limitations in current measurement services. Improvements have been made to national realisations of the SI units and quantities and new understandings and knowledge have emerged - especially from Key Comparisons.

The benefits from the MRA have been felt by the larger and older NMIs just as much as the newer and smaller ones! Some readers may remember that the BIPM commissioned the independent consultants, KPMG, to review the expected economic benefits of the MRA. A summary of their findings is that:

- 75% of NMIs have a “positive or very positive” impression of the benefits due to mutual recognition of calibrations by a greater number of countries.
- Each participating NMI saves €75 k per bilateral mutual recognition.
- The total notional saving to the community of NMIs is about €85 M
- Participants cover 89% of world trade
- Conservative estimates of the *impacts of the MRA in reducing technical barriers to trade suggest that they could be worth over €4 billion.*

As with all reports such as this, the results need to be interpreted carefully, but by any standard, the data is impressive and, I hope, it convinces you of the value and importance which results from our work. The signatories of the CIPM MRA, drawn from Members of the Metre Convention and Associates of the General Conference, have something of which to be proud. They are making a major contribution to the advancement of world metrology as well as

to the reduction of problems which result from the lack of mutual acceptance of NMI and other calibration certificates.

Whilst the technical coverage of the KCDB and the CIPM MRA currently is focussed on physics, engineering and chemistry, we shall be reporting on related developments in the laboratory medicine and food areas as we believe that the framework established so far can be applied to these new sectors. Already in laboratory medicine, the Joint Committee for Traceability in Laboratory Medicine, the JCTLM, is creating databases of reference materials and processes. Both of these are currently of interest to the European Commission as they implement the recent Directive on In Vitro Diagnostic medical Devices (Directive 98/79/EC) and to the World Health Organisation. Key and other comparisons to help provide the technical underpinning for this work are under way. I am certain that the scope of our activities in this and other areas will be expanded, founded on the experience we have gained through the CIPM MRA and the KCDB. In this way we aim to apply good metrology practice to activities which are of direct benefit to human health and quality of life.

Whilst the majority of the material in this newsletter is inevitably from the BIPM, we are keen to respond to the interests of our readers and look forward to your feedback and comments on this first edition using the contact address at BIPM.KCDB@bipm.org. In particular, we want to include information of interest to end users in the regulatory, accreditation and legislative worlds in addition to those from metrology organisations.

Finally may I thank all of you who contribute to the CIPM MRA activity and to its application. I would also like to add my thanks to my colleagues Dr Claudine Thomas, Dr Stephanie Maniguet, and M. Laurent Le Mée who are the energetic powerhouse behind the KCDB office. My thanks also go to Dr Ismael Castelazo who recently replaced Dr Angela Samuel as the Executive Secretary of the JCRB and who is the lynchpin of the complex and demanding policy and administrative processes which lie behind this huge international collaborative effort.

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