



## **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 facilitates international trade.

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

Following the inclusion of a new MRA signatory or after the successful re-evaluation of a current signatory, an APLAC MRA signatory can promote international acceptance of test, calibration, inspection, proficiency testing reports, and reference material certificates and statements in their own economy.

Signatories to the APLAC MRA can write to the following organisations acknowledging the achievement of the new MRA signatory 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:

An accreditation body’s own economy

- the appointed desk officer and/or official responsible for the MRA signatory economy in the local economy’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, State Department and other appropriate regulatory bodies.
- the appointed desk officer and/or official responsible for the MRA signatory economy at the Ministry of Trade and Industry, Department of Commerce, Ministry of Economic Development and other appropriate regulatory bodies.
- 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 the 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 directory or through the local Chamber of Commerce or similar organisations that coordinate the interests of business communities.

Another signatory's economy

- 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.
- 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 and 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 letters on MRA promotion and would be generically suitable for all of the above organisations.

**Following five key points should be covered in the letter:**

- introduction about an accreditation body;
- description about MRA and its significance;
- update on signatory status and activities in the region;
- benefits of equivalence and acceptance of endorsed test reports in trade facilitation;
- an accreditation body as a contact point for bridging the gap if any between the regulator, importer and/or exporter.

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 letter on MRA promotion.

Appendix 3 is an example of a press release for promoting acceptance of test reports from MRA signatories for use by all signatories.

**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", "medical", "inspection", "reference material" or "proficiency testing" as appropriate*) reports (*insert "certificates and statements" as appropriate*) issued by each other's accredited laboratories (*insert "and inspection bodies", "reference material producers" or "proficiency testing providers" 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, calibration and medical laboratories, inspection bodies, reference material producers and proficiency testing providers 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 (*insert "testing", "calibration", "medical" "inspection", "reference material" or "proficiency testing" as appropriate*) of products and services 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: *Conformity assessment -- Requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies*. All signatories of the APLAC MRA accredit laboratories to the international standard, ISO/IEC 17025: *General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories* (*insert "and inspection bodies to ISO/IEC 17020: Conformity assessment -- Requirements for the operation of various types of bodies performing inspection", "ISO 17034: General requirements for the competence of reference material producers", "ISO/IEC 17043:*

*Conformity assessment -- General requirements for proficiency testing”, “ISO 15189: Medical laboratories -- Requirements for quality and competence” 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 (*insert “certificates and statements” as appropriate*) issued by laboratories (*insert “and inspection bodies”, “reference material producers” or “proficiency testing providers” if appropriate*) accredited by (*name of other accreditation body*). Similarly, (*name of other accreditation body*) would recognise test reports (*insert “certificates and statements” as appropriate*) issued by laboratories accredited by (*local accreditation body’s name*).

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. 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 Test Reports, Calibration Certificates, Inspection Reports, Reference Material Certificates and Statements, and Proficiency Testing Reports” (or “What to look for on reports to make sure they are from an accredited laboratory, inspection body, reference material producer or proficiency testing provider”), 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  
Organisation Name

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



**<Insert Title of the News Release>, p. 2**

About *<insert the name of AB>*

The **<insert the name of AB in bold>** provides accreditation for ISO/IEC 17025 testing and calibration laboratories, ISO 15189 medical test laboratories, ISO/IEC 17020 inspection bodies, ISO 17034 reference material producers, ISO/IEC 17043 proficiency test providers. **<insert the name of AB in bold>** is a member of the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) and Asia Pacific Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (APLAC) (*insert and the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) and Pacific Accreditation Cooperation (PAC) if applicable*), and is a signatory of the ILAC and APLAC (*insert IAF and PAC if applicable*) *multilateral recognition arrangements*. Through these arrangements, **<insert the name of AB in bold>** cooperates with other accreditation bodies around the world to provide value to the organizations it has accredited and their customers, ensuring that accredited certificates and test results are recognized nationally and internationally.

For more information, visit *<insert AB's website url>*.