

## IEC and ILAC

The IEC and the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to make official a working relationship that had been operating informally since December 2002.

IEC General Secretary Aharon Amit and ILAC Chair Daniel Pierre signed the MoU at IEC Central Office in Geneva on 9 February 2005. Commenting on the event, Amit said: "Formalizing our arrangement is important for the IEC because it means that by cementing ties with a highly respected market player we can reduce expenses for the stakeholders in our conformity assessment systems." Daniel Pierre commented "The laboratory community common to both the IEC Schemes and ILAC member accreditation have endured duplication of effort for too long. This cooperation, now formalised through the MoU, will go a long way to relieving this burden whilst enhancing the assessment process overall."

In December 2002 the IECEE CB Scheme and ILAC member IANZ carried out their first joint assessment at Wakefield Laboratories in Auckland, New Zealand. Several other test laboratories have been through the same process with the CB Scheme and other ILAC member accreditation bodies since then. Recently, IECEX was involved in joint assessments with the National Association of Testing Authorities, the Australian ILAC member. Doing it this way makes the process more efficient and less costly because instead of two separate assessments covering the same activities, laboratories can have one joint assessment.

The other aspect to the IEC/ILAC MoU has to do with the common understanding of ISO/IEC 17025 *General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories*, which is dealt with by the joint working group set up between the IEC Conformity Assessment Board (CAB) and ILAC. "This agreement helps to ensure that the standard is applied in the same way by both the IEC and ILAC," says IEC CAB Chairman Don Gray, "which makes life easier for the testing laboratories."

IECEE Executive Secretary Pierre de Ruvo said he is "looking forward to developing the relationship and working even more closely in the future with IECEE counterparts in ILAC based on a common view of the value of joint assessments."

According to its website, ILAC "is an international cooperation between the various laboratory accreditation schemes operated throughout the world." Accreditation bodies demonstrating compliance with ISO/IEC Guide 58 and now ISO/IEC 17011, through ILAC's peer evaluation process, are admitted to the ILAC Mutual Recognition Arrangement.

The IEC's three conformity assessments systems are the IECEE for electrical equipment, the IECEX for electrical equipment used in explosive atmospheres and the IECQ-CECC for electronic components.