



**Establishing a Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) for the Caribbean Countries Workshop
28 -29 June 2018, Port-of- Spain, Trinidad & Tobago**

A summary of the main points of the MRA meeting held on 28-29 June.

To further encourage national and regional ICT innovations, Conformance and Inoperability (C&I) remains a critical component for the Caribbean region and in pursuit of a regional harmonise approach the following scenarios are noted:

1. ICT products imported: In this case it is noted that no immediate changes to national C&I rules and regulations may be needed.
2. ICT products developed and sold locally: In this case it is noted that to further encourage local innovation, youth entrepreneurship and perhaps national diversification, C&I remains important and so are associated regulations. National/local regulators are encouraged to define their regulatory processes for C&I and other compliance requirements, as appropriate. Light-touch regulations is encouraged.
3. ICT products locally developed and intended to be sold internationally: For wider sales of new ICT products within the Caribbean region or beyond, the Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) system could be very useful to local developers. Bilateral MRA agreements would be arranged but equally useful is the presence/assistance of a MRA regional coordinating agency. Similar to CITEL's MRA role for Latin America, the CTU could be the Caribbean MRA regional coordinating agency.

The following details the process for sections 3.

MRA

1. The meeting recommended the implementation of the CITEL MRA to expedite and address the problem of lack of in-country and regional CABs (Conformity Assessment Bodies) in the CARICOM region. Participants are asked to enquire and subsequent to the meeting to confirm whether their Administration supports this recommendation.
2. The APEC MRA (21 economies), CITEL MRA (34 member states) and MRA EU (29 member states) implemented with other countries share the same features and conditions. These MRAs have a very large installed base. Reports indicated that there is no intention or desire from these representative countries to update their MRA.



Telecom Regulations:

1. These recommendations do not apply to countries without telecom regulations.
2. These recommendations do not apply to countries which recognize foreign standards and conformity assessment results (testing and certification) such as CE, FCC, CSA etc and are satisfied with this status.
3. Countries which have their own standards and regulations but do not have national or access to regional CABs are encouraged to consider implementing the CITELE MRA by:
 - a. Directly negotiating with member countries through.
 1. Exchange of letters, detailing for e.g.: scope, start date, end date etc.
 2. Bilateral MRA
 - b. CTU can be the co-coordinating organization for the Caribbean countries.
 1. Be a repository for all agreed bilateral MRAs. Countries shall lodge copies of their MRA(s) with the CTU.
 2. Building awareness and/or encouraging participation; and,
 3. Countries are encouraged to notify CTU of their intended MRA partners, detailing the scope.
4. It is proposed that a few pilot projects be implemented within a regulatory “Sand box”. Sand Box means a virtual or physical space in which new or untested products/devices can operate and for which light-touch regulation applies.

In this case, CARICOM developers shall disclose to regulators the technical parameters (for wireless devices, eg, frequency spectrum, transmit power) and protocols to determine the specific standard or regulation which will apply to their new device.

The regulator should consider a risk-based approach. Based on the risk associated with the device, the Regulator should determine the operational parameters for the sand box.

Each sand box instance is an observation period for the regulator to assess whether there is need to revise or otherwise update existing regulations.

For regional trade, as in point 3 above, implementing the CITELE MRA will enable the entrepreneurs to access their MRA partners’ CABs.

5. Caribbean regulators should work towards the harmonization of approaches to facilitate innovation within the region, with particular reference to technical standards, applicable



regulations and conformity assessment systems. CTU/ITU should organize a regional standards forum for this purpose.

Way forward

Guided by the above, participants proposed the following as the way forward:

1. Regional Member States are to advise whether they support the implementation of the CITELE MRA to expedite and address the problem of lack of in-country and regional CABs (Conformity Assessment Bodies) in the CARICOM region.
2. CTU to coordinate the implementation of the CITELE MRA for the Caricom region. Details of CTU role are detailed in 3.b above.
3. ITU and CTU to host a Caribbean regional MRA workshop in 2019 to enhance training and awareness of the role of regulators role and function in a MRA environment.
4. ITU shall share the details and recommendations of this event with the most senior level officials of Caribbean Member States to get the necessary support of the recommendations.
5. At least one pilot project to be implemented within a regulatory “Sand box.” Trinidad and Tobago in collaboration with the UWI, St. Augustine campus, TATT, TTBS and ITU shall continue discussions for a pilot project for 2019/20.
6. Consider using a product in the Fasove pipeline to put through the process of obtaining the C&I certification and documenting that process so that it can be shared with developers, regulators and other persons in the ecosystem. It is proposed that this would be done in conjunction with CPqD. The goal is to complete the process before the end of 2018.
7. Consider undertaking short training courses (train the trainer) to prepare developers and other persons in the system to be able to undertake pre-compliance testing. In so doing identifying a location for the precompliance 'center' and the partners who would support the center.
8. Consider creating an advocacy group for Caribbean developers that can capture and represent the concerns of the developer community.
9. To speed up the regional MRA process, CTU is to work with and perhaps subscribe to MRA data banking international agencies. This will provide access to “a repository for all agreed bilateral MRAs including regulator’s technical parameters (for wireless devices, eg, frequency spectrum, transmit power) and protocols which will apply to new devices.