



# Conformance & Interoperability in the Caribbean

Situation review, survey results and  
recommendations, way forward

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## Contents

- Comprises four parts :
  - Situation review
  - Survey results
  - Recommendations
  - Suggested roadmap
- **NB:** Most of this info is in the report *“Conformity and Interoperability Assessment on a Regional Basis”*



## Summary (from earlier talk)

- Most countries have a regulatory framework for technical requirements for the importation ICT products and services
- There are a broad range of Conformity Assessment Schemes in effect in the region, some of which are ISO/CASCO compliant
- There are differing positions on matters related to delegation of authority and MRAs
- Most countries have a national stds system, and are prepared to adopt international stds
- Most countries have metrology laws and a national institute of metrology
- Most countries do not have a local accreditation body, nor did they have accredited testing laboratories
- The local regulator is responsible for certification in some countries
- Trusted Marks of Conformity include: EU, FCC, IEC, UL and CE



## RECOMMENDATIONS



## **Problem: How to advance C&I and MRAs in the region?**

- Most countries have a basic framework that addresses some but not most of the key elements re C&I and MRAs
- There are no national or regional testing labs doing 1<sup>st</sup> party testing
- Few internationally accredited certification bodies
- Differing positions regarding MRAs and the delegation of authority



## **Recommendation 1: Establish in-country testing laboratories**

- A best practice internationally
  - E.g. see ITU “Feasibility Study for a Conformance Testing Centre”
- Benefits
  - The development of local human capacity and building country expertise;
  - May lead the country to become a reference in a particular C&I Domain (testing of mobile terminals, etc).
- Challenges
  - High set up & maintenance costs
  - Potential for under-utilisation of testing laboratory;
  - Only few Caribbean countries may have the capacity and capital to establish in-country laboratories.
- Caribbean countries may consider coordinating with other countries in the region in order not to duplicate efforts



## Recommendation 2: Establish a regional test centre

- A best practice internationally
  - E.g. see ITU “Guidelines for developing countries on establishing conformity assessment test labs in different regions”
- Regional centre might be a longer-term consideration
- Benefits
  - Take advantage of economies of scale and scope
  - Donor agencies might be more amenable to support a regional initiative
- Challenges
  - Requires consensus and commitment from participating countries
  - Likely that countries would need to adjust existing frameworks to recognise outputs from test centre
- A critical consideration might be deciding where to locate the test centre
  - demography and market size, plus having requisite technical and financial capacity, might limit country choice



## Recommendation 3: Establish MRAs in the region

- A best practice internationally
  - E.g. see ITU “Guidelines for the development, implementation and management of Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs)”
- Benefits
  - Would be a significant development for the countries involved
- Challenges
  - Legal basis to delegate regulatory authority, through MRAs, is fragmented in region
  - Considerable resources may be needed to create the requisite enabling environment
- A more thorough understanding of the legal and regulatory frameworks in the countries is needed



## SUGGESTED ROADMAP



## What are the next steps?

- This workshop is truly just to begin the conversation on C&I and MRAs in the region
- The countries need to decide their individual positions and the extent to which a regional approach should be employed
- Sub-regional and regional organisations may be influential in guiding priorities and facilitating collaboration and harmonisation
  - Might be useful to involve CARICOM, and single ICT space initiative
  - ECTEL, with respect to its Member States
  - CROSQ for regional standards development, and to coordinate/represent national standards agencies



## What are the initial country positions?

- To what extent do the countries agree that C&I and/or MRAs require attention?
- What course of action might the countries wish to pursue?
  - National labs? Regional test centre? MRAs? Etc.?
- Is there scope to work collaboratively, or with a coordinated effort?
- Is a steering committee necessary to coordinate and manage process
  - If yes, who should the committee comprise? What should be its mandate?
- What start-up budget is needed to jumpstart proposed initiative?
- What technical assistance is needed to develop framework and support implementation?



## Sensitisation and awareness building

- Policy makers and key decision makers need to understand C&I and MRAs
  - What are C&I and MRAs?
  - Why are they important?
  - Where is the country currently, re C&I and MRA development?
  - Where should the country aspire to be?
  - What are the benefits ?
  - What will it take to get there?
  - What are the routes through which to get there?



## **Common regime: Alignment of purpose**

- To transition to a regional approach, it is critical that the objectives, goals, required commitment, etc., are clearly established from the outset
- A series of consultations across the region may be required
- Countries ought to expressly affirm the importance of the initiative and commit to undertaking the necessary internal restructuring



## **Common regime: Capacity building**

- Open to policymakers, plus legal drafting, regulatory and standards specialists from the participating countries
- Technical assistance from int'l agencies might be necessary to secure requisite expertise
- ITU may offer support in collaboration with training institutions in the region



## **Common regime: Regulatory alignment**

- What is the role of the telecoms regulator?
- What is the role of the national standards bureau?
- Who will be responsible for advancing C&I and MRAs for telecoms/ICT?
- Should the agency responsible be the same in all of the participating countries?
- What corresponding support framework will be needed in each country?



## **Common regime: Alignment of standards**

- What are the standards, rules, procedures, etc in each of the participating countries?
- What are the commonalities and differences among the participating countries?
- What are the “must haves” to realise a common regime?
- What must each country do to be aligned with the common agreed regime?
- What differences/latitude will be allowed?





## **Common regime: Legislative alignment**

- What are the current laws re C&I and/or MRAs in each of the participating countries?
- What are the commonalities and differences among the participating countries?
- What are the “must haves” to realise a common regime?
- What must each country do to be aligned with the common agreed regime?
- What differences/latitude will be allowed?
- Can model legislation be developed?



## **Common regime: Realisation/implementation**

- Following initial advice and recommendations, countries would be required to implement
- Countries ought to commit to timelines by which key milestones would be reached
- Task force/steering committee would keep all parties honest
- Expert assistance might be necessary to support in-country implementation



## Way forward

- Establish clearly defined objectives and goals
- Ensure participation and commitment of policymakers to effect the needed changes
- Secure commitment from countries to adjust their policy, legal and regulatory frameworks to meet agreed goals and objectives
- Establish task force or steering committee to oversee/coordinate the entire initiative
- Build needed technical capacity across region
- Make effort to access the necessary technical and financial assistance



## Any Questions?

**Michele Marius**  
**ICT Pulse Consulting Limited**

Blog: [ict-pulse.com](http://ict-pulse.com)

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