As we embark on a new year, we take a look back at our accomplishments to date and how far the organisation has travelled in the last 10 years of existence.

Initially, CROSQ focused on the development of regional documentary standards. In recent years, however, with the phenomenon of globalization and its driving forces, the focus has necessarily shifted to include the development of key elements of a regional quality infrastructure (RQI) such as metrology, inspection, testing, certification and accreditation.

Externally funded projects have contributed significantly to the development process of CROSQ, including a significant increase in the staff complement from an initial 5 persons to 17 at maximum:

- The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) co-funded 2 projects, the first aimed at increasing the competitiveness of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SME project) and the second aimed at building RQI to improve market access and competitiveness (RQI project);
- The Physikalisch Technische Bundesanstalt (PTB - the German Metrology Institute) funded 2 projects aimed at developing quality infrastructure in the region, with an initial focus on the strengthening of metrology;

When Caribbean countries signed the CARIFORUM-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) in 2008, the region’s exports to the EU were just 16% of its total exports and trade was concentrated in a few areas. Since the EPA offered duty-free access to markets in the EU, businesses felt they had an excellent opportunity to increase and diversify their exports to that region. This was particularly true in fast-growing areas such as specialty foods and beverages.

However, the reality is that many businesses find it very difficult to penetrate EU markets partly because of existing "technical barriers to trade" (TBTs), including the need for product testing and certificates from recognised (accredited) laboratories.

In recognition of this need, CROSQ recently signed on to a Grant Agreement from the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), through the UK-funded Caribbean Aid for Trade and Regional Integration Trust Fund (CARTFund), for the implementation of a project for strengthening regional testing laboratories.

The three year project, entitled “Strengthening the Capabilities of Testing
Launch (cont.)

(continued from page 1)

- The Caribbean Development Bank funded a project aimed at developing a comprehensive set of Regional Building Standards and the promotion of their use;
- The Canadian International development Agency (CIDA - via TDV Global/Wren Group) supported the strengthening of CROSQ’s structure and processes;
- TradeCom supported a project to strengthen regional metrology; and
- The European Development Fund financed a Caribbean Laboratory Accreditation Services (CLAS) project aimed at assisting laboratories to achieve accreditation via regional cooperation and the establishment of an overarching regional accreditation mechanism.

CROSQ has also developed strategic partnerships and relationships with other regional and international organizations including the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) and the Caribbean Export Development Agency. Through these relationships, joint activities have been undertaken aimed at: assisting the development of manufacturers and producers, trade facilitation and disaster management, among other things.

In November 2008, a 3-year Strategic Plan (2009-2012) was developed by CROSQ, taking into account the new direction in which CROSQ was moving, setting up Strategic Themes as the pillars for developing RQI and taking into account necessary human, technical and financial resources as well as projects and activities that would help the organisation achieve the set targets.

In 2009, Haiti signed on the Inter-Governmental Agreement Establishing CROSQ, officially becoming a Member. Since then, Haiti has actively participated in the activities of CROSQ, benefitting from training, technical assistance and necessary equipment.

Also in 2009, CARIMET - the Caribbean arm of the Sistema Interamericano Metrologia (SIM) comprising representatives of the National Metrology Institutes (NMIs) of the English-speaking Caribbean including Belize, Guyana and Suriname - was integrated as a Technical Committee within CROSQ with particular responsibility for the development and coordination of metrology in the region.

Likewise, with the recognized need for increased information sharing and collaboration amongst the member organizations within CROSQ, the Regional Information Network Committee was formed in 2009 with responsibility for coordinating regional efforts in information management, knowledge management and other aspects related to information and communication technology (ICT).

These activities are only a few highlights of the achievements which CROSQ has obtained since its existence. It is recognized that the organization’s development was not possible without the dedication of the staff at the CROSQ Secretariat and through the efforts of its Member Bodies. CROSQ continues to be committed to achieving its mandate of the promotion and development of standards and standards related activities to facilitate international competitiveness and the sustainable productions of goods and services within the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) for the enhancement of social and economic development for the next 10 years and beyond.

On behalf of myself and the staff of the CROSQ Secretariat, we wish you all the best for 2012 and look forward to working with our regional and international partners this year and beyond, towards furthering the goals and objectives of CROSQ and its Member States.

-- Mr. Winston Bennett, Chief Executive Officer, CROSQ

Minister of Commerce and Trade Launches CARTFund Project

It is important that the requisite systems are in place to support business activity in this country as efforts are made to enhance and increase our exports to regional and international markets.

Minister of Commerce and Trade, Senator Haynesley Benn, told a group of regional exporters that Barbados recognises the importance of standards and conformity assessment to trade, especially within this era of globalisation and trade liberalisation. To this end, he said that Government is committed to firmly establishing a national quality infrastructure through the implementation of the ‘Modernisation of Barbados National Standards System’ project.

“I keep remembering many things we used to do many years ago as it relates to quality and I remember when we were exporting, there were so many hoops to jump through, so many hurdles to clear, and yet as a consumer when I went into the supermarket and saw products that came to our country, I wondered why we were not as consistent as they were... We sit down as consumers and allow supermarkets to put on their shelves poor quality products [and] close-dated products,” he noted.

Delivering the feature address at the launch of the project enti- tled ‘Strengthening the Capabilities of Testing Laboratories in the Caribbean to Reduce Technical Barriers to Trade’, which (continued on page 3)
Lab Strengthening Project (cont.)

(continued from page 1)

Laboratories in the Caribbean to Reduce Technical Barriers to Trade”, focuses on strengthening the capabilities of testing laboratories in CARIFORUM Member Countries so that they can provide reliable, competent, internationally recognized and affordable testing services to exporters. The UK, through the CARTFund, is contributing USD $522,401 (87% of project costs) to the successful implementation of the project activities.

The CROSQ/UK CARTFund project seeks to ensure that the benefitting laboratories will provide the testing services that are needed by exporters and that there will be equal access to the services for both men and women. The project aims at ensuring safer products are made available in the region’s markets, by improving access to less costly (approximately 50% saving on pre-intervention costs) and internationally accepted testing services within the Caribbean region for exporters and producers in the priority sectors. This will facilitate Caribbean exporters having improved access to EU, North American, Caribbean and other international markets.

Subsequently, CROSQ conducted a series of workshops and consultations for the facilitation of less costly access to testing services, as well as identifying the needs of exporters to be able to successfully enter the EU market.

These workshops were held on January 16-20, 2012 at the CDB Headquarters in Barbados. The first 2 days were a train-the-trainers workshop focusing on enabling laboratory personnel to effectively undertake gap analyses and self-assessment against the internationally established guidelines. Days 3 and 4 were centered on the development and promotion of a Caribbean Co-operation for Accreditation (CCA) scheme, the establishment of which was agreed by CARICOM Member States in view of the high costs associated with accreditation by agencies based outside the region.

The final day of the workshop (Friday, January 20) was launched by Senator Haynesley Benn, Minister of Commerce and Trade and included in-depth discussions with established and potential exporters in order to identify the needs of regional manufacturers/producers to enable them to test their products cost-effectively and satisfactorily within the region. Ms. Carol Homer-Caesar of Angostura Ltd provided participants with a view of how accreditation improved export for Angostura and Ms. Cherianne Clarke, Growth Policy Advisor at the UK’s Department for International Development (DFID) gave a brief address to participants on the CARTFund programme.

This series of workshop is the first activity of the CROSQ/UK CARTFund project and will assist CROSQ in identifying the laboratory services demanded by exports and to ultimately assist three regional laboratories to achieve accreditation.

Minister of Commerce and Trade…(cont.)

(continued from page 2)

is being spearheaded by CROSQ and funded by the UKAID CARTFund, managed by the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB). Benn urged regional countries to ensure that the requisite systems are in place so that only quality products are imported and make their way to the shelves in our countries.

Using the example of Barbados, he explained that the objective of the modernisation project here is to improve the country’s competitiveness, consumer protection, trade facilitation and market access, by enhancing the competence and performance of the Barbados National Standards Institution.

“The quality infrastructure is essential in breaking down technical barriers to trade and is the key to the greater integration of countries as partners into the international trading system,” he said.

Meanwhile, referring to the project being launched by CROSQ yesterday, he noted that it too seeks to strengthen certain capabilities, particularly that of the testing labs in the CARIFORUM member countries, so that they can provide reliable, competent, internationally recognised and affordable testing services to exporters. He noted that the availability of testing services in the region that conform to international standards would definitely eliminate the need for costly re-testing abroad and reduce compliance costs, thereby removing technical barriers to trade.

“When Caribbean countries signed the CARIFORUM-EU Economic Partnership Agreement in 2008, the region’s exports to the EU were just 16 per cent of the total exports and trade was concentrated in a few areas... The reality is that many businesses find it difficult to penetrate EU markets, partly because of existing technical barriers to trade including the need for product testing and certificates from recognised or accredited labs,” he said.

As such, he maintained that there is definitely a need to close the gaps in laboratory testing within the region and he has pledged Government’s support to strengthening the quality infrastructure locally, as well as within the region.

-- Adapted from The Barbados Advocate, 21 January 2012
CROSQ’S VISION
The premier CARICOM organisation for the development and promotion of an Internationally Recognized Regional Quality Infrastructure

CROSQ’S MISSION
The promotion and development of standards and standards related activities to facilitate international competitiveness and the sustainable production of goods and services within the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) for the enhancement of social and economic development

2012 Calendar of Events (January – September)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>EVENT</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 16</td>
<td>Planning Meeting for the CROSQ/PTB RQI-3 Phase I Project</td>
<td>Barbados</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 16-17</td>
<td>Train-the-trainers Workshop for National Accreditation Focal Points</td>
<td>Barbados</td>
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<td>January 18</td>
<td>ISO 9001 Quality Management Systems Implementation Workshop</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 18-19</td>
<td>Planning Meeting on the Caribbean Cooperation for Accreditation</td>
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<td>January 20</td>
<td>Launch Ceremony for CROSQ/UK CARTFund Project</td>
<td>Barbados</td>
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<td>January 20</td>
<td>Regional Public-Private Sector Consultation on Demand for Laboratory Services</td>
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<td>January 23</td>
<td>Meeting of the CDEMA Education Sector Subcommittee</td>
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<td>February 22-24</td>
<td>10th EDF and CROSQ/PTB RQI 3 Phase II Projects Planning Meetings</td>
<td>Grenada</td>
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<td>February 27-28</td>
<td>Twentieth Meeting of the CROSQ Technical Management Committee</td>
<td>Antigua</td>
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<td>March 12-16</td>
<td>ISO Regional Training of Trainers on Energy Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 26-28</td>
<td>ISO Regional Seminar on Carbon Footprinting</td>
<td>TBA</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 16-18</td>
<td>ISO Regional Workshop on Marketing and Promotion of International Standards</td>
<td>Saint Lucia</td>
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<td>April 24-25</td>
<td>CROSQ Strategic Planning Workshop</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 26-27</td>
<td>Twentieth Meeting of the CROSQ Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 27</td>
<td>CROSQ Tenth Anniversary Ceremony and Reception</td>
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<td>July 25</td>
<td>Launch of the 10th EDF-CRIP Programme Technical Barriers to Trade Component</td>
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<td>July 25</td>
<td>First Meeting of the Technical Oversight Committee of the 10th EDF-CRIP Programme Technical Barriers to Trade Component</td>
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<td>September 10-14</td>
<td>Workshop on Calibration of Weighing Instruments</td>
<td>Saint Lucia</td>
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<td>September 16-17</td>
<td>46th Meeting of DEVCO</td>
<td>California, USA</td>
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<td>September 18-22</td>
<td>ISO General Assembly</td>
<td>California, USA</td>
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<td>September 24-28</td>
<td>Training in e-Learning Course in Basic Metrology</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 27</td>
<td>Launch of PAHO/CDC/CROSQ Laboratory Quality Management Systems –SIP</td>
<td>Trinidad and Tobago</td>
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