Region Celebrates 10 Years of Quality

This year marks an important occasion for the creation of a culture of quality in the region as the CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality (CROSQ) celebrates its 10th Anniversary in February. CROSQ was established in 2002 by the signing of an Inter-Governmental Agreement by CARICOM Heads of Government and has since then strived to introduce and establish mechanisms and documentation to assist in the development of Quality of Life in the region.

CROSQ was established with a mandate of facilitating the development of regional standards, representing the interest of the region in global standards work, promoting the harmonization of measurement systems and supporting the sustainable production and trade in goods and services in the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME). The Headquarters Agreement, signed in January 2007 with the Government of Barbados, provides a permanent base for CROSQ in Barbados, where the Secretariat has been located since 2003.

As we celebrate this important milestone, we recognise that the advancement and achievements in the development of a quality culture through the introduction of quality products and services has been made possible through the cooperation, collaboration and support of the governments and people of our Member Countries, donors, private sector, academia, civil society and other national,

CROSQ Establishes Formal Working Relationship with ISO

The Council of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) adopted a resolution in September 2011, which laid out a set of criteria for the establishment of working relations for the enhancement of collaboration between sub-regional organisations and ISO.

Having passed the requirements, CROSQ’s working relations with ISO were formalized in February 2012. The particulars of the relationship allow CROSQ representatives to attend the annual ISO General Assembly and the annual meeting of the ISO Committee on developing country matters (DEVCO) as an observer. Additionally, CROSQ and ISO will work together to plan joint awareness-building, training and capacity-building activities, as well as foster the increased participation from CROSQ members in the technical work of ISO.

Chief Executive Officer of CROSQ, Mr. Winston Bennett, commented that: “the establishment of this relationship is of significant achievement for CROSQ which celebrated its 10th Anniversary this month, and has been consistently facilitating the coordination, promotion and development of regional standards and standards-related activities.” He added that through this arrangement, it is hoped that the region’s participation and input into the development of international standards would be increased, resulting in

Stakeholders Consultation in Grenada - Photo Gallery

Promoting a Regional Culture of Quality
Celebrating Ten Years (cont.)

regional and international partners. We also especially recognize the contributions of persons who were instrumental in developing the organisation to this point.

In honour of CROSQ’s achievements to date, the organisation is intending to conduct a series of activities throughout the year to commemorate its anniversary. This first activity to earmark the occasion was a church service held on 5 February 2012 at Power in the Blood Assemblies in Barbados. The Chief Executive Officer of CROSQ, Mr. Winston Bennett, provided a brief speech to the congregation during the service on CROSQ and its role and benefits to the people in the region.

The next in the series of events will be held in Grenada from 21-24 February 2012 in conjunction with the Grenada Bureau of Standards. Plans are underway for the presentation of CROSQ and its benefits during a stakeholder consultation and the hosting of a press conference surrounding the planning of activities under the 10th European Development Fund (EDF) project relevant to CROSQ and its Member States.

Additionally, a ceremony and reception will be held in April 2012 in Barbados to officially commemorate the anniversary of CROSQ, which will be attended by the members of the Council of CROSQ, Ministers, donor agencies representatives, and representatives from other partners locally, around the region and internationally.

The aim of each of these activities is to focus on promoting how CROSQ and its Member States can increase Quality of Life in the region, from the consumer all the way up to the manufacturer and importer, by ensuring that goods and services entering into the market meet the high level of quality that we should expect and demand in the region.

Antigua Hosts Technical Committee Meeting of CROSQ

The Antigua & Barbuda Bureau of Standards (ABBS) hosted the Twentieth meeting of the Technical Management Committee (TMC) of the CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality (CROSQ), Monday, at City View Hotel.

Representatives of the TMC from Antigua & Barbuda, Barbados, Trinidad & Tobago, Guyana and Jamaica participated in the day-long meeting. Stakeholders from St Lucia, Dominica and St Vincent & the Grenadines were absent.

The TMC, which is responsible for the Standards Development Work Programme for the region, met to discuss previously raised issues of standardisation of poultry feed and feed ingredients and cigarette packaging, as well as new initiatives, including tourism standards.

TMC Chairman Fabian Scott said he believes the tourism standard will directly affect Antigua & Barbuda.

"Tourism is one of your big foreign exchange earner. Therefore, tourism standards are improving the quality of service that our tourists expect is one thing that we would like to work on," he said.

A contentious issue surrounds the proposed labelling of tobacco products with "graphic" pictures that illustrate the effects of tobacco smoke on consumers.

The longstanding initiative has been unsuccessfully lobbied for the last five years.

"We are so challenged in getting this one to go, so far … We still have three or four member states still having issues," said CROSQ's Technical Officer Standards Fulgence St Prix.

"Members have signed onto that protocol, so that it is expected that they put things in place to acknowledge that protocol."

If a consensus can not be reached, the tobacco initiative will be removed from the work plan.

However, the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) requires that all member states approve standards for them to become a regional standard.

Subsequent to the meeting, the committee's decision will be submitted to CROSQ in Barbados. Once the standards have been ratified by the organisation, the decisions will become binding throughout the participating Caricom countries.

In a plea to the government and people of Antigua & Barbuda, St Prix called for continued support.

"We are asking that the people look out for the standards and make the necessary comments because the standards affect you. We are also asking for the government to beef up human resource and the infrastructure of the Antigua & Barbuda Bureau of Standards.

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-- Adapted from Antigua Observer, 29 February 2012

Promoting a Regional Culture of Quality
CROSQ-ISO Relationship (cont.)

...standards being developed at the international level having an increased reflection of the particularities of the CARICOM Member States. It is also hoped that through this strengthened agreement with ISO, Member States of CROSQ who are currently Correspondent members would be assisted in being upgraded to Full membership and encourage those who are not currently members of ISO to join. At current, 4 Member States of CROSQ are Full members of ISO with an additional 2 countries holding Correspondent membership and 3 being Subscriber members.

Project Planning Meeting hosted by GDBS

Heads of the region’s National Standards Bodies met this February in Grenada to chart the way forward for the development of Phase II of the CROSQ/PTB Regional Quality Infrastructure 3 (RQI-3) project. Phase I and II of the project are funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) of Germany through the Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt (PTB). Phase I of the project is set to be completed in October 2012.

The Planning session, which included technical staff from the CROSQ Secretariat, looked at the results of surveys and assessments undertaken in Phase I surrounding the implementation and impact of the project activities, with an aim to effectively determine the strategic themes of focus for Phase II.

Additionally, the session focused on discussing plans for continuing to build the Regional Quality Infrastructure (RQI) through funding from the European Union through the 10th European Development Fund (EDF) Programme.

Opening the event, Director of the Grenada Bureau of Standards (GDBS), Mr. L. Simeon Collins, highlighted that key components in which Grenada benefited from the RQI-3 Phase II project were:

- Training in the calibration of weighing instruments;
- Training in ISO 17025 - the International Standard which sets out the requirements to ensure technical competence of testing and calibration labs;
- Training in the estimation of uncertainty in measurements;
- Proficiency testing workshops;
- Method validation workshops; and
- A measurement toolkit workshop for service providers.

Mr. Collins also stated that the Planning Meeting was preceded by a Stakeholders Consultation at the Bureau where members of CROSQ, PTB and GDBS interacted with several stakeholders to get their inputs on the activities that CROSQ conducted as part of their efforts to build RQI.

He noted that some of the feedback given indicated that more public awareness programmes were needed to increase consumer awareness and ensure consumer confidence. Additional suggestions were that CROSQ should increase its work with the private sector and that adequate legislative framework should be put in place to complement the work of CROSQ and the National Standards Bodies. Stakeholders also expressed a desire for more efforts to be placed on the small and medium-sized enterprises.

Also speaking at the Opening Ceremony was the Honourable Nazim Burke, Minister of Finance, Planning, Economy, Energy and Cooperatives, who highlighted the important role CROSQ has to play in promoting the development and harmonization of standards, technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures.

“CROSQ can create the environment for business in the CARICOM Member States to improve their trade competitiveness through a harmonized quality infrastructure,” Minister Burke said. He added that the standards developed by CROSQ for use regionally “should ensure quality, safety, reliability and efficiency.”

Minister Burke recommended that CROSQ should seek to put in place systems that would ensure that products traded regionally and internationally are inspected to ensure that they conform to established standards or requirements. “If possible, a Certification Mark Scheme should be developed and this Mark should be used on products which meet regional, and by extension, international standards.”

Minister Burke also emphasized the need for increased development of standards for services, citing the tourism industry as a prime example of where the introduction of regional standards for services would be significantly beneficial.
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

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Like us on Facebook: facebook.com/crosq.caricom

2012 Calendar of Events (February – November)

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<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>
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<td>March 12-16</td>
<td>ISO Regional Training of Trainers on Energy Management</td>
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<td>ISO Regional Seminar on Carbon Footprinting</td>
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<td>ISO Regional Workshop on Marketing and Promotion of International Standards</td>
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<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>September 10-14</td>
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<td>September 27</td>
<td>Launch of PAHO/CDC/CROSQ Laboratory Quality Management Systems –SIP Programme</td>
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<td>October 29 - November 2</td>
<td>WTO TBT Enquiry Points Strengthening Workshop and Summit of the Americas</td>
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