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The Caribbean Community (CARICOM – www.caricom.org) was established by the signing of the Treaty of Chaguaramas on July 4, 1973. The objectives of the Community, identified in Article 6 of the Revised Treaty (formally, The Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas Establishing the Caribbean Community, including the CARICOM Single Market and Economy - CSME) are: to improve standards of living and work; the full employment of labour and other factors of production; accelerated, coordinated and sustained economic development and convergence; expansion of trade and economic relations with third States; enhanced levels of international competitiveness; organisation for increased production and productivity; achievement of a greater measure of economic leverage and effectiveness of Member States in dealing with third States, groups of States and entities of any description and the enhanced co-ordination of Member States' foreign and foreign economic policies and enhanced functional co-operation. Under the Treaty there are several institutions responsible for formulating policies and performing functions (CROSQ- standards and technical regulations, CAREC- epidemiology, UWI/CXC – education, CEDERA – disaster & disaster response, CCJ – law & justice, CCCCC – climate change...etc.). There are in excess of twenty two (22) institutions of the Community. This cooperation was realised as a response to the close proximity and similar historical background of the countries as well as the comparative smallness of the economies and by extension the limited human and financial resources.

Since the late 70s, the development of standards and technical regulations has been coordinated at the regional level through the Caribbean Common Market Standards Council (CCMSC). The Caribbean Common Market Standards Council (CCMSC) was set up in 1976 to advise the Council of Ministers (CM) of the Community on matters relating to Standards and Technical Regulations. As liberalization and globalization intensified international competitiveness in the production of goods and services; the scope of activity of the National Standards Bodies (NSBs) the world over expanded considerably.

By the 1990's the CCMSC was being asked to deal with matters outside of its original terms of reference and beyond the capabilities of its informal structure (e.g investigation of disputes between traders/Member States relating to differences in standards and technical regulations; CET suspensions where regional manufacturers claim that the regional inputs cannot meet requirements, hosting international organizations...etc). Free trade in goods adopted under the Common Market and carried forward in Protocol IV/Article 67 of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas into the Single Market heightened the need for standards and technical regulations to regulate the flow of good (and services) and protect the health and safety of the consumer and the environment.

The Inter-Governmental establishing CROSQ was provisionally applied after being signed by the Heads of State of nine (9) Member Governments in Belize City, Belize on February 04, 2002 and definitively entered into force upon being signed by all Member States of the Community. The CROSQ Council which consists of the Directors (or their designees) of the national standards bodies of the Community, held its inaugural meeting formally launching CROSQ in Kingston, St Vincent, April 10-12, 2002. The Secretariat is located in Barbados. A CROSQ Bill must be enacted by the legislature in each Member State and this gives the Governments the regulatory powers to enact the regional standards and technical regulations. This means that once a regional measure is approved for adoption each member state is obliged to adopt it as a national standard as is (no changes/adaptations)

CARICOM through its standards and technical regulation institution the CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality (CROSQ – www.crosq.org) is currently making a significant effort in developing in the regional infrastructure aimed not only at enhancing and eliminating TBTs but also at assisting the region in participating effectively in the STBT fora as well as responding, on the regional level, to STBT issues. CROSQ supports the CARICOM requirement for the reduction in technical barriers to trade and the protection of the consumer and the environment in the expansion of intra-regional and extra-regional export of goods and services. It is mandated to represent the interest of the region in international and hemispheric standards fora, to promote the harmonisation of metrology systems and standards, and to increase the pace of standards development in

the region. It facilitates the resolution of trade disputes between Member States of CARICOM where it pertains to standards and technical regulations.

CROSQ undertakes the coordination and facilitation of standards development (including technical regulations) at the regional level (IDB-CROSQ Standards for SMEs Project). Documentary standards and technical regulations may be prepared by Member States or by Regional Technical Committees. Once the final draft is approved by Council Members and subsequently the CARICOM's Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED), a Directive is sent to the Member States, so that they can make the necessary administrative provisions in order to comply with the Directive, and advise the CROSQ Secretariat accordingly. Conformity Assessment is one of the core functions of the respective NSBs. CROSQ's role is to provide support to the NSBs in developing their capacity/capability in carrying out the CA function. The regional standards development is coordinated through the Technical Management Committee (TMC) of CROSQ – process has been mapped; implementation yet to be fine-tuned.

Metrology (physical standards) is coordinated on a hemispheric level by the Inter-American Metrology System (SIM - www.sim-metrologia.org.br), which coordinates metrology activities with the other regional metrology organisations (RMOs). SIM is comprised of all 34 members of the OAS and is part of a worldwide system of coordination of regional metrology regions/activities, with BIPM as the “custodian of the international primary standards”. The size, geographical orientation, number of countries and measurement capabilities requires that SIM to be sub-divided into [five] sub-executing regions. CARIMET is the SIM sub-region comprising the countries of CARICOM and has been adopted as the regional technical committee of CROSQ responsible for coordinating metrological activities within CARICOM and with the other [four] sub-regions of SIM. Each Member State will maintain the national artefact standards necessary to support verification and calibration at the national level and will obtain traceability to the international units to regional reference laboratories (IDB-PTB-CROSQ Metrology Project)

A system of Caribbean Reference Laboratories for primary quantities (CARLs) will also be developed for the region, starting with mass (Jamaica) and temperature (Trinidad and Tobago). These will provide traceability to the international standards of measurement for members who would otherwise be unable to afford. The first regional Inter-comparison set to begin shortly. The smaller economies cannot maintain primary reference laboratories. They will maintain that level of laboratory capability needed to support national regulatory and industrial needs and would achieve traceability and recognition to the international measurement standards through the regional reference laboratories. (CLAS Project)

Accreditation is a relatively new area to the CARICOM and is not economically feasible for many of the smaller countries. . It is proposed that the best way forward would be to develop a “cooperation in accreditation”, using two internationally recognised national accreditation bodies already being developed by two of the Member States (Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago). The coordinating Agency would be CROSQ, with national accreditation focal points (NAFPs) in each of the other Member States. The Caribbean Laboratory Accreditation Scheme is supporting the coordination at the national (NAFPs) and at the regional levels since it is not economically feasible for each member state to have its own accreditation body. CROSQ has already been granted stakeholder membership in both ILAC and IAAC.

A regional quality infrastructure is being developed with assistance from the IDB and PTB (RQI-IDB-CROSQ RQI Project). This project is aimed at building the elements of the RQI at the national level (ensuring the existence and sustainability of at least minimum capability) and at the regional level (ensuring that where members are unable to maintain capability at the national level, that the capability exists in experts centres within the region). The development of infrastructure based individual Member State needs and aimed at building relevant capacity to respond effectively and efficiently to the role it is required to play in the national economy

With this regional coordination it is possible to keep members up to date on the TBT issues and activities taking place at the international level even when it is not possible for

members to attend meetings. This is particularly important for the smaller members of the Community who have neither the financial nor physical resources to attend all the meetings. In addition it also allows for the coordination of regional positions on some of these issues.

In recent months, a number of extra-regional manufacturers of goods have expressed an interest in the CROSQ's regional standards so that they can conform to these standards in the development of products aimed at the CARICOM markets. Since these regional standards are developed in accordance with provisions of the WTO TBT Code of Good Practice for Standardization, and therefore use international standards as the base documents for the development of regional standards, they would facilitate trade and not put any undue strain or expense on these manufacturers. In some cases manufacturers want to know that technical regulations do not exist so that cheap products can be dumped on the market.

Within the region the regional standards are also used as to assist in resolving trade disputes on technical issues between Member States – flour, match splints, brewery products, rum, sausages, cement, beef patties etc., and for promoting the free flow of good [and services] between Member States of the Community and between CARICOM and other countries and regions (CARIFORUM-EC EPA, CARICOM-Canada Trade Agreement, etc...). By harmonising standards over the past 7 years rice from Guyana was freely sold in the CARICOM region after many years of TBT issues. Harmonisation of standards for rum, carbonated beverages, poultry products and sausages are being finalized/promulgated to the same or expected greater effect on eliminating barriers to trade. We are reminded of the pain of trade related issues via TBT each time a product outside of the harmonized standards regime enters a new market within or without the region. In recent times it was sausages and patties from Jamaica to Trinidad and Tobago, in the not too distant past it was ackees from Jamaica to the US. The region must remain resolute in bringing even greater cohesivity to this process of standardization and national development through continuous discussions and participation. This can be enhanced by building a complete **Quality** infrastructure around: metrology, standards, testing and conformity assessment, inspection and accreditation. Hence the

harmonisation of efforts has improved production efficiencies in a sustainable way demonstrating the relevance of CROSQ and the other regional efforts. They are also used in the protection of the consumer and the environment – labelling standards, effluent standards, environmental standards, energy efficiency. This coordination of activities at a regional level, harmonizing of practices and processes is helping to break down the TBTs especially within the region.

There is a lot more work to be done on harmonizing and streamlining processes and practices regionally but the variations in size of the countries, the comparatively small sizes of the economies, lack of human and financial resources and the range of capabilities and most times lack of capabilities means that the process is not as timely or coherent as it should be, and, external resources are required. Most importantly the regional approach makes more efficient and effective use of scarce resources and MSs who would otherwise not be capable of eliminating these barriers are afforded the opportunity through CROSQ. The harmonized/coordinated approach facilitates the functioning for the single market as good entering the market at one port can now move freely through the region. Throughout the world the issue of technical barriers to trade (TBT) are of concern. In the Caricom region this concern is no less of an issue.