ARAC Strategy 2017 - 2022

AUTHORIZATION

Issue Nº:	01
Prepared by:	Executive Committee
Date:	07 November 2016
Revision Nº:	02
Approved by:	General Assembly
Issue Date:	07 November 2016
Application Date:	Immediate
Document number:	ARAC AD 004

CLASSIFICATION

This document is classified as Administrative Document

Original: English

TABLE OF CONTENTS   **PAGE**

ARAC-AD-004-ARAC Strategy 2017-2022

Issue Date: 7th November 2016

INTRODUCTION

The Arab Accreditation Cooperation (ARAC) was established in accordance with a decision taken in relation to the Arab Standardization Strategy by the Council of Ministers of the Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization (AIDMO) in June 2008 (Decision Number 376) with the aim to develop the accreditation activities in the Arab Countries and to facilitate trade.

ARAC was formally launched in 2011 as an association of accreditation bodies and other organizations interested in conformity assessment in the Arab Region. It is a non-profit organization, established within the framework of AIDMO, that operates with independence and impartiality in its decision-making, and on the basis of cooperation among its members and stakeholders.

ARAC's financial resources currently come only from contributions from external funding organizations.

ARAC is a member of the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) and the International Accreditation Forum (IAF), and has signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) with a number of other regional accreditation cooperations.

ARAC is recognized as one of the main pillars of the Pan Arab quality infrastructure in supporting intra-regional trade and the Arab Customs Union requirements[1].

In accordance with the decision taken during the 8th ARAC Executive Committee meeting held in Abu Dhabi, UAE on 12 February 2015, and following consultation with the ARAC membership, this document sets out the Strategy for ARAC to meet its members' expectations for the period 2017 – 2022.

THE ENVIRONMENT WITHIN WHICH ARAC OPERATES

The environment within which ARAC operates and delivers it services can be categorised by the stakeholder groups that it serves.

A stakeholder can be considered to be any person, group or organization that can place a claim on ARAC's attention, resources or output, or is affected by that output.

These can be categorised into the following groups:

- External authorities and regulators that provide a framework within which ARAC must operate (such as AIDMO, IAF, ILAC)
- External supporters of ARAC (such as The Arab League, UNIDO, Sida)
- Users of ARAC's services that are within the national and international quality infrastructures (such as ARAC member accreditation bodies; conformity assessment bodies accredited by ARAC members)

---

[1] 95th Ministerial Economic and Social Council meeting of the League of Arab States, 19 February 2015

⟩ End beneficiaries of accreditation that are covered under the mantle of ARAC's services (such as customers of conformity assessment bodies that are operating at the international, regional or national level in Arab countries; specifiers of accreditation, such as purchasing organisations and regulatory authorities; consumers)

⟩ Other interested parties (such as trade associations of customers of conformity assessment bodies; associations of conformity assessment bodies; other regional accreditation cooperations)

In the development of the future strategy, constraints that might affect the strategic direction were considered. In particular, ARAC members are required not to work with commercial motives, need to avoid competition in providing accreditation services, and not provide conformity assessment activities. The proposed strategy also needs to be aligned with IAF and ILAC mandatory international requirements and procedures.

Existing relationships with AIDMO, the Arab League, and MoUs with other accreditation regions were not considered to be immovable boundaries and changes could, if necessary, be negotiated. The ARAC Bylaws and internal management system documents are within the powers of the ARAC General Assembly to change.

ARAC's member ABs range from bodies that are already members of IAF and ILAC and signatories to their MLMRAs, to embryonic bodies at the start of the route towards gaining international recognition. As well as their focus on supporting ARAC as their regional accreditation cooperation, some members also have links and priorities towards other regions and institutes (such as EA, the European Union ACAA agreements, AFRAC, or the Agadir Agreement).

ARAC VISION

ARAC safeguards internationally the value and credibility of accreditation delivered by ARAC members and services delivered by accredited conformity assessment bodies within the Arab market, supporting Arab countries to facilitate trade, enhance health & safety, protect the environment, and provide consumer protection.

ROLE OF ARAC

The ARAC Bylaws[2] set out top-level objectives for the organisation:

⟩ To coordinate between all the accreditation activities in the regional Arab countries and help them develop and improve accreditation systems through the achievement of recognition of ARAC with ILAC and IAF

---

[2] ARAC Bylaws ARAC AD 002 Issue 06 dated November 2015

Issue Date: 7th November 2016

ʃ Recognition of all conformity assessment certificates issued by the conformity assessment bodies accredited by the Arab Accreditation Bodies through the ARAC Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA)

ʃ To increase and promote the international acceptance of certificates and reports issued by the accredited Conformity Assessment Bodies signatory with ILAC and IAF

ʃ To promote cooperation in training of peer evaluators and other personnel of accreditation bodies

ʃ To encourage and facilitate the adoption and implementation of applicable documents and guidelines that have been developed by IAF and ILAC

ʃ To facilitate collaboration, cooperation and mutual assistance among members by various means including seminars, meetings of experts and the sharing of information and experiences

ʃ To promote international acceptance of test, calibration, inspection reports and certificates and other documents issued by conformity assessment bodies accredited by signatories to the ARAC MLA

ʃ To build up and to maintain mutual confidence in the technical competence among Full Members and to work towards further development of the ARAC multilateral recognition arrangement (MLA)

The role of ARAC is further defined as:

ʃ Harmonization and unification of procedures and activities for the accreditation of conformity assessment bodies
ʃ Definition and development of the accreditation system in the Arab region, in compliance with international requirements, taking into consideration the circumstances and needs of the Arab member states
ʃ Sharing of experiences in the operation of accreditation bodies, and in the establishment of mutual recognition arrangements between Arab accreditation bodies
ʃ To assist the current and potential ARAC members, and provide advice on matters related to accreditation of conformity assessment bodies through its committees
ʃ Harmonization of the ARAC members' procedures according to ILAC and IAF requirements
ʃ Implementing the ARAC peer evaluation process according to ILAC, IAF and ARAC requirements with the aim for members to sign the ARAC MLA
ʃ Cooperation with international and regional organizations, and taking advantage of their services in order to develop training programs in the field of accreditation and conformity assessment for the benefit of ARAC members

ARAC STRATEGY 2017 TO 2022

In order to reach ARAC's Vision for the future, it must:

- Be an internationally recognized accreditation region
- Be the recognized body of knowledge and expertise on accreditation and conformity assessment by national and regional authorities, accreditation bodies and stakeholders in all the countries of the Arab region
- Be influential in international accreditation and conformity assessment fora
- Be the preferred provider for Arab recognition of accredited conformity assessment results that meet the market, regulatory and public needs

At the same time, ARAC needs to preserve its current values of transparency, impartiality, competence, objectivity, and confidentiality at all levels in the ARAC structure.

Six strategic thrusts have been identified as necessary to realise the Vision for 2022:

1. **Become a recognized Regional Accreditation Cooperation within IAF and ILAC**
2. **Enhance the ARAC Peer Evaluation System and MLA**
3. **Boost ARAC's visibility and standing within both the Arab region and internationally**
4. **Serve the interests of and provide support to ARAC members**
5. **Be the regional reference point for accreditation capacity building**
6. **Ensure ARAC is financially self-sustainable**

These strategic thrusts will enable ARAC to further elaborate its policies, support the review of existing activities, and develop new mechanisms that will boost ARAC's role internationally and within the Arab region.

The strategic thrusts are detailed in the following sections. The general outlines of associated activity programmes are given; these will be developed into detailed action plans, including key performance indicators, by the ARAC Executive Committee.

Strategic Thrust 1 - Become a recognized Regional Accreditation Cooperation within IAF and ILAC[3]

Rationale

IAF and ILAC link existing MLAs of Regional Accreditation Cooperations, such as ARAC. Formal recognition of these regional cooperations with respect to the IAF and ILAC Arrangements is based on an external evaluation of the cooperation's competence in Arrangement management, practice, and procedures by an evaluation team composed of evaluators from other IAF and ILAC member accreditation bodies.

The IAF and ILAC Arrangements underpin results or certificates of accredited conformity assessment bodies and in turn deliver confidence in the acceptance of those results or certificates. This enhances the acceptance of products across national borders and helps to reduce technical barriers to trade.

The successful recognition of a regional cooperation enables the end beneficiaries of accreditation to have confidence in that accreditation within an international marketplace.

Gaining the same recognition as other regional accreditation cooperations will enable ARAC to be seen as the leader and coordinator of the Arab accreditation infrastructure, and enable conformity assessment bodies within the region to have direct access to internationally recognised accreditation.

It is therefore vital for ARAC to become a recognized region in IAF and ILAC.

Goals

1.1   ARAC becomes a recognized regional accreditation cooperation in both IAF and ILAC

- Successfully complete current peer evaluation processes
- Ensure adequate independence from AIDMO and impartiality in operation

1.2   ARAC member ABs utilise the ARAC MLA to gain international recognition (rather than via another region or as unaffiliated bodies)

- Review and amend membership criteria as necessary
- In the short-term prior to IAF and ILAC recognition, coordinate with other regions to ensure member ABs are not impaired by their ARAC MLA signatory status
- Following IAF and ILAC recognition, coordinate with other regions any additional requirements necessary for trade with their marketplaces
- Promote the added value of signatory status of the ARAC MLA to ARAC members in comparison to other regional MLAs (for example, language, culture etc)

---

[3] The terminology within IAF is to be a recognized Regional Accreditation Group, and within ILAC to be a recognized Regional Cooperation Body

1.3   All ARAC members ABs become members of IAF and ILAC and participate effectively to represent the interests of the Arab region in the international accreditation infrastructures

- Encourage ARAC members to participate at the international level
- Gain influence in IAF and ILAC structures through active participation in committee structures

ARAC-AD-004-ARAC Strategy 2017-2022

Issue Date: 7th November 2016

Strategic Thrust 2 – Enhance the ARAC Peer Evaluation System and MLA

<u>Rationale</u>

Central to the role of ARAC is to provide an MLA that meets the needs of its members and is fully aligned with the requirements of IAF and ILAC in order that ARAC can be an internationally recognized regional cooperation, thus providing global confidence in the results and services delivered by accredited conformity assessment bodies in the Arab region.

Whilst there has been good progress to date, the process to build the peer evaluation system needs to continue. The capacity of the MLA (both in terms of resources and coverage of accreditation activities that it provides) will continue to need to expand.

<u>Goals</u>

2.1   **The ARAC MLA is fully operational**

- Build, maintain and enhance the structure of the ARAC MLA in alignment with the MLMRAs of IAF and ILAC
- Expand the coverage of scopes of the ARAC MLA to meet the needs of the ARAC members

2.2   **Sufficient peer evaluator resources necessary to maintain the ARAC MLA and to meet international obligations for participation in IAF or ILAC peer evaluations have been trained and qualified**

- Increase the number of qualified ARAC peer evaluators sufficient to maintain the ARAC MLA in an efficient manner
- Provide initial and continuation training for ARAC peer evaluators, whilst developing the content and intensity to match requirements

2.3   **ARAC participates in peer evaluations undertaken by IAF and/or ILAC (and possibly other regions) in order to strengthen its peer evaluation competence**

- Implement a programme for existing and future ARAC peer evaluators

2.4   **Key regulatory authority stakeholders in the region are confident to rely on the ARAC MLA to support the implementation of regulations**

- Increase the involvement of regulators as observers in ARAC's work

Issue Date: 7th November 2016

Strategic Thrust 3 – Boost ARAC's visibility and standing within both the Arab region and internationally

<u>Rationale</u>

ARAC should be the body recognized by the Arab League as the institution that is at the pinnacle of the conformity assessment infrastructure, providing confidence and trust in the conformity assessments and services carried out by conformity assessment bodies accredited by its members.

It needs to be influential within the region at the governmental level in order to ensure that member states provide the necessary levels of commitment to support their accreditation bodies (particularly in the face of political instability or unrest in the region) and the need for accreditation nationally, regionally and internationally.

It should support Arab trade and industry through helping in the process of reducing technical barriers to trade.

ARAC must also provide support to its members in raising awareness and promoting the use of accreditation within the region so that the benefits of accreditation are clear to the marketplace. Individual ARAC ABs need a wider "toolkit" at their disposal to improve their effectiveness of communication and to help raise awareness of accreditation and accredited services

ARAC needs to be influential within the international accreditation infrastructures of IAF and ILAC. As a relatively new regional accreditation cooperation, ARAC needs to gain experience, build on the competence of ARAC members who are existing members of IAF and ILAC, and grow in stature through active participation at the international level.

<u>Goals</u>

3.1   ARAC continues to be recognised as one of the main pillars of the Pan Arab conformity assessment infrastructure

- Develop a stronger relationship with the Arab League
- Legally register ARAC within one of its member countries
- Confirm at Ministerial level the independent status of ARAC in the region
- Enhance collaborations with other regional quality infrastructure institutions
- Seek opportunities for technical cooperation with relevant regional organisations

3.2   ARAC understands the needs of its stakeholders for accreditation in the regional and international marketplace

- Consult with stakeholders to understand their needs, and promote recognition of accreditation provided by ARAC member ABs
- Identify and develop initiatives to meet regulatory, procurement, industry and professional needs
- Understand the legislative system in each of the member countries in order to find solutions to issues affecting accreditation

3.3 **Stakeholders in ARAC countries have a better understanding of the value of accreditation and accredited services, and in particular, regulators recognise and accept accredited conformity assessment results covered under the ARAC MLA**

- Implement a comprehensive and on-going programme to promote and raise awareness about the benefits of accreditation, the IAF MLA and the ILAC MRA, and the accreditation system in the Arab region
- Encourage the establishment of regional/national associations of key stakeholders, such as conformity assessment bodies, that can represent their members' interests within ARAC
- Develop ongoing relationships with stakeholder representative bodies through enabling greater participation in ARAC activities, such as General Assemblies, committees, training events etc, and encourage them to take up appropriate membership of ARAC
- Provide a structured process for the training of key personnel within the appropriate ARAC institutions/ABs on matters relating to marketing and awareness of accreditation

3.4 **Encourage and support the development of ABs in the Arab region**

- Promote ARAC and the benefits of internationally recognized accreditation services within the regional Arab countries
- Provide advice on matters relating to accreditation and conformity assessment to relevant decision-makers

3.5 **ARAC is an influential member of IAF and ILAC**

- Build on the competence of ARAC members who are already members of IAF and ILAC
- Actively participate in meetings and work at the international level.
- Strengthen relationships with other regional accreditation cooperations
- Continually review ARAC's level of leadership in accreditation globally to ensure it is commensurate with the importance of the region

Strategic Thrust 4 – Serve the interests of and provide support to ARAC members

<u>Rationale</u>

ARAC is a membership organisation. It therefore has a key role in serving the best interests of its members and providing or coordinating support within the boundaries of the resources available and as agreed by its members.

<u>Goals</u>

4.1   ARAC provides effective leadership to its members within the Arab region

- Provide advice and guidance on capacity building of ABs in Arab countries
- Encourage all ARAC members to become Full Members, to participate comprehensively in ARAC activities, and to become signatories to the ARAC MLA
- Provide a forum for members and interested parties to exchange information, carry out discussion and to coordinate assistance

4.2   ARAC provides and coordinates training at the regional level in order to harmonize best practices

- Organize workshops and training sessions on new or revised Standards, or IAF or ILAC mandatory documents, used for the accreditation of conformity assessment bodies
- Develop and promote use of smart and online platforms to deliver training and share best practices
- Provide training opportunities (including on-site training when applicable) in different accreditation fields
- Provide training to new members on ISO/IEC 17011 and IAF and ILAC documents

4.3   ARAC provides technical leadership and resource for its members

- Provide a database on the conformity assessment activities in the Arab region
- Help to resolve problems encountered by ARAC ABs and their accredited conformity assessment bodies in the implementation of requirements
- Be a resource bank on technical matters and contribute to the development, maintenance and implementation of accreditation requirements
- Enhance technical cooperation and inter-relationships between ARAC ABs including the sharing of technical experts

4.4   ARAC provides support to its members

- Assist in the strengthening of the accreditation of conformity assessment in the Arab region

- Support ARAC ABs to access programmes and funding that will help in their development (e.g. twinning programmes, funding from international agencies, etc)
- Provide coordination between ARAC members
- Assist and support developing accreditation systems (including the provision of experts as appropriate)
- Coordinate opportunities for ABs that are not yet signatories to the ARAC MLA to observe peer evaluations
- Recognising the need for proficiency testing to be available for conformity assessment bodies within the region, develop processes to assist in communicating the availability of proficiency testing programmes (either from within or outside the region), providing training as necessary to ARAC members, and encourage the development of further programmes to meet specific regional needs

4.5 Other accreditation related services are developed in accordance with identified needs

- Develop accreditation services in new fields such as Halal Foods, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Green Building Materials, Environmental Verification, and Proficiency Testing Providers

4.6 ARAC member ABs operate in a harmonized way

- Harmonize accreditation criteria and procedures within ARAC in line with mandatory requirements of IAF and ILAC
- Promote horizontal harmonization of standards used in support of regulation
- Facilitate collaboration, cooperation and mutual assistance among members by means of training activities, meetings of experts and sharing of information and experiences
-

ARAC-AD-004-ARAC Strategy 2017-2022

Issue Date: 7th November 2016

Strategic Thrust 5 - Be the regional reference point for accreditation capacity building

<u>Rationale</u>

ARAC needs to operate efficiently and effectively to meet members' expectations and its regional and international obligations to safeguard the value and credibility of accreditation delivered by ARAC members and services delivered by accredited conformity assessment bodies within the Arab and international market. It must have both good management and appropriate resources.

In order for ARAC to deliver the necessary results to achieve its Vision, there is a need for consolidation and development of the existing organisation. The key strength of ARAC is its people competence, and therefore the organizational capacity of ARAC should be reinforced.

<u>Goals</u>

5.1   ARAC has a comprehensive management system and procedures in operation that is in compliance with IAF and ILAC mandatory requirements

- Continue to develop and implement the ARAC management system and procedures
- Ensure it operates effectively

5.2   The ARAC committee structure efficiently covers all accreditation activities/disciplines included in the ARAC MLA

- Review both the structure and the level of management resources required, and make changes as necessary
- Examine the decision-making processes within ARAC to ensure they operate efficiently and effectively

5.3   The ARAC secretariat has an adequate level of resources to accommodate all its obligations

- Review the secretariat structure and capacity on a regular basis, and ensure the necessary resources are planned and provided
- Consider cost-effective options for the provision of the secretariat that are not dependent on external funding

5.4   ARAC is able operate efficiently and maintain an effective service

- Investigate how best ARAC can provide its services in the light of any on-going regional unrest

Issue Date: 7th November 2016

Strategic Thrust 6 – Ensure ARAC is financially self-sustainable

<u>Rationale</u>

The financial stability of ARAC is one of the many factors that may influence its on-going success. Its current reliance on external funding organizations for support is considered to be a long-term weakness that needs to be addressed.

ARAC cannot guarantee stable support from external organizations throughout the period under consideration. Although some external funding may still be available, ARAC needs to consider long-term, sustainable finances including from the ARAC membership. The funding mechanisms need to be examined and steps taken to move towards financial independence.

<u>Goals</u>

6.1   Obtain reinforced commitment from the Arab countries to adequately fund the ongoing operation of ARAC until it reaches a self-sustainable situation

- Promote the benefits of national participation in ARAC and of the international recognition of accreditation
- Provide Ministers with a long-term plan for ARAC financial self-sustainability

6.2   Achieve financial self-sufficiency so that ARAC is not reliant on external funding

- Develop a policy and action plan for financial sustainability, that might include a phased introduction of membership fees, funding from other sources such as direct government grants, and the provision of services-in-kind from ARAC members, as appropriate
- Grow the number of member ABs within ARAC
- Consider extending the membership criteria to include more stakeholders
- Look for alternative sources of funding for specific training and development activities that relate to accreditation and conformity assessment

ARAC-AD-004-ARAC Strategy 2017-2022

Issue Date: 7th November 2016

ANNEX A

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AB	Accreditation Body
ACAA	Agreement on Conformity Assessment and Acceptance of Industrial Products
AFRAC	African Accreditation Cooperation
AIDMO	The Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization
ARAC	Arab Accreditation Cooperation
EA	European cooperation for Accreditation
IAF	International Accreditation Forum
IEC	International Electro technical Commission
ILAC	International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
MLA	Multilateral Recognition Arrangement
MLMRA	Multilateral Mutual Recognition Arrangement
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
UAE	United Arab Emirates

ARAC-AD-004-ARAC Strategy 2017-2022

Issue Date: 7th November 2016