

# **PRESS RELEASE**

## **NEW WORLD FEDERATION OF TECHNICAL ASSESSMENTS (WFTAO) LAUNCHED IN SOUTH AFRICA BY INSTITUTES FROM 14 NATIONS**

Paris, France, September 20, 1996 - The World Federation of Technical Assessment Organizations (WFTAO), a newly created independent organization dedicated «to enhance and promote the role of Technical Assessments of innovative and non- standardized systems and products in the construction field worldwide » was officially launched last week in South Africa. Over thirty leaders in the design and construction industry from fourteen different nations were hosted by Agrément South Africa and met to discuss ways to facilitate the transfer of national construction industry products to the global marketplace. They plan on creating an awareness and understanding of technical assessment both locally and manufacturers, contractors and regulators.

For the purposes of WFTAO, the term technical assessment covers all procedures described in different countries by terms such as technical assessment, technical approval, appraisal, evaluation, technical agrément, avis technique, etc. It means an authoritative favourable declaration of technical fitness for an intended use of an innovative or non-standardized construction product, service or process.

Because each country currently has its own specifications for construction products, companies often face different obstacles when they try to market their goods in other countries. Therefore, the General Assembly of WFTAO, created a Coordinating Committee, to begin developing a format for the exchange of technical information between world assessment organizations, and to explore the steps necessary to achieve mutual recognition of the different participating country assessment processes. The founding members have established a mission statement, vision, and objectives to ensure the WFTAO will have a long term impact on the industry and to attract other assessment organizations throughout the globe. In fact, WFTAO seeks to foster the development of Technical Assessment Organizations in countries where they do not currently exist. The Coordinating Committee will be working to develop a communication system accessible on the World Wide Web to

facilitate the transfer of information and establish a common understanding of member country assessment requirements.

In preparation for the inaugural meeting, a survey was conducted on technical assessment organizations all over the world. A provisional report intituled « International Sourcebook for Construction Industry Product Assessment » was published to provide an initial registry of some of the key characteristics of these technical assessment organizations.

And this Registry will be updated taking into account the WFTAO membership.

Emile Farhi, CSTB Department Head, and one of the founding members of this new global Federation, was elected to serve as the first General Secretary. Farhi expects WFTAO to become the world network for coordination and facilitating innovation assessment in the construction field.

The leadership of WFTAO believes it has the potential of reducing the manufacturers time and costs for moving innovative products and systems to the marketplace worldwide. This will go a long way to ensuring that the design and construction industry utilizes technology and practices on the leading edge, and reducing the mystery associated with assessing construction industry innovative products and systems.

Attached are copies :

- WFTAO - Mission Statement, vision and objectives
- WFTAO - Definition of Technical Assessment
- WFTAO - Statutes
- WFTAO - List of founding members

For more information on WFTAO contact

- WFTAO founding members in your country
- or the General Secretary Emile Farhi at CSTB  
4, avenue du Recteur Poincaré  
75782 Paris Cedex 16 (France)  
Tel. : 33-1-40-50-28-28  
Fax : 33-1-45-25-61-51

# WFTAO MISSION STATEMENT, VISION AND OBJECTIVES

## 1 - MISSION

« To enhance and promote the role of Technical Assessments of innovative and non-standardised systems and products in the construction field worldwide and to develop the mutual confidence on technical assessments made by its members ».

## 2 - VISION

« To become the world network for co-ordinating and facilitating innovation assessment in the construction field ».

## 3 - OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 To facilitate the transfer of national products to the global marketplace through the acceptance of technical assessments of innovative and non-standardised building and construction products and processes delivered by its members.
- 3.2 To create awareness and understanding of technical assessment both locally and worldwide and to encourage the use of technical assessment organisations by designers, owners, manufactures, contractors and regulators.
- 3.3 To establish a common understanding of member country technical assessment requirements to minimise duplication of efforts and to establish guidelines of mutual exchange of assessment criteria for product introduction into the global marketplace.
- 3.4 To promote co-operation and the free exchange of information between members.
- 3.5 To encourage all existing Technical Assessment Organisations that fulfill the membership criteria to voluntary join.
- 3.6 To foster the development of Technical Assessment Organisations in countries where they do not exist.
- 3.7 To provide a network to facilitate manufacturers to understand and use Technical Assessment Organisations within the various member countries.

## DEFINITION OF TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT

A technical assessment in the sense of WFTAO is an authoritative favourable declaration of technical fitness for an intended use of an innovative or non-standardised construction product, service or process.

### **Technical assessment**

The term technical assessment in the sense of WFTAO covers all procedures described in different countries by terms such as technical assessment, technical approval, appraisal evaluation, technical agrément, avis technique, technische Zulassung, etc.

Different legal systems may give different legal meanings to the terms, e.g. to be voluntary or mandatory.

The term « **technical assessment** » must be distinguished from certification of conformity which attests the conformity of a product, service or process with a given specification, (e.g. product standard).

### **Authoritative favourable declaration of technical fitness**

**An authoritative favourable declaration of technical fitness** as delivered by a body regarded as competent, is a nationally recognised statement based on scientific and practical knowledge impartiality, and the consideration of the opinions of all interested parties.

### **Construction product**

**Construction product** means any material, component, or system which is produced for incorporation in a permanent manner in construction works : both buildings and civil engineering works.

This term includes prefabricated construction works which are marketed as such, for example prefabricated houses, garages, and silos.

Furthermore, the term « **construction product** » includes materials and components for construction purposes and equipment for incorporation as a temporary measure for construction and demolition.

### **Intended use**

The **intended use** may be defined in terms of assumptions about how the products are incorporated, assembled, applied or installed in the works and how such works are designed, calculated and built.

## **Technical assessment of the construction product**

The **technical assessment of the construction product to show fitness for purpose** takes into account all essential requirements which apply to the works in which the product is intended to be used and takes into account regulations and user needs. Among others, these essential requirements to the works (as a whole and in their separate parts) may be :

- mechanical resistance and stability against normal and extraordinary actions (e.g. seismic actions)
- safety in case of fire
- non threat to hygiene, health and environment
- safety in use
- protection against noise
- energy economy and thermal comfort
- protection against moisture (watertightness, airtightness, weathertightness, etc.)

Additional requirements may be necessary to facilitate the proper erection of construction. All requirements, subject to normal maintenance, must be satisfied for an economically reasonable working life (durability).

# STATUTES OF THE WFTAO

## **Article 1 : World Federation of Technical Assessment Organisations**

The WFTAO is a network of organisations that are engaged in issuing Technical Assessments in the construction field based on fitness for purpose. It is a non-registered organisation with voluntary membership.

## **Article 2 : Technical Assessments**

A « technical assessment » is an authoritative favourable declaration of technical fitness for an intended use of an innovative or non-standardised construction product, service, or process. (A detailed definition of technical assessment has been given in an attached document).

## **Article 3 : Membership of WFTAO**

Eligible for membership in WFTAO are organisations with national relevance that can ensure that :

- the technical assessments that are issued are recognised nationally by specifiers, contractors, regulators, users, and manufacturers
- they provide technical competence
- they have available the necessary means to deal with applications of technical assessments
- they are in a position to consult national institutions in their field of competence as well as the various interested professions
- their decisions are free of any proprietary commercial interest
- their technical assessments conform to the provisions of Article 2 above.

## **Article 4 : Objectives of the WFTAO**

The main objective of the WFTAO is to enhance and promote the role of technical assessments in a construction field worldwide and to develop mutual confidence in the technical assessments made by its members. Members are expected to facilitate the transfer of national products to the global marketplace through the use of technical assessments as delivered by its members. This will be accomplished by :

- exchanging information, advice, and experience on the scope and procedures used in technical assessments in various countries
- establishing a common understanding of the technical assessment requirements in members' countries to minimise duplication of effort
- establishing guidelines for mutual exchange of assessment criteria
- where possible, achieving mutual recognition of test data inspection schemes and assessment procedures
- producing harmonised assessment procedures where possible.

## **Article 5 : Organisation**

### **5.1 General Assembly**

The General Assembly is comprised of all members. The General Assembly shall meet at least once every two years.

If decisions have to be taken by voting, an affirmative vote is two-thirds of the voting members of the General Assembly, each member organisation having one vote.

The General Assembly shall be chaired by the host member.

### **5.2** The Coordinating Committee, appointed by and acting on behalf of the General Assembly, will manage the business activities of the WFTAO and make recommendations to the General Assembly for membership nominations.

These appointments are made in accordance with the Operational Procedures by the General Assembly from any member organisations interested in serving on the Committee, broadly reflective of the geographic representation of the membership.

The Coordinating Committee shall be chaired by the General Secretary.

### **5.3** The General Secretary is appointed from the membership of WFTAO by the members of the General Assembly for a period of two years.

## **Article 6 : Financial matters**

Every member carries its own expenditure which arises from its participation in WFTAO. The General Assembly may determine that a funding structure is necessary in order to cover administration costs, e.g. incurred by a member holding the position of General Secretary, or expenditures for other common matters of WFTAO.

## **Article 7 : Operational procedures**

These statutes will be supported by operating procedures, consistent with the Statutes and adopted by the General Assembly.

## **Article 8 : Reviews of statutes**

The statutes may be reviewed by the General Assembly.

## List of founding members of WFTAO (10 th September 1996)

Australia	ABSAC (Australian Building Systems Appraisal Council)
Brazil	IPT (Instituto de Pesquisas Tecnologicas de Estado de Sao Paulo S.A.)
Canada	CCMC (Canadian Construction Materials Center)
Denmark	ETA-DANMARK
France	CSTB (Centre Scientifique et Technique du Bâtiment)
Hungary	EMI (Epitésügyi Minoségellenorzo Intézet)
Israel	NBRI (National Building Research Institute)
Italy	ICITE (Istituto Centrale per l'Industrializzazione e la Tecnologia Edilizia)
Japan	BCJ (Building Center of Japan) CBL (Center of Better Living) HOWTEC (Japan Housing and Wood Technology Center)
New Zealand	BTL/Branz (Building Technology Limited/Building Research Association of New Zealand)
South Africa	A.S.A. (Agrément South Africa)
Spain	IETcc (Instituto de Ciencias de la Construcción Eduardo Torroja)
United Kingdom	BBA (British Board of Agrément)
United States	NES (National Evaluation Services, Inc.) ICBO Evaluation Service, Inc. HITEC (Highway Innovative Technology Evaluation Center)

