



WORLD FEDERATION OF TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT ORGANISATIONS

PRESS RELEASE

WORLD FEDERATION OF TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT ORGANISATIONS RENEWS ITS MISSION AND OBJECTIVES

... Federation confirms objective to facilitate trade through the acceptance of technical assessments by its members...

Madrid, Spain -- The World Federation of Technical Assessment Organisations (WFTAO) met 3-5 October 2001 to enhance its role in transferring national products into the global marketplace.

The federation is an informal network of 25 organisations from 21 nations that share a common interest in the technical assessment of innovative and non-standardized construction products. From its modest beginning in 1996, the WFTAO has developed into a dynamic forum for provocative exchanges on issues surrounding technical assessment and facilitation of trade in construction products.

This assembly was hosted and chaired by the Instituto de Ciencias de la Construcción Eduardo Torroja; Spain's national organisation responsible for technical approvals of construction products.

A main focus of the meeting was a strategic planning exercise. Members carried out a critical assessment of the original WFTAO mission and objectives. They questioned whether or not the federation should take a more direct role in meeting the technical assessment needs of manufacturers in the world market. They concluded that this responsibility clearly remains with the individual national organisations. In the end, the current Mission and Objective statements were confirmed as being valid.

The federation will continue to promote the role of technical assessments as the principle means for demonstrating the fitness for purpose of a construction product that is innovative or for which no standard exists. Facilitating the movement of assessed products across national boundaries remains the prime objective.

A second draft of a process for developing a World Technical Assessment (WTA) was considered at this meeting, as a follow-up to an agreement in principle last year in Washington. When finalized, the approach was intended to allow proponents of new products to gain simultaneous assessments in two or more countries. Following debate on several issues surrounding the proposed approach, a small task group has been charged with redrafting the document as a set of guidelines on how co-operative assessments between two or more members could be conducted. Many bi-lateral arrangements already exist between WFTAO members and the meeting concluded that formal rules were redundant.

Other highlights of the meeting:

- Policy document approved on duration of validity of technical assessments; recommending a finite limit, regular reviews and withdrawal for unresolved technical reasons.
- WFTAO logo to be registered worldwide.
- Environmental implications acknowledged as part of technical assessments, but only in context of national requirements that are imposed by regulation or that relate to essential health and safety issues.
- Need for accredited internal quality control programs for members to be investigated.
- Model table created for web-based repository of methods of assessment.

For more information on the World Federation of Technical Assessment Organisations, visit <http://www.wftao.com> or contact:

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