



UPDATE

RAPPROCHEMENT BETWEEN THE

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF LEGAL METROLOGY

AND

THE METRE CONVENTION (BIPM)

INTERIM REPORT

DRAFT: 2011-09-14

Reference: Resolution #3; 44th and 45th CIML Meetings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The International Organization of Legal Metrology (OIML) and the Metre Convention (BIPM) have complementary, yet distinct mandates; the OIML in the establishment of model rules and requirements (legal metrology) and the BIPM in the provision of the framework for consistent and traceable standards used to determine measurement values with high accuracy (scientific metrology).

Both the OIML and the BIPM are well situated to assist their Member States' metrology organizations respond to the demands imposed by increased international trade, the global marketplace and recent events in the world economy. In a number of Member States the activities of the OIML and the BIPM are combined in a single national body.

The feasibility of a rapprochement between the OIML and the BIPM has been considered at various times over the past 16 years. Rapprochement deliberations have ranged from developing a closer relationship between the International Bureau of Legal Metrology (BIML) and the BIPM to structural change, with or without changes to one or both treaty agreements (cohabitation, merger within existing treaty, a new treaty).

In accordance with Resolution 3, taken at the 45th International Committee of Legal Metrology (CIML) Meeting, this interim report has been prepared for the consideration of the CIML with a view to taking final decisions at the 14th Conference in 2012. As per direction given at the 44th CIML Meeting, the report is strategic in nature, considering the views of stakeholders in the OIML and the BIPM as well as comments received from CIML Members.

2.0 BACKGROUND

The International Bureau of Legal Metrology (BIML) is the Secretariat and headquarters for the International Organization of Legal Metrology (OIML). The BIML reports to the International Committee of Legal Metrology (CIML) and is responsible for the day-to-day operation of OIML activities (coordination of technical committees, organization of meetings, budget management) and planning of longer term initiatives.

The International Bureau of Weights and Measures (BIPM) is an intergovernmental organization established by the Metre Convention. Reporting to the International Committee of Weights and Measures (CIPM), the BIPM performs measurement related research, taking part in and organizing international comparisons of national measurement standards and conducting calibrations for Member States and provides the administrative framework for these activities.

2.1 History of Rapprochement Deliberations

In 1995, the French Foreign Ministry indicated its intention to send a diplomatic note to the Member States of the Metre Convention and the OIML informing them that the French Government would welcome moves towards a single intergovernmental organization. At the 20th General Conference that same year, a CIPM/CIML joint working group was established "... to identify ways of achieving increased cooperation and effectiveness in the achievement of their objectives and the use of their resources, including, but not limited to, the possibility of merger of the two organizations."¹

¹ 20th General CIPM Conference (1995) : Resolution 10

The joint working group met the three subsequent years and at the 21st General Conference (1999). They reported a merger of the two organizations would offer very little scope for improved operational efficiency or effectiveness which could not already be attained by cooperation between the two organizations. The CIPM advised Member States that it had taken action to improve the cooperation with the OIML, but that no further action was needed to be taken in respect of the suggested merger of the two organizations.

In 2004, at the 12th International Conference on Legal Metrology, the issue of a rapprochement between the BIML and the BIPM was again discussed. Members were advised the issue had already been examined and the CIML had decided not to pursue a merger as the disadvantages for the OIML outweighed the advantages (virtually no savings, different missions, and the establishment of a single organization could deter countries from joining the OIML due to higher combined costs).

At the 2007 annual meeting between the two organizations rapprochement was again discussed and the Directors of the BIPM and the BIML were asked to prepare a joint report on the issue of a rapprochement for the consideration of the CIML and CIPM Presidents. The report, issued in early 2008, indicated there were benefits to a rapprochement and suggested three options for consideration: (1) merger in some way of the CIML and the CIPM and/or the BIML and the BIPM without organizational merger; (2) co-location at the BIPM site; and (3) transfer of the BIML activities to the BIPM (single organization). The report further stated that the Directors saw little merit in contemplating the first option and were neutral on the second and third options, identifying only the issues needing to be considered / addressed should they be pursued.

At the 43rd meeting of the CIML, the Committee asked the BIML to circulate the joint report to CIML Members to obtain their comments. Ten countries responded, but there was no consensus as to whether the options should be pursued.

The 2008 joint report was also considered at the 97th CIPM meeting. The meeting minutes² indicated the CIPM took a positive attitude to the proposals, believing them to be in the interests of the two organizations as well as to world metrology in general. The CIML had some reservations regarding the proposed options as co-location could involve considerable expense and they did not feel they could justify to Member States the use of OIML assets to fund the move or the merger without quantifiable benefits or compelling reasons.

At the 44th CIML Meeting (2009), the Committee asked the BIML Director to prepare a draft strategic report which considered the views of OIML and CIPM stakeholders as well as comments received from CIML Members. At the 45th CIML meeting (2010) the President was asked to prepare an interim report to be presented at the 46th CIML meeting in 2011 with a view to taking a final decision at the 14th Conference in 2012.

Throughout the discussions concerning a possible rapprochement over the course of the last 16 years, the Directors of the BIML and the BIPM have continued to take steps to develop closer cooperation between the two organizations, meeting regularly and collaborating on joint information and communications products related to metrology. There is, in addition, regular contact between the BIML and the BIPM concerning technical and administrative subjects (HR, IT).

2. 97th CIPM Meeting(2008) Minutes: Section 2.13

3.0 CONSIDERATIONS

In contemplating the recommendations of this report, the following factors should be considered:

3.1 External environment

International trade has become an integral part of a country's economic health. Metrology (in particular legal and scientific metrology) plays an increasingly important role in a country's ability to succeed, as trading partner and consumer confidence in the accuracy of measurement is a key component to the effective operation of the global marketplace.

The boundaries between legal metrology and scientific metrology are increasingly blurring for measurement applications in non traditional areas such as health, environmental protection, renewable and non-renewable resources and road safety. Rules and requirements in these non-traditional areas are common; however conventional aspects of legal metrology (type approval and verification) are increasingly absent, while the characteristics of metrology (consistent systems of measurement, traceability) remain.

As a result of recent world economic events, the governments of many Member States are pursuing ways to reduce costs, seeking to reduce barriers to trade, innovation and competitiveness while ensuring their citizens receive appropriate consumer, health, safety and environmental protection. Many Member State metrology organizations may be facing increasing pressure to demonstrate real and tangible benefits of participating in international organizations such as the OIML and the BIPM. Among other activities, proactive efforts by the OIML and the BIPM to improve operational efficiencies and reduce costs would assist Member States in demonstrating the value of continued participation in international forums.

3.2 The CIML Member reaction

Ten countries responded to a request for comments on the 2008 joint report on the issue of rapprochement authored by the then BIML and BIPM Directors. Austria, Cyprus, Switzerland and Romania supported continued discussions concerning a future rapprochement of the OIML and the BIPM with a view to exploring a merger of the two organizations. The Czech Republic, France and Japan indicated that further information on the merits and disadvantages of a possible merger were required before a position on the proposed rapprochement could be given. Poland, the United Kingdom, Germany and the Russian Federation did not support continued pursuit of a rapprochement, indicating that priority should instead be given to strengthening cooperation between the two Bureaus.

3.3 Changes in senior officials

The recent appointments of new Directors of the BIML and the BIPM and the election of new Presidents of the CIML and the CIPM have provided an opportunity for further discussions on this matter. In March 2011, the BIPM agreed to provide assistance to the CIML / BIML in terms of estimating the costs of co-location of the two Bureaus at the BIPM facility in Sèvres, France. CIML / BIML agreed to provide clear guidance with respect to scenarios envisioned and resultant data needed.

3.4 The OIML Strategic Plan

At the 46th CIML Meeting in October 2011, President-elect Peter Mason will seek CIML Members' approval for a revised Strategic Plan (OIML B 15) which outlines the high level objectives the OIML will strive to achieve. These objectives will form the framework for the priority setting of projects and activities and how resources will be allocated to achieve these objectives. Activities and projects which do not contribute to the achievement of one or more of the objectives may not be approved or continued. The approved Strategic Plan should serve as a benchmark against which the benefits and disadvantages of a possible rapprochement are evaluated.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the BIML be directed to pursue further discussions with the BIPM concerning a possible rapprochement in the following areas with a view to taking a final decision at the 14th Conference in 2012.

1. **Increased co-operation in daily activities** - with a view to formalizing means and creating a culture committed to reducing duplication of effort, improving exchanges of information and taking advantage of opportunities for collaboration (for both technical and administrative functions).
2. **Co-location with the BIPM** – examination of the advantages, disadvantages, legal considerations, costs and benefits associated with co-location with the BIPM.
3. **The OIML in the 21st Century** – development, for the consideration and approval of Member States, of a proposed role, mission and strategy for the OIML (taking into account OIML B 15) in order to strengthen the OIML's relevance in the global marketplace and to serve as a benchmark in anticipation of evaluating the benefits and disadvantages (not just from a financial perspective) of full integration, with particular consideration for emerging regulatory needs.