MULTILATERAL RECOGNITION ARRANGEMENT: MANAGEMENT OF THE GLOBAL ACCREDITATION COOPERATION INCORPORATED MRA

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FURTHER INFORMATION

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. **Purpose:** This document defines the management framework implementing the Global Accreditation Cooperation Incorporated (Global ACI) MRA.

1.2. **Scope**: This document applies to the operational framework of the Global ACI MRA, covering governance, decision-making, evaluation, and ongoing management of signatories. The policies and scope of the Global ACI MRA are documented in *Global ACI MRA-001 Multilateral Recognition Arrangement: Structure, Scope and Obligations.*

2. DEFINITIONS

2.1 **Accreditation Body (AB)** - an authoritative body that provides accreditation.

2.2 **Associate Member** - Accreditation Bodies that have not yet been accepted as a signatory of a mutual recognition arrangement of a Regional Cooperation Body Member, but self-declare that they conform with the requirements of ISO/IEC 17011 and the application requirements and obligations for Associate Members as specified in the Bylaws.

2.3 **Global ACI Arrangement (Global ACI MRA)** - the Multilateral Recognition Arrangement on the operation of accreditation that is signed by Full Members.

2.4 **Global ACI MRA Mark** - A registered mark symbolises recognition under the Global ACI Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MRA) and is owned by Global ACI.

2.5 **Combined Global ACI MRA Mark** - is the Global ACI MRA Mark used in combination with the Global ACI MRA signatory's logo or its accreditation symbol.

2.6 **Conformity Assessment Body (CAB)** - a body that performs Conformity Assessment Activities.

2.7 **Full Member** - an Accreditation Body that has been accepted by Global ACI as a signatory of the Global ACI Arrangement and meets the requirements and obligations for Associate Members as specified in the Bylaws.

2.8 **MRA Signatory** - A Full Member or a Recognised Regional Cooperation Body that has signed the Global ACI MRA and adheres to its requirements.

2.9 **Regional Cooperation Body (RCB)** - a formally established regional cooperation of accreditation bodies that has met the Global ACI requirements for Regional Cooperation Bodies as set out on this Constitution and the Bylaws.

3. GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE OF THE Global ACI MRA

3.1 The Global ACI General Assembly is the approving authority for policies regarding the operation of the Global ACI MRA, including the evaluation procedures to be implemented.

3.2 The Global ACI Arrangement Committee (ARC) is responsible for the final decision-making regarding signatory status under the Global ACI MRA, including approvals for new signatories, scope modifications, suspensions, and withdrawals and the oversight of adherence to Global ACI MRA requirements.

3.3 The Global ACI Arrangement Management Committee (AMC) is responsible for the day-to-day management of the evaluation processes and for making recommendations to the

Global ACI Arrangement Committee regarding recognition, peer evaluation outcomes, and ongoing compliance of signatories.

3.4 The evaluation procedures and requirements for Recognised Regional Cooperation Bodies and Accreditation Bodies under the Global ACI MRA are detailed in the following documents:

a) *Global ACI MRA-004 – Requirements and Procedures for Evaluation of a Regional Cooperation Body.*

b) *Global ACI MRA-005 – Requirements and Procedures for Evaluation of an Accreditation Body*.

c) This document includes procedures and requirements supplementary to those contained in the above documents.

d) *Global ACI MRA-006 – Use of the MRA Mark and Claims of Accreditation Status by Accredited Conformity Assessment Bodies.*

e) Normative and Mandatory Documents governing the structure, operation, and recognised scopes of accreditation are documented in *Global ACI-FMRA-001: Structure and Normative Documents under the Scope of Global ACI MRA* (www.globa-aci.org).

3.5 All evaluations, re-evaluations, and peer review processes must align with these documents to ensure consistency, impartiality, and international recognition of accreditation programs.

4. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

4.1 In order to accomplish the objective of the Global ACI MRA, the following conditions must be fulfilled:

a) An accreditation body shall be evaluated against the requirements of ISO/IEC 17011 and other applicable international standards and normative documents. If found to be in conformity, it will be admitted to the Global ACI MRA.

b) Accredited Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) shall fulfil the requirements of the applicable Level 3 standards and other international standards and normative documents for competently performing conformity assessment services within their accredited scopes.

4.2 Global ACI aims to achieve the objective of the Global ACI MRA using the following principles and authorities:

a) An accreditation body is evaluated against agreed criteria and, if found to be in conformity, will be admitted to the Global ACI MRA. Admission, continuance, or exclusion is based solely on an evaluation of competence conducted in accordance with Global ACI's published evaluation procedures and membership rules.

b) No Accreditation Body or Regional Cooperation Body shall be required to implement documents or requirements that contravene national or regional law, as long as the member still complies with any mandatory document or requirement related to the implementation of ISO IEC 17011 and any level 3, 4 or 5 standard.

c) A fundamental principle of mutual recognition in the conformity assessment accreditation community is that accreditation of CABs is provided in an equivalent way, leading to equivalent outcomes. Consequently, the use of internationally harmonised

guidance documents is encouraged to promote consistency in the interpretation of requirements by signatory bodies.

4.3 The operational principles of the Global ACI MRA are:

a) The Global ACI MRA shall be implemented through the recognition and strengthening of existing regional arrangements while encouraging the development of new regional structures.

b) Global ACI shall peer-evaluate Regional Cooperation Bodies to establish their competence in managing the operation of regional Multilateral Recognition Arrangements and shall formally recognise this competence in a documented scope of recognition.

c) Global ACI shall recognise the evaluation and re-evaluation of its member accreditation bodies carried out by the recognised Regional Cooperation Bodies.

d) Global ACI shall delegate to its recognised Regional Cooperation Bodies the detailed decision-making process regarding the admission and continued membership of accreditation bodies within their region to the Global ACI MRA.

e) Decisions regarding the recognition of Regional Cooperation Bodies and signatory status shall be taken by the Global ACI Arrangement Committee (ARC) based on a recommendation from the Global ACI Arrangement Management Committee (AMC). Acceptance of Accreditation Bodies as signatories occurs through their Recognised Regional Cooperation Body in accordance with Section 7.

5. CONFIDENTIALITY OBLIGATIONS

5.1 All personnel who request or are provided with access to any pre-evaluation, evaluation, or re-evaluation reports of an applicant must sign a *Global ACI-FMS-005 Declaration of Confidentiality* before handling such information.

5.2 This confidentiality obligation applies to:

a) Members and observers of the evaluation teams.

b) Members of the ARC and AMC.

c) Secretariat personnel and Appeals Panel members.

d) Any other individuals with access to confidential information.

5.3 Confidentiality is essential to ensure the integrity and trustworthiness of the peer evaluation process and to protect sensitive information of Global ACI MRA signatories and applicants.

6. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

6.1 Members and representatives involved in discussions, evaluations, and decision-making processes shall declare any potential conflicts of interest before the commencement of peer evaluations, assessments, or voting stages of the decision-making process.

6.2 Any individual with a declared conflict of interest shall recuse themselves from participation in the evaluation, review, or decision-making process concerning the affected party.

6.3 Conflicts of interest include, but are not limited to, personal or financial interests in the applicant or signatory under review and prior affiliations with the applicant or signatory that could affect impartiality.

7. PROCEDURE FOR ACCEPTANCE INTO THE Global ACI MRA

7.1 Acceptance into the Global ACI MRA applies to Regional Cooperation Bodies applying for recognition, and Accreditation Bodies (ABs) already recognised by a Regional Cooperation Body for a specific MRA Scope.

7.2 For Regional Cooperation Bodies, the following procedure applies:

a) The applicant must be a Global ACI member according to the respective category.

b) The applicant must submit a completed application form and supporting documents as per *Global ACI MRA-004 – Requirements and Procedures for Evaluation of a Regional Cooperation Body*.

c) The Global ACI AMC reviews the application to verify completeness.

d) A peer evaluation is conducted in accordance with Global ACI MRA-004.

e) The evaluation team submits a final report to the Arrangement Management Committee.

f) Revision of the report and the decision is made according to section 8 of this procedure.

g) If approved, the Global ACI Secretariat issues a Global ACI MRA Signature Sheet (Annex 1 of *Global ACI MRA-001 Multilateral Recognition Arrangement: Structure, Scope and Obligations*), and the applicant becomes a signatory.

h) The new signatory shall then be added to the official list of Global ACI MRA signatories.

7.3 For Accreditation Bodies that have already been evaluated and accepted by a Recognised Regional Cooperation Body, the following process applies:

a) The applicant must be an Associate Member of Global ACI and meet the current financial obligations of Global ACI. An application for signatory status may be submitted concurrently with an application for associate membership, but shall be processed by Global ACI upon receipt of payment of the requisite fees.

b) The applicant must submit:

i. *Global ACI-FMS-001 Membership Application Form - Accreditation Bodies* **for full membership** and supporting documents demonstrating compliance with Global ACI MRA requirements.

ii. A certificate of recognition issued by the Recognised Regional Cooperation Body.

c) No peer evaluation is required for these applicants. In this case, the scope of the accreditation body’s signatory status to the recognised regional MRA/MLA must be within the Recognised Regional Cooperation Body’s scope of recognition to the Global ACI MRA.

d) The Global ACI MRA Secretary reviews the application and sends the information for the decision of the Arrangement Committee Chair.

e) The Global ACI Arrangement Committee Chair reviews the application and makes the final decision on acceptance.

f) If approved, the Global ACI Secretariat issues a Global ACI MRA Signature Sheet (Annex 1 of *Global ACI MRA-001 Mutual Recognition Arrangement: Structure, Scope*

and Obligations) authorised by the Global ACI Chair. The applicant becomes a signatory, and the new signatory shall then be added to the official list of Global ACI MRA signatories.

g) The Chair of the Arrangement Committee will inform Global ACI Arrangement Committee members of the applicant's admission into the Global ACI MRA by presenting a resolution for endorsement to the General Assembly.

8. DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

8.1 Upon receipt of the final report package from the evaluation team leader, requiring a decision regarding signatory status, the Global ACI Secretariat shall forward the final report to the members of the Review Task Group (RTG) in accordance with *Global ACI MRA-004*. This step shall be completed within 30 days of receipt of the final report.

8.2 To ensure the appointment of appropriate Arrangement Management Committee members to the RTG, the members of the Arrangement Management Committee, upon appointment, shall complete and submit to the Global ACI Secretariat the *AMC Members Competency in Reviewing Evaluation Reports Form (Global ACI-FMRA-002).* This form shall be reviewed by the Global ACI Secretariat and the AMC Chair for compliance with the review criteria established in *Global ACI MRA-004*. If an AMC member does not meet the required criteria, they shall not be eligible for RTG appointment.

8.3 Upon receipt of the summary report from the RTG, the Global ACI Secretariat shall forward the final evaluation report from the evaluation team and the summary report from the RTG to the members of the Arrangement Management Committee and the Full Members serving on the Arrangement Committee for comment.

8.4 Feedback received from the review of the final report and the summary report shall be consolidated by the Global ACI MRA Secretariat. If additional information or clarification is required, this shall be followed up by the RTG in conjunction with the evaluation team leader and the applicant as appropriate, and completed within 30 days.

8.5 Once the final and summary reports are reviewed, the Arrangement Management Committee Chair and Secretariat shall prepare an AMC evaluation summary report and recommendation. This package shall be distributed to the Full Members of the Global ACI Arrangement Committee for the decision-making process as described in *Global ACI MRA-005*.

8.6 The decision-making process shall be conducted via electronic ballot unless the Arrangement Management Committee identifies a need and recommends that the outcome of an evaluation should be discussed at an Arrangement Committee meeting.

8.7 The following criteria apply to decisions taken by the Global ACI Arrangement Committee:

a) Voting on Global ACI MRA decisions is restricted to signatories, i.e., Global ACI Full Members, on the basis of one vote per Full Member.

b) Decisions shall be taken according to *Global ACI-GOV-009 Terms of Reference - Arrangement Committee.*

c) Members and representatives from an organisation subject to a Global ACI Arrangement Committee decision (i.e., Regional Cooperation Bodies and signatories to the regional Arrangement) shall not participate in the final voting stage but may be present for any preceding discussions.

d) Members and representatives involved in the discussion and voting process shall disclose any conflicts of interest before the commencement of the discussion and voting stages.

8.8 In the case of a decision-making process conducted via electronic ballot, the final evaluation report, RTG summary report, consolidated comments and Arrangement Management Committee recommendation summary report shall be distributed to the Full Members of Global ACI along with a voting form for a 30-day ballot period.

8.9 If an evaluation is to be discussed at an Arrangement Committee meeting, the final evaluation report must be distributed to Arrangement Committee members at least 30 days before the date of the decision-making process to allow sufficient time for review. If decisions are made during a Global ACI Arrangement Committee meeting, the evaluation summary reports may be distributed within the same week as the scheduled meeting, but at least two days prior, as the evaluation summary reports may only be finalised at the Arrangement Management Committee meeting held immediately before the ARC meeting.

9. EXTENDING THE SCOPE OF A SIGNATORY TO THE Global ACI MRA

9.1 Unless otherwise specified, the following evaluation methodologies will apply for extending the scope of a signatory to the Global ACI MRA:

a) Main Scope Extensions (Level 2 and 3): Signatories may apply to extend their scope of recognition under the Global ACI MRA, and the same procedure for the Acceptance into the Global ACI MRA described in section 7 of this document will apply.

b) The first Level 4 or Level 5 normative document under Category 2 for each main scope shall be evaluated in accordance with *Global ACI MRA-004 (for Regional Cooperation Bodies) and Global ACI MRA-005 (for Accreditation Bodies)*.

c) Additional Level 4 or Level 5 normative document under Category 2 within the same main scope may be granted based on the signatory's declaration that the normative document has been introduced and relevant requirements, as defined by Global ACI, have been met.

9.2 The following declaration forms shall be used for Level 4 or Level 5 normative documents under Category 2:

a) *Global ACI-FMRA-003: MRA Declaration for Level 4 or Level 5 Normative Documents under Category 2 Extensions (Accreditation Body)* – This declaration shall be submitted by the Accreditation Body and be accompanied by:

i. An MLA/MRA certificate issued by the Regional Cooperation Body for Level 4 or Level 5 under category 2.

ii. A letter from the Recognised Regional Cooperation Body confirming the acceptance of the Level 4 or Level 5 normative document under Category 2 by the applicant and providing relevant contact details.

b) *Global ACI-FMRA-004: MRA Declaration for Level 4 or Level 5 Normative Documents under Category 2 Extensions (Regional Cooperation Body)* – This declaration shall be submitted by the Regional Cooperation Body, and be accompanied by:

i. Documentation confirming that at least one accreditation body within the region has been evaluated and accepted under the new Level 4 or Level 5 normative document under Category 2.

ii. Evidence of alignment with Global ACI-recognised standards and mandatory documents for the specific Level 4 or Level 5 normative document under Category 2.

9.3 Approval Process for Level 4 or Level 5 Normative Documents under Category 2 for Accreditation Bodies (ABs):

a) The Global ACI Arrangement Committee Chair will review and approve declarations without a comment period or further review by the Arrangement Management Committee.

b) The official list of Global ACI MRA signatories will be updated to reflect the new normative document.

c) The additional Level 4 or Level 5 normative document under Category 2 will be evaluated at the next scheduled peer evaluation of the MRA signatory conducted by its Recognised Regional Cooperation Body.

9.4 Approval Process for Level 4 or Level 5 Normative Documents under Category 2 for Regional Cooperation Bodies (RCBs):

a) Before a Recognised Regional Cooperation Body can apply for an extension of an additional Level 4 or Level 5 normative document under Category 2, it must have granted MRA signatory status to at least one Accreditation Body within its region for the respective normative document.

b) The declaration will be subject to review and comments by the Arrangement Management Committee before a final decision is made.

c) Upon completion of the review, the Arrangement Committee Chair will approve or deny the request based on the recommendation of the Arrangement Management Committee.

d) When a Recognised Regional Cooperation Body's declaration is approved, any Accreditation Bodies documented by the RCB as already evaluated and accepted under the new Level 4 or Level 5 normative document under Category 2 shall automatically be granted the corresponding extension of scope under the Global ACI MRA.

e) The official list of Global ACI MRA signatories will be updated to reflect the new normative document for both the RCB and the applicable Accreditation bodies.

9.5 In some cases, Global ACI may require a peer evaluation before granting the Level 4 or Level 5 normative document under Category 2 extension for a Regional Cooperation Body, depending on the nature of the scope. Such decisions shall be made in accordance with the procedures established in *Global ACI MRA-003: Policies and Procedures for the Expansion of the Scope of the Global ACI Arrangement*.

10. SUSPENSION AND WITHDRAWAL FROM THE Global ACI MRA

10.1 Decisions regarding the maintenance, suspension, or withdrawal of a Recognised Regional Cooperation Body or an Accreditation Body signatory shall be undertaken by the Global ACI Arrangement Committee in accordance with Global ACI's policies and procedures.

10.2 A Recognised Regional Cooperation Body or an Accreditation Body shall cease to be a signatory to the Global ACI MRA if its recognition is suspended or withdrawn by Global ACI.

10.3 In the event of a suspension, the Global ACI MRA Secretary shall:

a) Officially notify the Regional Cooperation Body or the Accreditation Body of the suspension, the reasons for the suspension, the period of suspension, and the conditions for lifting the suspension.

b) Amend the list of Global ACI MRA signatories to indicate that the body is suspended.

c) Notify all Global ACI MRA signatories of the suspension.

d) Remind the Regional Cooperation Body or Accreditation Body of the consequences of suspension under the Global ACI MRA.

e) Inform the suspended Regional Cooperation Body or Accreditation Body of their right to appeal the decision.

10.4 The consequences of suspension shall be determined by the Global ACI ARC on a case-by-case basis, depending on the reason for suspension. Consequences may include, for the applicable main scope and/or Level 4 or Level 5 normative document under Category 2:

a) The suspended signatory shall not actively promote its status as a signatory to the Global ACI MRA.

b) The suspended signatory shall not issue any accreditation documents bearing the Global ACI MRA Mark.

c) The suspended signatory shall not participate in ballots or decision-making processes related to the Global ACI MRA.

d) Recognised Regional Cooperation Bodies shall notify their signatories of the suspension and its consequences.

e) The suspended signatory shall notify all accredited Conformity Assessment Bodies of the suspension and its implications.

f) The suspended signatory shall notify relevant stakeholders in its economy of the suspension.

10.5 Obligations of a Suspended Signatory, while under suspension, a Regional Cooperation Body or Accreditation Body shall:

a) Continue to comply with all Global ACI MRA requirements.

b) Cooperate fully with the Global ACI ARC and AMC to resolve the issue leading to suspension.

c) Maintain oversight of their signatories (RCBs) or accredited CABs (ABs).

d) Continue to vote on Global ACI governance matters, except for MRA-related ballots.

10.6 In the event of withdrawal, the Global ACI MRA Secretary shall:

a) Officially notify the Regional Cooperation Body or Accreditation Body of the withdrawal and the reasons for withdrawal.

b) Amend the list of Global ACI MRA signatories to remove the withdrawn signatory.

c) Notify all Global ACI MRA signatories of the withdrawal.

d) For Recognised Regional Cooperation Bodies: Terminate agreements regarding the use of the Global ACI MRA Mark with Accreditation Bodies that were recognised through the regional arrangement.

e) For Accreditation Bodies: Terminate agreements regarding the use of the Global ACI MRA Mark.

f) Remind the withdrawn signatory of the consequences of withdrawal.

g) Inform the withdrawn signatory of their right to appeal the decision.

10.7 The consequences of withdrawal shall include, for the applicable main scope or Level 4 or Level 5 normative document under Category 2 normative document:

a) The withdrawn signatory shall immediately stop promoting its status as a Global ACI MRA signatory.

b) The withdrawn signatory shall immediately stop issuing any accreditation documents bearing the Global ACI MRA Mark.

c) Recognised Regional Cooperation Bodies shall notify their signatories of the withdrawal and its consequences.

d) The withdrawn signatory shall notify all accredited CABs of their withdrawal and terminate all relevant agreements for the use of the Global ACI MRA Mark.

e) The withdrawn signatory shall notify relevant stakeholders in its economy of the withdrawal and its consequences.

10.8 A Recognised Regional Cooperation Body or an Accreditation Body may request a voluntary reduction or withdrawal of its scope of recognition under the following conditions:

a) The Recognised Regional Cooperation Body or Accreditation Body shall submit a written request to Global ACI.

b) If an Accreditation Body makes the request, a copy must also be submitted to its Recognised Regional Cooperation Body.

c) The procedure and consequences for voluntary withdrawal or reduction shall follow Sections 10.6 and 10.7 provisions.

d) If a Global ACI MRA signatory voluntarily withdraws from the Global ACI MRA or withdraws part of its scope of recognition, it shall notify Global ACI in writing.

e) The Global ACI MRA Secretary shall inform other Global ACI MRA signatories and update the Global ACI MRA records accordingly.

f) Upon withdrawal, the signatory’s status as a Global ACI MRA signatory shall be revoked, and its signature sheet shall be removed from the official list of Global ACI MRA signatories.

10.9 In case of suspension or withdrawal, if the Recognised Regional Cooperation Body or Accreditation Body does not respect the consequences, Global ACI will analyse the case and may withdraw the signatory status or take legal actions.

11. AMENDMENT TABLE

Section	Previous Version	Summary Of Changes
All	1.0	Changing Global Accreditation Cooperation Incorporated to Global ACI, including updating of Global ACI contact details.