The International Association of Assay Offices

Secretary: Assay Office London, Goldsmiths’ Hall, Foster Lane, London EC2V 6BN, U.K.
Treasurer: Holland Assay Office (WaarborgHolland) P.O. Box 1075, NL-2800 BB Gouda, The Netherlands

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ASSAY OFFICES (IAAO)

2nd MEETING

~

Tuesday 23rd September 2008
Council of Ministers of the Ukraine,
Instituka Street No 7
Kiev

~

Draft Summary Record
1. **CHAIRPERSON’S OPENING REMARKS**

The Chairperson, Ms Nataša Mejak-Vukovic (Slovenia), welcomed everyone to the 2nd meeting of the IAAO and thanked the hosts from the Ukraine for their wonderful hospitality – the visit, tour, dinner and venue.

2. **ROLL CALL**

A Roll Call was held and the Attendance List signed (attached).

3. **APPROVAL OF DRAFT AGENDA (IAAO 18)**

The Draft Agenda was approved.

4. **APPROVAL OF DRAFT SUMMARY RECORD OF 1st MEETING OF IAAO (IAAO 16)**

The Draft Summary was approved.

5. **MATTERS ARISING**

5.1 **Proposals for amendments to constitution and articles (IAAO 19)**

The proposed amendments were approved, save for the following:

(a) Voting. Following a point raised by Denmark, it was agreed that where a state has an equal number of offices and there is an equal split in opinions on a voting issue, the national vote should be registered as an abstention.

(b) Membership. The Secretariat reported that a private company, Fischer instruments who make XRF machines, were interested in becoming observers. It was agreed that such commercial organizations were not allowed, only assay offices.

5.2 **Update on legal protection of IAAO**

The Secretariat reported that basic legal advice had been sought on the most appropriate structure for the organization to give the requisite legal protection. The advice given was that the best analogy was that of a “golf club” which was essentially a private company limited by guarantee. Poland and Latvia explained that their national legislation would prevent them being the “owner” of a private company. The Secretariat agreed that he would commission a solicitor to examine the relative merits of different options available in more detail.
6. **INTER-LABORATORY COMPARISONS**

6.1 **Round Robins RR17, RR18 (IAAO 15)**

Mr Brodmann (Switzerland) presented the results for RR17 (nominally 923.4 Ag) and RR18 (nominally 924.9 Au) which were the first under the revised procedure. The Chairperson asked why slightly odd finenesses had been selected. Mr Brodmann replied that often assay offices were called upon to test odd finenesses and it was important that methods were able to do this. Israel asked why corrective actions were necessary if XRF is not a used as a reference method. The reply given was that corrective actions were only compulsory in the Convention but not the IAAO. Also, as XRF was now widespread as a method, at least for screening, it should now form part of the round robin programme. Latvia and Portugal questioned whether z scoring is a reliable method when variations of 12ppt and 17ppt from the mean were being produced. Mr Brodmann replied that the results were analyzed according to the best practice standards used for inter-laboratory comparisons but these assumed a normal distribution. Often the round robin results show some skewness.

6.2 **Future Round Robins**

The Birmingham Assay Office (United Kingdom) offered to organize the next set of round robins.

7. **EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION**

7.1. **Update on Hallmarking Convention activities**

The Chairperson proposed that the Chairman and Secretariat of the Hallmarking Convention should each receive a formal invitation to the IAAO meetings. This was unanimously agreed.

The Chairman of the Hallmarking Convention, Ronald LeBas (Ireland), thanked the IAAO for its invitation and gave a report on recent activities. He explained that the Convention was examining majority voting on certain issues. Slovenia was expected to ratify the agreement imminently, while Sri Lanka had just been inspected. Italy showed a considerable interest in becoming a member. Attendance at meetings was becoming an issue. Ireland encouraged IAAO members to join the Convention and asked for increased co-operation with other organizations.

7.2 **EU Mutual Recognition Regulation (MRR)**

This MRR was published in August and would come into force on 13 May 2009. The Chairperson pointed out that the recital in the introduction referred to the
concept of “prior authorisation” but this was not mentioned as part of the
disregulation. It was thought that hallmarking would be deemed such a prior
authorisation. One of the areas that still required clarification was whether
countries would have to accept all finenesses that existed in Europe if
Houtwhipper equivalence was met in other areas. This matter was raised during
this point and during AOB at the end of the meeting. Clarity was required on the
Commission's instructions to France (several years ago), and it was agreed to have
this discussion again as an agenda item at the next IAAO meeting. A suggestion
to invite a representative of the Commission was voted 18 against, three for and
three abstentions.

7.3 IAAO website

The proposed website for the IAAO was well received, particularly in its role as a
central contact point of information for hallmarking. Denmark requested that the
word hallmarking be replaced with the word marking to cover all aspects of metal
marking in the information pages. Ireland believed that the term hallmarking
should remain.

7.4 EU Services Directive – Is hallmarking a service or not?

The Chairperson explained that Slovenia was currently holding the Presidency of
the EU. In her discussions, she explained that it would be necessary for each
national government to identify those services which would fall under the EU
Services Directive. It was clear from the meeting that many assay offices believe
hallmarking an activity of state authority while others believe it to be a service.
The United Kingdom had requested clarification from its own advisers and had
written to the Commission.

7.5 ILAC

Ms Valentina Valestany (Sweden) would attend the next ILAC meeting in
Stockholm.

7.6 Internet retailing and hallmarking

The Secretariat asked how internet retailing and hallmarking is controlled with the
states of the members. He was concerned that in the UK, a loophole had been
developed such that goods were entering the country which circumvented
hallmarking regulations. Switzerland explained that they work closely with their
border control officers to control watch and jewellery movement of goods.
However, it was extremely time consuming and expensive.
8. **TECHNICAL MATTERS**

8.1 ISO TC 174

Five new standards have been published which can be downloaded from the ISO website (for a fee). These are ISO 11494:2008; ISO11495:2008; ISO11596:2008; ISO 15093:2008; ISO 15096:2008. It was recommended these be incorporated within the annexes of the Convention.

8.2 Polish Mint XRF Standards

The Polish Mint XRF Standards are in the Czech Assay Office waiting to go to Cyprus. It was agreed that the Secretariat reissue instructions for the control of these standards before they are sent from Prague to Cyprus. Switzerland was concerned because they had lost track of their whereabouts because administration and control procedures had not been followed fully. The Secretariat was also asked to ensure that the Standards were insured.

9. **TREASURER’S REPORT**

The Treasurer explained that seven members were overdue, four of which had not paid for two and a half years (Japan, Belgium, Greece and Malaysia). It was agreed that the membership of the latter four should be withdrawn. The savings account held €40,565 while the current account held €47,589.

10. **ELECTIONS OF CHAIRPERSON AND DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON**

10.1 Chairperson

The Chairperson confirmed that she would be stepping down to be Vice Chairperson, and that Mr Antonio Coelho Teixeira (Portugal) as current Deputy Chairperson had been proposed to be her successor. Antonio said he was happy to stand as Chairperson, and was voted unanimously to be Chairperson for 2009. He then thanked everyone for their support and confidence in him.

10.2 Deputy Chairperson

The Chairperson proposed Ms Dalia Yarom (Israel) to be new Deputy Chairperson for 2009. This was seconded by Ireland and Switzerland, and unanimously approved by everyone. Dalia said she was pleased to be voted in and that she was proud to be in this position because she was the first from outside Europe. She needed official approval from her authorities before she could confirm she had permission to do the job.
11. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

11.1 **CIBJO Blue Book (IAAO 17)**

Michael Allchin (United Kingdom) said a few words about the CIBJO Blue Book on Precious Metals, and why it was so important. Many countries such as France, Germany, Italy, China, Russia and the United States were members of CIBJO but not the Convention, but their trade organizations at CIBJO now agreed to technical standards and finenesses, including no negative tolerances, based on the Convention's annexes. Michael suggested that perhaps he could seek permission from CIBJO and the IAAO that each organization could have 'observer status' with each other, or each become a member of the other for the same fee (a reciprocal agreement so no money changed hands).

11.2 **Hallmarking Research Institute (IAAO 21)**

The Chairperson pointed out that information was being requested by the Hallmark Research Institute from Russia, Portugal, UK, and Italy, and asked for their co-operation.

11.4 **Vote of thanks**

Mr Michael Allchin (United Kingdom) thanked the Chairperson on behalf of all the IAAO for her hard work, leadership and spirited chairmanship.

12. **DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be held on 31 March 2009 in Geneva following the Convention Meeting.