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## World Association of Industrial and Technological Research Organizations (WAITRO) visits UNIDO



**The WAITRO Delegation to UNIDO** (left to right front row) Ms. Aini Suzana Ariffin, Deputy Secretary General, Nirmala M. Pieris, First Vice President, Ms. Goay Peck Sim, Secretary General. **UNIDO staff left to right:** Ouseph Padickakudi; Steffen Kaeser; Rick Kennedy; Ricardo Seidl da Fonseca; Lalith Goonatilake; and Director of the Industrial Technology and Promotion Branch, Ms. Liang Dan [larger photo here](#)

A high-level delegation from the World Association of Industrial & Technological Research Organizations ([WAITRO](#)) comprising First Vice President, Dr. Nirmala M. Pieris; Secretary General, Ms. Goay Peck Sim; and Deputy Secretary General, Ms. Aini Suzana Ariffin, visited UNIDO on 17th and 18th October 2005. The visit was a part of WAITRO's programme to strengthen relationships with UN agencies. After the UNIDO visit, the delegation moved on to Geneva for meetings with [UNCTAD](#), [UNDP](#) and [WIPO](#).

WAITRO is an independent non-profit international network of active Research and Technology Organizations (RTOs) and supporting agencies in the field of technological research and development established under the auspices of the United Nations in 1970. Its primary objective is to serve as a vehicle for the exchange of ideas

on technology management and the application of technology for sustainable development. WAITRO also assists in technological capacity building in member institutes in the developing countries. Presently [WAITRO has 156 members from over 75 countries](#) (both developed and developing). Membership covers a wide range of institutes and organizations carrying out or promoting industrial research and technology. The WAITRO Secretariat is located at Malaysia's Standards and Industrial Research Institute, [SIRIM Berhad](#). Four Regional Focal Points in Africa; Asia and the Pacific; Middle East and Northern Africa; and Latin America and the Caribbean assist the Secretariat.

One of the highlights of the WAITRO visit was the agreement to collaborate on the recommended follow up action of a very successful UNIDO/WAITRO capacity building workshop on *The Significance of Testing and Conformity assessment in Global Trade* in Malaysia in April 2005. Director of UNIDO's Industrial Promotion and Technology Branch, Liang Dan singled out standards and conformity assessment, technology foresight, technology assessment, and innovation as areas for future UNIDO/WAITRO collaborative programmes.

One programme currently under discussion in the area of standards and conformity assessment is the development of a web based **LabNet** to assist developing countries obtain rapid information to support their efforts for laboratory accreditation. Also in the area of standards and conformity assessment is the development of a joint programme between UNIDO and WAITRO and other global players to address issues of Certified Reference Materials ([CRM](#)) and [Proficiency Testing](#). UNIDO agreed to provide resources for the setting up of *LabNet* in the framework of its various regional programmes. WAITRO agreed to identify member organizations that could participate in the project and obtain their commitment to host and maintain the *LabNet* system on a rotational basis. With respect to CRMs a link with WAITRO member organizations in India, China or Korea was proposed and a link with India's National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories ([NABL](#)) was proposed for the Proficiency Testing. A meeting of experts to decide on the modalities of the identified areas was tentatively scheduled for December 2005 at SIRIM Berhad, in Malaysia.

UNIDO and WAITRO also discussed the possibility of conducting another joint programme on *Testing and Conformity Assessment*, this time in Trinidad and Tobago, in March 2006, in conjunction with the 56th Executive Committee meeting of WAITRO. Confirmation of this programme depends on the outcome of discussions between WAITRO and CARIRI (Caribbean Industrial Research Institute) their Regional Focal Point (RFP) for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Discussions also covered the possible participation of UNIDO in the WAITRO General Assembly and Biennial Congress on the theme *Business of Innovation* scheduled for Saskatoon, Canada in August 2006 and WAITRO collaboration in UNIDO's *Technology Foresight* Summit in November 2006 in Hungary and the UNIDO *Fair of the Future* tentatively scheduled for Turkey in 2007. UNIDO also agreed to share its technology assessment tool with WAITRO for use by its members, whilst WAITRO agreed with a proposal by UNIDO for joint publications on specific topics. Tentative topics include *The Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Agreement and Challenges for Research and Technology Organizations*.

The WAITRO delegation was briefed on UNIDO's involvement in the establishment of the Ghana Technology Centre with partners from Malaysia, Korea, Thailand, India and South Africa, and a virtual centre for Brazil in the area of machinery. WAITRO expressed interest in developing a similar centre for the ASEAN region to be based in Malaysia's Standards and Industrial Research Institute, SIRIM Berhad. Technology foresight activities carried out by UNIDO in Asia with TIFAC (Technology Information, Forecasting & Assessment Council), a WAITRO member organization, were also presented. WAITRO agreed to prepare a concept paper to develop a joint project on technology foresight with UNIDO. Yet another area within this activity for future collaboration was identified as the UNIDO regional foresight studies on specific topics such as Water.

[The UNIDO Cluster / Network Development Programme](#) and the [Master Craftsmen Programme](#) were identified as yet further potential areas for WAITRO / UNIDO collaboration. The UNIDO Cluster / Network Development Programme, operating since 1993, helps government and the private sector co-operate in the design and implementation of programmes to promote the organisation and development of clusters and networks of micro- small and medium sized enterprises. The programme draws lessons from the experience of successful clusters and it implements them through technical cooperation projects in various developing

countries. The Master Craftsmen Programme (MCP) encourages successful entrepreneurs to pass on their skills to their competitors (for a fee - and the additional incentive of collectively being able to meet bigger orders). The MCP focuses on metalworking, electrical and electronics engineering, food processing, textile, leather and woodworking. The major services of MCP are industrial advisory services, training in business and technical skills upgrading, encouraging the formation of entrepreneurial self-help groups, and secretarial services. The Master Craftsmen Programme was formally included in the curriculum of the Uganda Nakawa Vocational Training Institute in 2001, and rated by an Executive Committee meeting of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), as one of the most successful examples of UNIDO / JICA technical cooperation.

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