



**OFFICIAL NOTICE**  
**CB Obligations to Arrange Witness Audits**  
**March 9, 2021**

Dear CBs,

Although there are hopeful signs in many countries that the COVID 19 pandemic is being brought under control, it is clearly going to continue to affect us all and our work throughout 2021. We at IOAS appreciate your efforts to work and collaborate with us through this challenging time.

Like you, we have kept working throughout and continue to find ways to adapt to remote working. The most challenging area of work right now is scheduling and conducting required operator site 'visit' surveillances and we need greater effort on your part to be able to make these happen to ensure compliance with the requirements of the various scheme owners and with our own procedures. Otherwise, we will not have adequate information needed to maintain your accreditation.

Despite our efforts to inform you late last year of all activities we need and when we need them in 2021, we are experiencing periods of silence or lack of cooperation from some CBs in arranging the operator visits, only to be suddenly informed that the inspection is happening 'this week' or even 'tomorrow' with the expectation that IOAS find an assessor at such short notice. In other cases, we are notified that all operators under the specific scope have already been inspected for the year, without prior notice. Although we react to these situations when we can, this is normally impossible and unreasonable, given that our team is already working extensive and atypical hours to cover different time zones. As a result, we now have some operator visits that have been postponed several times. We cannot continue to keep pushing off such visits to the end of the year. After a full year of the COVID crisis, we expect CBs to have systems in place to ensure control over the inspection planning in all countries in which they operate and to make sure inspections are being performed according to requirements.

Please be reminded that your contract with IOAS, under Section C, requires you to '*Comply with the current versions of the relevant scheme owner requirements and standards ...*' and to '*Arrange the witnessing of conformity assessment activities when requested by the IOAS*'. It is therefore a contractual obligation for CBs to ensure that the witnessing of operator visits can be done in a timely manner and when requested by the IOAS. Not achieving the required number and type of witnessed operator visits can, therefore, lead to sanctions including suspension. IOAS is and will continue to be as accommodating as possible, but if we do not see the cooperation and advance planning on the part of individual CBs, we will impose sanctions.

In summary, **WE NEED BETTER COMMUNICATION FROM YOU, MORE FOREWARNING AND MORE FLEXIBILITY ON OPTIONS AND DATES.**

We urge your full cooperation in ensuring that the necessary and required surveillance activities are completed to avoid any threat to your accreditation status. Contact your Client Manager now if you are unsure of what is required or if you have not yet agreed upon dates and inspections to be witnessed.

Thanks for your assistance.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Crucefix', with a stylized flourish at the end.

David Crucefix PhD  
Executive Director