

THE EXPANDING ROLE OF ACCOUNTING TECHNICIANS

Accounting Technicians Ireland

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Good morning. I'm delighted to be here this morning, as Accounting Technicians Ireland unveils its new identity program—to show IFAC's support for the work you are doing and to recognize the increasingly important role of accounting technicians in business and the public sector.

I would like to congratulate ATI collectively, but especially Mr. Aidan Collins, your new president, and Ms. Gay Sheehan, your chief executive, as you take this major step forward in increasing the organization's visibility.

As you know, IFAC, the International Federation of Accountants, is the global organization for the accountancy profession. Our mission is to serve the public interest by strengthening the profession and contributing to the development of strong and stable economies worldwide.

Consistent with that mission, we recognize the important role that accounting technicians play in providing a wide range of taxation and accountancy services to organizations of all sizes and types, and in contributing to business growth and development. We are proud to call Accounting Technicians Ireland one of our own, your organization having joined IFAC in 1991 and having been a strong supporter of our work since that time.

Accounting Technicians Ireland is one of IFAC's 157 members and associates in 123 countries. We represent more than 2.5 million accountants—including roughly 360,000 accounting technicians—in public practice, education, government service, industry, and commerce.

As members of Accounting Technicians Ireland, you are united with the global profession through your body's affiliation with IFAC. Additionally, you are a member of the distinguished, 120-year-old Irish accountancy profession, which consistently pushes above its weight.

The leadership of the profession here in Ireland is demonstrated in many ways: the profession works with national regulators, it pro-actively participates in the international standard-setting process, and it plays a leadership role within IFAC. It is also committed to education, working to ensure that the accountancy professionals of the future have the necessary competencies.

Accounting Technicians Ireland has, for more than a quarter century, been committed to training the highest qualified accounting technicians through a combination of professional exams and practical work experience. I commend you for this initiative. Through your new branding initiative, you reemphasize the value of your people and their qualifications.

Certainly, skilled and experienced accounting technicians have a critical role to play in today's global economy. The qualified accounting technician can make a vital contribution to the financial reporting supply chain—as a critical link in the people and processes involved in the preparation, approval, audit, analysis, and use of financial reports.

Whether operating as a finance manager, controller, internal auditor, or in many other capacities, accounting technicians have much to contribute to an organization's sustainability and growth.

In recent years, the role of and demand for accounting technicians has increased dramatically in both the public and private sectors. That is not surprising. In some ways, accounting technicians represent accounting in its purest form, whether recording income and receipts, operating a cash management or credit control system, or supplying information for management reporting.

In parts of the world less developed than Ireland, the value of accounting technicians as an essential resource in the public sector has become very clear. So it is interesting to see that a consortium of development banks, led by the World Bank, has been developing an initiative in Africa to train and engage 5,000 accounting technicians in the public sector.

While many countries have either IFAC members and associates or independent education providers to offer accounting technician certification programs, many others still do not. IFAC's

Developing Nations Committee recently issued a Good Practices Guide for these countries to assist professional accountancy organizations in developing qualified accounting technicians through education, training, and assessment of skills and competence.

We know how valuable your work is—and want to make sure that all countries are fully aware of the skills that the accounting technician can offer. That is one of the reasons why IFAC has begun work this year to alter its educational framework, to make it more meaningful for accounting technicians in terms of training, continuing education, and recognition.

Before I conclude, I would like to comment on one other area in which IFAC and Accounting Technicians Ireland are both active: that is in executing our voice—speaking out on issues that demonstrate the value of the profession to our many and varied stakeholders and addressing those issues in which the public interest is at stake.

As an example, in the weeks before the G-20 finance ministers met in London on April 2, IFAC made submissions to three of the four working groups convened to do advance work for the Summit.

We support the G-20's work in reforming the international financial system, and feel that the accountancy profession should have a vital role to play moving forward. The objectives issued at the Summit are consistent with many of the recommendations we made to the G-20, including:

- the call for implementing the Financial Stability Board's 12 key International Standards and Codes (which include our International Standards on Auditing)
- making significant progress toward a single set of high-quality global accounting standards
- making improvements in the international regulatory framework
- strengthening the roles of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in their efforts to assist countries to improve their financial management capabilities and strengthen the financial reporting infrastructure

- Emphasizing the importance, in regulatory reform, of paying attention to the issues of SMEs

We also urged that the G-20 back the existence of strong, well-governed national accountancy bodies as an essential component of every country's financial infrastructure. These bodies are vital to sustaining the profession and also to ensuring that there is requisite accountancy talent and capability to meet a country's economic needs. This, of course, includes accounting technicians.

In Ireland, you know very well what strong accounting bodies can do—not only through Accounting Technicians Ireland but also through the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland and the Institute of Certified Public Accountants in Ireland – both of which are IFAC members.

In fact, these organizations and others with locations here in Ireland, including CIMA and ACCA as members of CCAB-Ireland, have provided significant leadership talent to IFAC through volunteer participation on our boards and committees. We are very grateful for this support.

To conclude, I wish Accounting Technicians Ireland great success as it uses this new branding campaign to tell the world about its internationally recognized business qualification and the high-quality educational, technical, and ethical standards of its members.

Thank you.
