

Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

APPLICANTS FOR OBSERVER STATUS

Note by the Secretariat*

Addendum

1. An application for observer status in the SPS Committee was received on 5 October 2009 from the Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS). Information provided by ECOWAS is summarized below.

I. ECONOMIC COMMUNITY FOR WEST AFRICAN STATES (ECOWAS)

1. Membership (15)

Benin	Liberia
Burkina Faso	Mali
Cape Verde	Niger
Côte d'Ivoire	Nigeria
Gambia	Senegal
Ghana	Sierra Leone
Guinea	Togo
Guinea Bissau	

2. Mandate, Scope and Area of Work

2. ECOWAS was formed in 1975 with the aim of promoting cooperation and integration leading to the establishment of an economic union in the West African Sub-region. ECOWAS is a Regional Economic Community (REC) that comprises fifteen member states, with fourteen members belonging to the World Trade Organization. Liberia is an observer to the WTO, having submitted an application for membership in June 2007. ECOWAS has observer status in Codex, the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), as well as an *ad hoc* observer status on a meeting-by-meeting basis in the Committee on Trade and Development.

3. Contribution to the Work of the SPS Committee

3. ECOWAS has adopted international regulations on sanitary and phytosanitary measures in the sub-region. ECOWAS organizes training workshops for the SPS focal persons in its member states at the national level. In addition, it has formed a Regional Veterinary Committee, which is a technical advisory body composed of Directors of Veterinary Services in the region that provides advice and expertise on sanitary issues.

* This document has been prepared under the Secretariat's own responsibility and is without prejudice to the positions of Members or to their rights or obligations under the WTO.

4. ECOWAS participates in several capacity building initiatives, notably the Better Training for Safer Food (BTSF) in Africa initiative funded by the European Commission. It collaborates with the African Union/Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU/IBAR) in the implementation of the Participation of African Nations in Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards Setting Organizations (PAN-SPSO) project. These projects aim at improving understanding of sanitary and phytosanitary issues, building capacities in member states to enable effective involvement and participation in international standard-setting activities, as well as boosting trade within the region and internationally.

5. As part of the PAN-SPSO project, several RECs, including ECOWAS, have been encouraged to apply for observer status in the SPS Committee (as well as in Codex, IPPC and OIE) to enable them to better assist their member states in the implementation of the SPS Agreement.

4. Reciprocity

6. The WTO Secretariat has not requested observer status in ECOWAS. However, ECOWAS is willing to give access to the WTO Secretariat to the records of its relevant meetings and SPS-related documents, upon request.
