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Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

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**REPORT ON THE FOLLOW-UP NATIONAL WORKSHOP ON THE SPS AGREEMENT  
FOR THE PHILIPPINE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE REGULATORY AGENCIES  
AND THE SPS WORKSHOP FOR REGIONAL REGULATORY AGENCIES**

COMMUNICATION FROM THE PHILIPPINES

The following communication, received on 7 October 2013, is being circulated at the request of the Delegation of the Philippines.

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1. Two national SPS Workshops were held in the Philippines from 29 July to 2 August 2013 sponsored by WTO. The two workshops were attended by about 100 participants from the different regulatory agencies of the relevant departments involved in SPS and trade.

2. The first workshop was the "Follow-Up National Workshop on the WTO SPS Agreement for the Philippine Department of Agriculture Regulatory Agencies" which was held 29 July 2013 in Manila, Philippines and attended by the previous 41 participants of the "WTO National Seminar on the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures" held last 18 to 20 July 2012. The follow-up national workshop was conducted to (1) refresh knowledge of previous participants on WTO and SPS, (2) discuss and elaborate key issues raised from the 2012 SPS national workshop, and (3) present actual SPS case studies that relate to harmonization, equivalence and risk assessment and collectively address the issues and concerns. The national follow-up workshop was found most useful when practical case studies were presented and the specific provisions of the SPS Agreement were used to argue the case. This exemplified how theories learned previously were put into actual practice.

3. The second workshop was the "WTO-SPS Workshop for Regional Regulatory Agencies" which was held outside of Manila in Cebu, Philippines from 31 July to 2 August 2013. It was attended by 73 participants both from domestic and international posts from the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Trade and Industry, officers from the Bureau of Product Standards, Department of Health, the Philippine Economic Zone Authority, and the Bureau of Customs. The regional workshop was conducted to (1) refresh and harmonize knowledge on the WTO and SPS Agreements *vis-a-vis* roles and responsibilities of the respective regional border and foreign service corps in formulating and implementing SPS regulations, and (2) analyze and recognize the implications of their SPS decisions and actions on the Philippines' commitments and obligations in domestic and global trade. Participants greatly benefited from this capacity building activity as they gained significant knowledge on the key SPS principles and how these support their functions.

4. Both workshops were used as a launching pad for the STDF project on "Implementing SPS Measures to Facilitate Safe Trade", which included regional research on SPS controls and trade facilitation in selected countries in Africa and Asia including the Philippines. WTO Members are currently engaged in negotiations on trade facilitation for possible inclusion in the early harvest package for the 9<sup>th</sup> Ministerial meeting in Bali, Indonesia in early December.

5. Members' proposals indicate that some areas covered by the negotiations (such as import alert/rapid alert mechanisms, transparency of procedures, fees, etc.) relate, directly or indirectly, to provisions of the SPS Agreement, notably Article 8 and Annex C on Control, Inspection and Approval Procedures. We find this STDF project very relevant to the current negotiations and hopefully its outcome could provide some guidance to Members.

6. Finally, the Philippines would like to again thank Ms Marième FALL from the WTO Secretariat for providing her valuable expertise during the two workshops and to STDF for the valuable project. The Philippines signals its continued interest to avail of similar technical assistance and capacity building activities under the WTO. Most importantly, we would be more than happy to share our experience and assist any Member in establishing and strengthening capacity in this area.

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