



Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

SUMMARY OF THE MEETING OF 15 AND 17 OCTOBER 2014

NOTE BY THE SECRETARIAT¹

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1 ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1.1. The Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (the "Committee") held its sixty-first regular meeting on 15 and 17 October 2014. The proposed agenda for the meeting was adopted with amendments (WTO/AIR/4363).

2 INFORMATION ON RELEVANT ACTIVITIES

2.1 Information from Members

2.1.1 Peru - Organization of the 46th Meeting of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene, to be held in Lima on 17-21 November 2014

2.1. Peru informed Members that Peru's national Codex committee was co-sponsoring the meeting of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene in November 2014 in cooperation with the United States (G/SPS/GEN/1362). This would enhance Peru's participation in Codex and contribute to strengthening capacities. Co-sponsoring would also enable Peru's delegates to participate more effectively in this year's session of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene, with a focus on prioritizing risk-oriented preventive measures aimed at ensuring food safety.

2.1.2 Russian Federation – Information regarding amendments to the common sanitary epidemiological and hygienic requirements

2.2. Russian provided information on current efforts to amend the common sanitary requirements of its Customs Union, with a focus on pesticide residue levels in food products. So far, 20 maximum residue levels (MRLs) for twelve active ingredients in pesticides had been harmonized with international standards and had undergone public consultations as an amendment to Annex 15.1 of Chapter II of the common sanitary requirements. Russia had notified these draft amendments in G/SPS/N/RUS/50. All comments received were being studied by the Eurasian Economic Commission and competent Customs Union authorities, and a revised draft document would be submitted for further approval. Russia would continue to inform WTO Members of progress in this regard.

2.3. Ukraine thanked Russia for the information provided and requested further clarification regarding the two questions submitted to Russia in June. Malaysia informed the Committee of its concerns regarding Russia's new peroxide value (PV) of palm oil of 0.9 meq/kg (notified through G/SPS/N/RUS/50), which was lower than the international standards. Malaysia was of the view that a maximum level of 10 meq/kg should be maintained, in line the standard established by the Codex Committee on Fats and Oils. A PV of 0.9 meq/kg was too trade restrictive and would not reflect actual trade practices. Malaysia requested Russia to provide the relevant scientific risk assessment justifying its lower peroxide value. Russia thanked Ukraine and Malaysia and expressed its readiness to engage in bilateral discussions on this issue.

2.1.3 Russian Federation – Possible scenario on African swine fever spread in the Eurasian region

2.4. The Russian Federation drew Members' attention to the African swine fever (ASF) situation within the Eurasian region, which continued to pose risks of economic and social losses. These risks were aggravated by disagreements between the European Union and Russia; co-operation and confidence would be needed in order to find a solution. In Russia's view, EU veterinary services and those of other countries in the region had underestimated the risk, resulting in 154 outbreaks reported to the OIE by Lithuania, Latvia, Poland and Estonia. The EU focus on maintaining trade led to health risks for EU countries and for Russia. Russia expressed concern about the spread of ASF in Estonia and Latvia and resulting risks for ASF introduction to the Kaliningrad and Leningrad regions of Russia, and about the lack of information available on the efficiency of monitoring programmes implemented in the Transcaucasia region. Russia suggested the establishment of an international standing working group comprising scientists from affected countries with practical experience in ASF control. Russia had proposed to hold a special meeting for international experts, for example in Minsk.

2.1.4 Japan - Update on the response to TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station accident and on import restrictions on Japanese food regarding radioactive nuclides

2.5. Japan provided an update on the situation of Japanese foods following the nuclear power station accident. Japan highlighted the continuous implementation of its rigorous monitoring programme for seafood products, both at the production site and in market distribution. The latest monitoring data indicated that levels of contamination in more than 99% of food items were below the standard limits. Strict measures prevented that food that exceeded the standard limits be distributed on the domestic market or exported. Japan also drew Members' attention to the latest IAEA assessment from September 2014, which found that Japan's current measures to address radionuclide contamination were appropriate. Japan thanked Members who had removed their import restrictions on Japanese food products, and hoped that remaining restrictions would be removed as soon as possible.

2.1.5 European Union - Update on the epidemiological situation of African swine fever

2.6. The European Union informed the Committee about the current epidemiological status of ASF within its borders. The European Union noted that 131 cases of ASF in wild boar had been reported in Lithuania, Latvia, Poland and Estonia, and 40 outbreaks among domestic pigs in Lithuania, Latvia and Poland. The European Union highlighted that ASF cases within EU borders were unrelated to legal trade of animals and animal products and, instead, the vast majority of cases arose as a result of infected wild boar moving across its borders with Belarus, or through the suspected illegal introduction of infected products. The European Union also highlighted a recent case of ASF in northern Estonia, close to the border with Russia, where no link had been found with other outbreaks in the European Union. This finding suggested that Russia was not only an indirect source of ASF introduction into the European Union via Belarus, but also a direct one. This highlighted Russia's failure to control the spread of ASF in its territory, leading to repeated introductions into neighbouring countries. The European Union emphasized that affected member States applied stringent control measures in close cooperation with the European Commission and that EU regionalization measures (EU Decision No. 2014/178/EU) were in line with international standards and had proven effective in containing the disease within limited areas. EU member States also ensured transparency by submitting immediate notifications to the OIE and to the EU Animal Disease Information System. In addition, the European Commission had sent 73 communications to the EU's key trading partners with information on ASF and on control measures and restrictions put in place. The European Union expressed concern that its repeated requests for information on the surveillance and control measures taken by Belarus and Russia had not been answered. The European Union provided information on its efforts to enhance collaboration within the OIE and FAO framework, starting with the regular sharing of surveillance data and reinforced controls between neighbouring countries. A first meeting had taken place in Bern on 22 September 2014 with the intention to establish a Standing Group of Experts on ASF under the umbrella of the Global Framework for the progressive control of Transboundary Animal Diseases.

2.1.6 European Union - Information on the launch of public consultation on defining criteria for endocrine disruptors

2.7. The European Union provided information about the launch of its public consultation process on defining the criteria for identifying endocrine disruptors on 26 September 2014. The European Union highlighted that the usual consultation period of twelve weeks had been extended until 16 January 2015 to allow sufficient time for stakeholders to provide comments. Relevant information and instructions on how to submit contributions were available on the European Commission website, as detailed in G/SPS/GEN/1365. The European Union further informed Members that a feedback report assessing all contributions would be issued, and would support the EU legislative work as appropriate.

2.8. Mexico thanked the European Union for the circulation of its document and noted that the included hyperlink was inaccessible. The United States thanked the European Union for providing an extended consultation period, and requested further details on how communications from Members would be taken into account, and whether the feedback report would be publically available in addition to the impact assessment.

2.9. The European Union replied that the hyperlink in its document would be checked.² The European Union promised to verify whether the feedback report would be published separately. The European Union also noted that it had not submitted a WTO notification but an invitation to Members to participate directly in the public consultation.

2.1.7 United States – Implementation of the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA)

2.10. The United States reported on progress of the Food and Drug Administration's implementation of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). FDA had published four FSMA-related supplemental proposed rules in the Federal Register on 29 September 2014.³ These proposals contained changes to four of the rules previously proposed in 2013: Produce Safety, Preventive Controls for Human Food, Preventive Controls for Animal Food, and the Foreign Supplier Verification Program. The proposed revisions were based on public comments submitted electronically during the comment period. The United States assured Members that the proposed changes were science-based, provided flexibility to the industry, and were the result of extensive dialogue between FDA and domestic and international stakeholders. The United States drew Members' attention to the final deadline of 15 December 2014 to submit comments through <http://www.regulations.gov>.

2.1.8 Belize – Information on PVS follow-up mission

2.11. Belize thanked the OIE for a follow-up mission conducted during July 2014 following the 2008 Performance of Veterinary Services (PVS) evaluation, which also included the application of the PVS aquatic evaluation (G/SPS/GEN/1372). The OIE's reports had been received on 10 October 2014 and were currently under review.

2.1.9 Belize – Foot and mouth disease simulation

2.12. Belize further informed the Committee of a Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) simulation workshop held in Belize in September 2014 (G/SPS/GEN/1372). The programme of the workshop had included the review and finalization of a draft FMD procedural manual, presentations on procedures contained in the manual, and visits to four cattle farms with a hypothetical FMD case. The simulation had been held in collaboration with the Belize Agricultural Health Authority, the Inter-American Development Bank, FAO, the Pan American Health Organization and the Centro Panamericano de Fiebre Aftosa.

2.2 Information from the relevant SPS standard-setting bodies

2.2.1 IPPC

2.13. The IPPC provided a report on its recent activities (G/SPS/GEN/1370). At a meeting of the Strategic Planning Group during October 2014, participants had prepared briefing papers on a long-term forecast for the IPPC, as a foundation for the IPPC strategic plan. The Standards Committee had approved specifications to be submitted for member consultation on the authorization of entities other than national plant protection organizations to perform phytosanitary actions, guidance on pest risk management, and guidelines for phytosanitary import regulations. The IPPC also provided information on its efforts to encourage Members to develop their national contact points and reporting obligations, which had allowed the IPPC to successfully update its database of official contact points; and on the creation of the ePhyto webpage, which would enhance the IPPC's functioning, reduce the number of fraudulent certificates being issued, assist in trade facilitation, and assist in developing a global system that could be used in future collaborations with the OIE and Codex. The IPPC also reported on a co-project with the STDF designed to develop a pool of qualified experts to serve as facilitators of the Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE) tool. The IPPC informed the Committee about a case initiated under the IPPC dispute settlement process, for which it had issued a call for technical experts on citrus black spot, with responses due by 31 October 2014.

² G/SPS/GEN/1364/Add.1.

³ G/SPS/N/USA/2502/Add.5, G/SPS/N/USA/2503/Add.5, G/SPS/N/USA/2569/Add.2, and G/SPS/N/USA/2593/Add.2.

2.2.2 CODEX

2.14. The Chairperson drew attention to a written report submitted by Codex (G/SPS/GEN/1368).

2.2.3 OIE

2.15. The Chairperson also drew attention to a report submitted by the OIE (G/SPS/GEN/1364).

3 SPECIFIC TRADE CONCERNS (G/SPS/GEN/204/REV.14)

3.1 New issues

3.1.1 Russia's market access requirements for bovine meat in compliance with OIE requirements – Concerns of India

3.1. India reported on progress achieved bilaterally to resolve this concern, and thanked Russia for its support. Russia expressed confidence that the issue would be resolved soon.

3.1.2 Russia's restrictions on imports of fruits and vegetables from Poland (G/SPS/N/RUS/69) - Concerns of the European Union

3.2. The European Union raised its concern regarding Russia's temporary restrictions on imports of certain fruits and vegetables from Poland, taken for phytosanitary and other reasons. These restrictions had been introduced as of 1 August 2014, and notified as G/SPS/N/RUS/69. The European Union questioned the consistency of this trade restriction with international principles, and whether it was supported by a risk assessment. Given the low rate of Polish phytosanitary non-compliance compared to the total number of consignments exported to Russia, the measures taken by Russia were disproportionate and more trade restrictive than necessary for the pests *Frankliniella occidentalis* and *Grapholita molesta*. The Russian measures were not transparent, since the Russian Federal Service had not provided regular notifications of interceptions to Poland in accordance with the IPPC and ISPM 13. Russia had not replied to EU requests for information on scope and methods of pest monitoring. The European Union reminded Russia of the principle of non-discrimination, which required that measures applied on exporting countries should not be more stringent than measures applied to the same pests within the importing country. Despite numerous invitations to establish an effective system of data exchange with Russia, many notifications were received with delay, thus hampering official investigations to enable appropriate corrective actions. The European Union was confident that the Polish phytosanitary certification system was effective and fully consistent with international standards, and underlined that the Polish National Plant Protection Organization had taken further measures to eliminate cases of non-compliance and was ready to demonstrate their effectiveness in a systems audit. Moreover, the European Union noted that in many cases the MRLs applied by Russia for nitrates and pesticides were far below those set by Codex Alimentarius. In some cases the findings of Russian laboratories could not be confirmed by Poland, which would be the subject of a meeting between Polish and Russian laboratory experts. The European Union requested Russia to immediately repeal its measures and to align them with international standards and its WTO obligations.

3.3. Russia enquired whether a National Plant Protection Organization existed at EU level, and whether Poland had delegated powers to the European Commission to discuss the ban. The Russian Federal Service for Veterinary and Phytosanitary Surveillance (Rosselkhoznadzor) had repeatedly notified both the European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Consumers and the Polish State Plant Health and Seed Inspection Service about the non-compliance of Polish commodities with Russian phytosanitary requirements. Since 2008 the phytosanitary status of commodities imported from Poland was insufficient, which had led to increasing numbers of interceptions every year, suggesting that Polish pest control might not be sufficient. Moreover, there had been several violations of international and Russian phytosanitary requirements of high risk commodities from Poland in 2013. To avoid such situations, two meetings with Poland had been held in 2013 and 2014, at which Poland had promised to undertake actions to prevent phytosanitary certification of contaminated products and to issue phytosanitary certificates in accordance with international requirements. The Russian Federation noted, however, that Poland had not taken these actions, although certain Polish products imported to Russia had posed a public health threat due to pesticide residues and nitrates levels

which neither complied with Russian nor EU standards. Given these systematic violations and failure to prevent the problems, Russia imposed science- and risk-based temporary restrictions on imports of certain regulated Polish commodities. Russia reminded Members that it had harmonized its plant quarantine legislation with the principles of international standards at Russia's accession to the WTO. Accordingly, the Russian Federation requested the European Union to specify the concrete clause, article or section of the SPS Agreement, IPPC, ISPM or other documents violated by Russian measures.

3.1.3 Russia's unilateral introduction of new requirements for veterinary certificates – Concerns of Ukraine

3.4. Ukraine raised concerns regarding Russia's unilateral introduction of new requirements for veterinary certificates for Ukrainian goods subject to veterinary supervision on 1 September 2014. Ukraine doubted the compliance of Russia's measures with Articles 2 and 5 of the SPS Agreement. Ukraine requested that Russia comply with its obligations, particularly those relating to equivalence and consultations. To avoid misunderstandings on the interpretation of laboratory tests, Ukraine had previously proposed research under bilateral governmental supervision on subjects including mutual recognition of laboratory results and joint laboratory assessments, as well as the validation and accreditation of methods that differ at the level of standards application. Ukraine informed the Committee that on 11 August 2014 the Ukraine State Veterinary and Phytosanitary Service had sent revised forms of veterinary certificates in Russian to Rosselkhoz nadzor. In response, Rosselkhoz nadzor had informed the Ukraine about a large number of inconsistencies in the certificate forms. Ukraine pointed to Russia's obligations within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which provided that parties agree bilaterally on sample forms of veterinary certificates for imported products of animal origin. Ukraine urged Russia to explain its non-implementation of Article 14 of the CIS Agreement and its accession commitments. Ukraine expressed its openness for full cooperation with Russia to resolve this concern in the interest of trade.

3.5. Russia clarified that a veterinary certificate was a legally binding document used by exporting countries to confirm the safety of its products and compliance with the veterinary requirements of the importing country. While Ukraine, as a member of CIS, had thus far used a simplified form of the veterinary certificate, difficulties arose when Ukraine signed the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement. This agreement covered, inter alia, the implementation of EU SPS legislation. The resulting reconstruction of Ukraine's current veterinary and phytosanitary control system had not been notified to Rosselkhoz nadzor, constituting a violation of WTO transparency principles. During trilateral consultations between Russia, Ukraine and the European Union to discuss the Association Agreement's economic implications for Russia, Ukraine had proposed the development of a co-operation road map with Rosselkhoz nadzor, the first point of which was to shift to the system of international veterinary certificates. However, according to an agreement reached on 12 September 2014, Ukraine could enjoy the privileges of CIS membership – and therefore use the simplified veterinary certificates – until 31 December 2015. Russia had provided comments on the new draft certificates submitted by Ukraine on 1 September 2014, correcting a number of mistakes. Russia expressed surprise at Ukraine's concern, since the change in certificates related to Ukraine's own proposal, and since Ukraine was able to use the simplified veterinary certificates until the end of 2015.

3.2 Issues previously raised

3.2.1 Application and modification of the EU Regulation on Novel Foods - Concerns of Peru (No. 238)

3.6. Peru restated its concerns over the proposed amendment of EU Regulation No. 258/97⁴ (G/SPS/GEN/1361). Peru referred to its earlier comments on how to facilitate access to the EU market for biodiversity products from developing countries (G/SPS/GEN/1335), highlighting concerns on the proposed definitions of: (i) "novel food"; (ii) "traditional food from third country"; and (iii) "history of safe food use in a third country". Peru requested the European Union to revise the definitions to establish criteria that would allow traditional biodiversity products from developing countries timely access to the EU market. Furthermore, Peru addressed Article 9 of the proposed amendment, which sets forth the procedure for authorizing the placement of novel food

⁴ Notified as G/SPS/N/EU/64, G/SPS/N/EU/64/Add.1 and G/SPS/N/EU/64/Add.2.

on the EU market, requiring the exporter to present scientific evidence demonstrating the safety of the novel food in question. Peru challenged the consistency of EU's proposed Regulation with Articles 2.2 and 5 of the SPS Agreement, which require the importing Member to adopt the least trade-restrictive measure, based on a risk assessment, and requested the European Union to provide the underpinning scientific basis.

3.7. Colombia and Guatemala expressed their support for Peru's concerns.

3.8. The European Union informed the Committee that Members' comments on the new proposed Regulation were being transmitted to the European Parliament and European Council for consideration before its final adoption. Regarding Peru's comments on Article 9, the European Union recalled that one of the main objectives of the proposed Regulation was to facilitate and streamline the authorization of novel foods from third countries. European Commission Recommendation 97/618/EC reflected the scientific considerations underpinning the draft legislation. As it was not possible to anticipate the potential risks associated with novel foods production processes, the European Union noted that a high level of food safety could only be achieved by putting in place a pre-market approval system, compatible with Article 8 and Annex C of the SPS Agreement. The European Union expressed its confidence that the proposed Regulation was consistent with the SPS Agreement since it provided unified, simplified and shortened authorization procedures. The European Union reiterated its commitment to work closely with all Members to address their concerns and to provide detailed guidance to applicants regarding the authorization and notification procedures.

3.2.2 Korea's strengthened import restrictions on food and feeds with regard to radionuclides – Concerns of Japan (No. 359)

3.9. Japan reiterated its concern regarding Korea's import restrictions on fishery and food products, as these bans and additional testing requirements for radionuclides were non-transparent, not based on science, discriminatory and more trade-restrictive than necessary. Japan had held numerous bilateral meetings and provided detailed information to Korea, and sought to use the tools set forth in the SPS Agreement to reach an amicable solution. While Korea had recently started to provide some responses to Japan's questions raised under Articles 4, 5.8 and 7 of the SPS Agreement, these were insufficient. Yet, Japan welcomed Korea's indication that it was conducting a review, and its clarification on the appropriate level of protection underpinning its measures in relation to the radionuclide thresholds established in Codex STAN 193-1995. Japan was concerned about the lack of transparency surrounding Korea's review of the measures taken between 2011 and 2013, and encouraged Korea to provide more information on its review meetings and timeframes. Japan hoped that this review would include an objective, transparent and science-based reassessment of Korea's measures in accordance with international standards, such as Codex Working Principle CAC/GL 62-2007. Japan reiterated that if Korea continued ignoring Japan's requests, Japan would have no choice but to resort to other actions under the WTO.

3.10. Korea clarified that its measures were in accordance with Article 5.7 of the SPS Agreement, to protect human health and food safety from radioactive contamination. Korea had been seeking to obtain additional information for a more objective and science-based risk assessment, but received insufficient data from Japan. The latest technical meeting had been held on 18 September 2014. Korea was willing to conduct additional expert meetings and hoped for full co-operation with Japan to finalize its review process and resolve this issue.

3.2.3 China's import restrictions in response to the nuclear power plant accident – Concerns of Japan (No. 354)

3.11. Japan recalled its concern over import restrictions by China on Japanese food exports, following TEPCO's nuclear power station incident. Japan regretted that no progress had been made since the July 2014 SPS Committee Meeting, as China maintained a ban on products from ten Japanese prefectures. This ban might not be based on international standards and be more trade-restrictive than required to achieve the appropriate level of protection. In June 2013, Japan had provided China with monitoring results that had demonstrated that Japan's food was safe for human consumption. Moreover, Japan raised its concern that additional prefectures were also subject to import bans on vegetables, fruits, tea, milk, medicinal plants and related products.

While China had announced in 2011 that it would lift the import ban on those products, it had since been reluctant to do so, although Japan had proposed pre-test certificates. Japan was concerned that China deliberately avoided any progress on this issue, raising the doubt that China was applying its measures in a manner which might constitute a disguised restriction on international trade. Japan requested China to immediately accept Japan's pre-test certificates, and to lift the import ban without further delay.

3.12. China explained that TEPCO's nuclear power station incident, which had brought great losses to Japan, had posed serious threats to food safety. China had imposed corresponding measures on agricultural and marine products from Japan, based on risk assessment in compliance with international practice. China had already adjusted the inspection and quarantine measures for Japanese food and agricultural products, and continued to apply restrictions only for high-risk products from seriously polluted regions. Following Japan's request, China was currently analyzing the technical data provided and would review the measures accordingly.

3.2.4 US high cost of certification for mango exports – Concerns of India (No. 373)

3.13. India reiterated its concern regarding the high cost of certification for mango exports to the United States. Since 2007 India had been granted access to export mangoes to the United States on the basis that they would be irradiated, under the supervision of US inspectors, to mitigate the risk of fruit flies and stone weevil and noted they had shipped 1,600 metric tons of mangoes to the United States. India noted that bearing the high cost of certification rendered its mangoes uncompetitive. While a trust fund had been created, India had suggested preclearance by the National Plant Protection Authorities, which had not been agreed on. In previous meetings, the United States had offered irradiation upon arrival which, however, would result in an economically unfeasible situation. Taking into account the past seven years of Indian mango exports to the United States, India requested mutual recognition of equivalence of mango certification and conformity assessment procedures in order to reduce costs and to facilitate trade, as had been done for organic certification.

3.14. The Dominican Republic expressed its support for India's concern and requested further information from the United States on the costs of import procedures.

3.15. The United States recalled that India had been the first country to export irradiated mangoes to the United States. While the value of Indian mango exports had risen every year since, the United States had attempted to accommodate India's concern by amending its legislation for irradiation upon importation to lower the costs of clearance. The United States reiterated that it was looking forward to receiving further proposals from India on how to lower the costs of mango clearance.

3.2.5 EU phytosanitary measures for citrus black spot – Concerns of South Africa (No. 356)

3.16. South Africa recalled that it had previously raised concerns over restrictive EU requirements for citrus fruit. Despite comments submitted by South Africa's as well as by an international group of scientific experts, the European Food Safety Authority had released its final risk assessment on citrus black spot in February 2014, maintaining its opinion that commercial citrus fruit from areas where citrus black spot was present presented a risk to the European Union. Based on this conclusion, the European Commission Standing Committee on Plant Health had decided on additional import measures for citrus fruit from South Africa, which had taken effect in July 2014. In South Africa's opinion, these significantly more stringent measures were unjustified restrictions on trade, and were disproportionate to any possible risk to the European Union. The measures implied additional costs and had severe negative influence on South Africa's citrus industry. South Africa had voluntarily suspended exports from certain areas for the rest of 2014, and had asked the secretariat of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) to establish an expert committee in line with Article XIII of the IPPC to provide an independent science-based opinion. South Africa had been engaging with the European Union for 22 years without a successful outcome. South Africa would again review its citrus black spot risk management system for the 2015 export season, and would continue to strengthen its citrus industry. South Africa upheld its science-based opinion that EU phytosanitary import requirements in respect of citrus black spot for fresh consumption fruit were more stringent than technically justifiable.

3.17. The European Union stressed that the measures were in place to prevent the entry of citrus black spot, since there had been an increasing number of interceptions in 2014. The European Union was currently free from citrus black spot, and the disease would have severe socio-economic implications if imported. The European Food Safety Authority had established a scientific panel and was in the process of organizing a dialogue. The European Union acknowledged South Africa's efforts to remedy the situation and expressed its willingness to comply with its responsibilities under the IPPC dispute resolution process, but was also looking forward to a bilateral dialogue with officials from South Africa.

3.2.6 EU ban on mangoes and certain vegetables from India - Concerns of India (No. 374)

3.18. India reiterated its concern regarding the EU ban on its exports of mangoes and four other vegetables on the grounds of increasing numbers of interceptions of harmful pests and organisms. India had informed the European Union of various measures taken to reduce the interceptions, such as treating mangoes with hot water against fruit flies. EU authorities had agreed to visit the Indian pack houses and the systems in place, and India requested the European Union to remove the restrictions at the earliest.

3.19. The European Union explained that its measures had been introduced in April 2014 due to the growing number of interceptions of five problematic commodities at the EU border. Several meetings had been held with India to discuss problems related to insufficient phytosanitary export checks and inadequate certification systems. In 2010 and 2013 the EU Food and Veterinary Office had undertaken two missions to India, which had revealed significant shortcomings in the certification system of plants. The European Union clarified that the current temporary ban was in force until the end of 2015, and that an audit report would be released in the next few weeks. Before reviewing the ban, the European Union was looking forward to sufficient guarantees from India that it would take effective corrective measures.

3.2.7 US measures on catfish – Concerns of China (No. 289)

3.20. China recalled that in March 2011, the United States had notified its regulations for mandatory inspection of catfish and catfish products, intending to transfer the regulatory responsibility from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). In 2014, USDA had been mandated to draft rules concerning the requirements for inspection of catfish and catfish products, which had included catfish regulation with that of terrestrial animal meat products. The biological characteristics, farming, processing and inspection of catfish products, however, were different from that of terrestrial animal meat products. The OIE had established terrestrial and aquatic animal health codes respectively, and there was no evidence that catfish products had higher food safety risks than other aquatic products. China raised its concern that USDA's inspection programme imposed additional costs on foreign catfish producers by requiring equivalence programmes. China believed that the inspection programme was a trade barrier and violated US obligations under WTO agreements. China urged the United States to adjust its mandatory inspection measure based on science, and to implement catfish inspection under the management regulations of aquatic products instead of terrestrial animal meat products.

3.21. The United States explained that the Food Conservation and Energy Act of 2008 had mandated that catfish be regulated under the Federal Meat Inspection Act. The Agricultural Act of 2014 had made the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) responsible for fish safety and inspection. The United States noted that FSIS was currently working on finalizing the catfish inspection rules, and that trading partners would be notified as soon as these rules were finalized.

3.2.8 US non-acceptance of OIE categorization of India as "negligible country" for BSE - Concerns of India (No. 375)

3.22. India restated its concern that the United States did not accept the OIE categorization of India as a negligible risk country for BSE. India recalled that OIE defined the standards for six diseases including BSE, and that India followed these standards in line with the SPS Agreement. India reminded Members to apply OIE designations instead of conducting their own national assessments, and noted that the United States had chosen to disregard the OIE

designation, which was contrary to accepted international practice among Members. India requested the United States to recognize its official OIE BSE status.

3.23. The United States reiterated its commitment to aligning its import regulations governing BSE with OIE guidelines. The United States had received India's OIE dossier on 18 September 2014, and was currently reviewing India's status, with an opportunity for public comments.

3.2.9 Australia's non-acceptance of OIE categorization of India as "negligible risk country" for BSE - Concerns of India (No. 376)

3.24. India also reiterated its concern regarding Australia's non-acceptance of its OIE categorization as negligible risk country for BSE. India noted that Australia had chosen to implement its own categorization process and voiced concerns about the multiplicity of systems, as well as the risk that national categorization processes would contradict the OIE's categorization. In order to resolve this issue, India requested that Australia accept the OIE categorization.

3.25. Australia offered to conduct meetings in Delhi or at the margin of the ongoing SPS Committee meeting in order to resolve this issue bilaterally. Australia reserved its right to conduct its own risk assessments on the status of India or any other Member, in relation to diseases of biosecurity concern, including BSE, in accordance with its current policies and appropriate level of protection.

3.2.10 General import restrictions due to BSE - Concerns of the European Union (No. 193)

3.26. The European Union reiterated the importance of this concern; SPS measures adopted by Members had to be based on relevant international standards. Unjustifiable trade restrictions relating to BSE were still in place in a number of Members, although OIE standards for safe trade had existed for more than ten years. The European Union welcomed the growing number of WTO Members recognizing the EU control system and the EU Member States' negligible or controlled risk status. The European Union urged all Members to align their BSE requirements with OIE standards. The European Union urged China, the USA and Australia to adjust their BSE requirements fully in line with OIE requirements, and to speed up the approval processes of bovine and beef products from the European Union. Furthermore, China's recent lifting of its ban on live cattle imports from one EU member State only suggested differentiation between identical or similar BSE conditions found in several EU member States. The European Union welcomed Saudi Arabia's recent lifting of restrictions on beef imports from the European Union.

3.27. The European Union raised, for the first time, similar concerns regarding Turkey's import restrictions on beef from the European Union. The European Union had identified in particular testing requirements that were unjustifiable and too trade restrictive. The European Union stated that it was willing to continue to work closely with Turkey to avoid inconsistencies, and to find a quick, comprehensive and practical solution.

3.28. Turkey responded that its bovine import requirements were in line with international rules and that there were no unjustified restrictions on beef imports from the European Union. Importation was allowed from EU member States with negligible BSE risk status.

3.29. China explained that it had taken a cautious approach to BSE measures to protect public health and food safety. In 2014, according to OIE statistics, two BSE cases had occurred in Germany and one in Romania, which had raised doubts that the BSE risk was under control in the region. China had engaged in technical exchanges with the European Union and its member States to solve relevant technical issues. Since the BSE risk status, prevention and control levels were not fully harmonized among EU member States, China had carried out separate risk assessments. China had recently lifted the ban on veal from the Netherlands and had sped up the access approval procedures. Regarding BSE-free countries, China had accelerated relevant beef access procedures by signing a protocol with Latvia and by agreeing on a draft protocol with Hungary. China expressed its willingness to enhance the technical exchanges with the European Union to solve this issue.

3.30. Saudi Arabia thanked the European Union for its comments and co-operation, and emphasized that it would not hesitate to facilitate trade with Members.

3.2.11 India's import conditions for pork and pork products – Concerns of the European Union (No. 358)

3.31. The European Union recalled its concerns regarding India's import requirements for pork and pork products, and noted that it had been requesting India for many years to bring such measures in line with the international standards of the OIE. While according to international standards veterinary authorities should not require any condition to allow trade of "safe commodities", India had imposed trade bans and had never provided any sound scientific justification. The European Union requested that India: (i) require that the exporting country certify freedom only from diseases for which there were OIE standards and not from other diseases; (ii) require treatment of pig meat and recognize curing processes in accordance with relevant Codex Alimentarius standards; (iii) apply the same conditions to non-heat treated processed pig meat, whether imported or produced in India; and (iv) provide a sound scientific justification for diverging from international standards. While India had promised to review its import requirements on multiple occasions, this had not yet led to tangible results. The European Union urged India to respect its obligations under the SPS Agreement, OIE and Codex Alimentarius, and to lift its longstanding barrier to trade immediately.

3.32. Canada echoed the concerns of the European Union and emphasized that India had not provided any scientific rationale for its deviation from international standards. Canada also noted that India required freedom from several animal diseases for which the OIE did not recommend veterinary certification. Canada requested that India provide the Committee with a timeline for publishing revised import conditions for pork and pork products.

3.33. India noted that the sanitary import requirements were being revised and that Members would be informed in due time. India further explained that the mentioned revision was delayed by the recent cases of African swine fever in the European Union.

3.2.12 Turkey's requirements for importation of sheep meat – Concerns of Australia (No. 340)

3.34. Australia reiterated its concerns over Turkey's requirements for sheep meat imports, which it had raised at each Committee meeting since October 2012. Turkey had indicated that it was in the process of aligning its food safety legislation with that of the European Union. In February 2012, Australia had provided Turkey with a draft bilingual sheep meat certificate based on EU requirements, but Turkey had neither acknowledged receipt of the draft certificate nor provided advice on its acceptability. Australia enquired when a response would be provided.

3.35. The United States shared Australia's concern and noted that importing countries should develop science-based standards in a timely manner when certification was required. The United States appreciated Turkey's willingness to work with US authorities to develop new certificates on import requirements, and requested that imports not be disrupted during the process of developing new standards.

3.36. Turkey noted that after bilateral meetings with Australia it had adopted its Law on Veterinary Services, Plant Health, Food and Feed, notified as G/SPS/N/TUR/9. Turkey had also prepared model health certificates for beef, bovine meat, livestock and fishery products aligned with EU standards. Development of a uniform model certificate for other products of animal origin, including sheep and goat meat, was underway. Efforts to determine the appropriate level of protection for imports of sheep and goat meat were also in process. Turkey was committed to resolving this trade concern, but highlighted that the first meeting of the Turkey-Australia agricultural steering committee planned for October 2014 had been delayed due to the heavy schedule of the Australian Minister of Agriculture. Turkey reiterated its openness for dialogue and close co-operation with Australia at different levels.

3.2.13 EU withdrawal of equivalence for processed organic products - Concerns of India (G/SPS/GEN/1354) (No. 374)

3.37. The Secretariat informed Members about inaccuracies in document G/SPS/GEN/1354, which provided information about SPS and TBT notifications on organic products, and on relevant Codex work. These inaccuracies would be corrected and a revised document would be circulated as soon as possible (G/SPS/GEN/1354/Rev.1, dated 7 November 2014).

3.38. India reiterated its concerns with the EU withdrawal of equivalence for processed organic products, which it had previously recognized since 2006. The equivalence agreement with the European Union provided that processed and unprocessed organic food products from India could be exported to the European Union pursuant to certification from the bodies accredited under India's National Programme for Organic Products. In order to expand its exports, India had published guidelines in September 2012 that would permit certain imported ingredients, such as herbs, flavours, additives and colours, to be blended with Indian organic value-added products. These guidelines, which provided that the percentage of imported ingredients would be within the range of 5%, were shared with the European Union, who did not comment. However, EU Regulation No. 125/2013 had removed processed organic products from the equivalence agreement on the grounds that the agreement required all ingredients to be grown in India. India clarified that no processed organic products containing imported ingredients were exported to the European Union since its 2012 guidelines had recently been withdrawn. India requested that the equivalence recognition be restored.

3.39. The United States was looking forward to the revised document and expressed its view that organic products did not fall under the ambit of the SPS Committee.

3.40. The European Union explained that its position that organic production was not covered by the SPS Agreement had not changed. Furthermore, as this concern related to a lack of compliance with rules of origin, the issue had no relation to SPS or food safety requirements. The European Union expressed its willingness to convey India's concerns to the services of the European Commission responsible for organic products. The European Union had contacted the competent authority in India to start a dialogue at technical level.

3.3 Information on resolution of issues in G/SPS/GEN/204/Rev.14

3.41. India thanked the United States and Japan for their co-operation, and reported that two specific trade concerns had been resolved: India's concerns regarding US default MRLs, limits of determination or limits of quantification on basmati rice (STC 328); and concerns regarding Japan's restrictions on shrimp due to anti-oxidant residues (STC 342).

3.42. The United States confirmed that STC 328 had been being resolved. The new tolerance limits had been notified in G/SPS/N/USA/2679 and had already facilitated trade in basmati rice. Japan confirmed that STC 342 was resolved.

4 OPERATION OF TRANSPARENCY PROVISIONS (G/SPS/GEN/804/REV.7)

4.1. The Secretariat recalled that it no longer produced paper copies of the contact lists of National Notification Authorities and National Enquiry Points, but that up to date information was available through the SPS Information Management System (IMS)⁵. Members were encouraged to verify the contact details of their NNAs and NEPs, since there were plans to circulate a questionnaire to these bodies. The Secretariat also drew Members' attention to a guidance document received from the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity relating to minimizing the risk of invasive alien species, available through the CBD website.

4.2. The Secretariat informed Members that the annual transparency overview for the period from 15 September 2013 to 15 September 2014 (GEN/804/Rev.7) highlighted that 152 out of 160 Members had designated SPS Notification authorities - three more than the previous year. During this period, 1,485 notifications had been submitted. The Secretariat found that the number of notifications submitted in 2014 had increased in comparison to the previous review period; the

⁵ <http://spsims.wto.org>.

60-day comment checkbox option was selected in 43% of regular notifications. The number of notifications in the past year indicating existence of an international standard constituted 53% of regular notifications, and out of these, 80% indicated that the measure conformed to the relevant standard. For emergency notifications, these rates were significantly higher, at 91% and 94% respectively. Lastly, the Secretariat noted a growing number of Members using the SPS online system for submitting notifications; 56 Members had requested access to the system, and 31 of these Members had submitted notifications via the SPS NSS. Approximately 50% of all notifications were submitted via the SPS NSS.

4.3. Chile was concerned that in so many notifications no international standard was indicated, and that a majority of regular notifications did not comply with international standards. Moreover, Chile remained concerned that, despite improvements, Members had often not complied with the 60-day comment period, and that extensions of comment periods were not always granted.

5 IMPLEMENTATION OF SPECIAL AND DIFFERENTIAL TREATMENT

5.1. No Member provided any information under this agenda item.

6 EQUIVALENCE - ARTICLE 4

6.1 Information from Members on their experiences

6.1. No Member provided any information under this agenda item.

6.2 Information from relevant observer organizations

6.2. No Observer provided any information under this agenda item.

7 PEST- AND DISEASE-FREE AREAS - ARTICLE 6

7.1 Information from Members on their pest or disease status

7.1.1 Brazil – Eradication of *cydia pomonella* (G/SPS/GEN/1355)

7.1. Brazil announced the eradication of *cydia pomonella* from its territory. Notification hereof was issued by Normative Instruction No.10, published in the Brazilian Official Journal on 8 May 2014. Brazil informed Members that the eradication of *cydia pomonella* was achieved over a ten-year period of coordinated action among the public and private sector, following the relevant IPPC standards. As of 2011, there had been no detection of *cydia pomonella*, and Brazil had implemented actions to maintain this phytosanitary status. Brazil requested that importing Members now remove requirements concerning this pest and allow imports from Brazil.

7.1.2 Uruguay – Sheep compartmentalization system

7.2. Uruguay provided information on its compartmentalization procedure for sheep populations, in accordance with Chapters 4.3 and 4.4 of the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code. Uruguay informed Members that, since 2003, it had been recognized as FMD-free with vaccination. Although vaccination for its sheep population had been suspended since 1988, this neither modified nor suspended its status as FMD-free with vaccination. Uruguay informed the Committee that, in order to facilitate the access of sheep meat on the bone to international markets that possess FMD-free health status, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries had established a programme for the compartmentalization of sheep with the aim of improving sheep production, and requested official recognition from the OIE. Uruguay had provided relevant documentation to the OIE and invited health inspectors from various trading partners to visit its sheep compartments.

7.1.3 Philippines – Rule recognising freedom from Mango Seed Weevil and Mango Pulp Weevil

7.3. The Philippines reported on its final rule recognizing the entire Philippines territory as an area free from Mango Seed Weevil (MSW) and, with the exception of a small island within the Philippine

territory, Mango Pulp Weevil (MPW). In achieving this, the Philippines implemented a 10 month survey across the mango production season, in terms of which 2.6 million fruit was inspected. The results of the survey showed no detection of either MSW or MPW. Moreover, the Philippines was pleased to report to the Committee on the United States' approval of an irradiation dose of 165 Gy as treatment for MPW from the affected island which, when combined with area freedom, had a positive impact on the Philippines' exports of mangoes to the United States, Hawaii, Guam and the Mariana Islands, and would help in securing the Philippines' access to other markets. Lastly, the Philippines thanked the United States for their final rule recognizing an area in the Philippines as free of MPW.

7.2 Information from Members on their experiences in recognition of pest- or disease-free areas

7.4. Chile raised concerns regarding the underutilization of the guidelines relating to recognition of pest and disease-free areas (G/SPS/48) and equivalence (G/SPS/19/Rev.2). The Committee had worked hard on these decisions, and it would be good to hear about their application, particularly in relation to recognition of a country's particular pest- or disease status. Chile noted that specific trade concerns were proof that Members did not always accept international recognition of a country's particular disease status. Chile requested more consistency from Members in their recognition of international pest and disease statuses.

7.5. The Secretariat encouraged Members to provide information on their experiences in requesting the recognition of pest- or disease-free areas, in accordance with the Committee's decision on the recognition of pest- disease-free areas (G/SPS/48). Some of the information reported under earlier agenda items referred to such recognition, and it would be helpful if Members who had recognized such areas would confirm that this was the case.

7.3 Information from relevant Observer Organizations

7.6. No Observer provided any information under this agenda item.

8 TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND COOPERATION

8.1 Information from the Secretariat

8.1.1 WTO SPS activities

8.1. The Secretariat recalled that documents G/SPS/GEN/997/Rev.4 and G/SPS/GEN/997/Rev.4/Add.1 provided an overview of the planned technical assistance and training activities for 2014. Since the last Committee meeting, technical assistance on the SPS Agreement had been provided through five national activities held in Tanzania, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Sri Lanka, El Salvador and Ecuador. A regional SPS workshop for Central and Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus had been held in Vienna. More general training on the SPS Agreement had been provided through (i) an Academic Support University Programme for Colombia; (ii) a Training Seminar on the SPS-IMS and SPS-NSS for trainees in the Netherlands Internship Programme; (iii) WTO Advanced Trade Policy courses (in both English and Spanish); (iv) WTO Regional Trade Policy Course for Asia and the Pacific (held in India), Latin America (held in Ecuador), Central and Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus (held in Turkey); (v) a Training Programme organized by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency for Middle East and North African countries, held in Sweden; and (vi) a WTO/STDF side event held in the margins of the July 2014 Codex Alimentarius Commission meeting.

8.2. Upcoming Geneva-based activities included regional workshops for the Pacific region, in Samoa; and for Latin America, in Uruguay, both to be held in November. National seminars would be held in Saudi Arabia and Belarus before the end of the year; additional national seminars for Azerbaijan, Egypt, Honduras, Gambia, Mexico, Myanmar, Sudan, and Trinidad and Tobago were currently being scheduled. More general training on the SPS Agreement would also be provided in (i) a Regional Trade Policy Course for Arab countries, to be held in Oman (November); (ii) a WTO Workshop on Trade and Public Health, to be held in Geneva (November); (iii) a Training Programme organized by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency for African countries, held in Sweden (19-21 November); and (iv) an AU-IBAR workshop to be held in Kenya

(1-4 December). In addition, an E-Learning course on the SPS Agreement was available in English, French and Spanish throughout the year.

8.3. The Secretariat also drew attention to the 2014 Advanced Course that was currently underway, in Spanish. It was the tenth consecutive year that this course had been offered, and 24 officials from developing and least-developed countries had been selected to participate. This was a unique activity since it not only focused on transmitting knowledge on the SPS Agreement and the SPS Committee, but also on identifying actions to address specific implementation challenges and opportunities at the national level. Throughout the course, each participant developed an action plan, to be implemented upon their return to their countries. This implementation was monitored by coaches, and through a follow-up session about nine months after the course.

8.4. El Salvador and St. Vincent and the Grenadines thanked the Secretariat for the training activities held in their countries.

8.1.2 Report on Workshop on Risk Analysis

8.5. The Secretariat noted that the Workshop on Risk Analysis (held on 13 and 14 October 2014) had been attended by delegates and non-governmental participants, as well as by 48 sponsored participants selected from developing and least developed countries. The WTO Global Trust Fund covered the travel costs for these participants and for many of the speakers. In addition, the Inter-American Institute for Co-operation on Agriculture (IICA) had co-funded the participation of nine Caribbean participants in this Workshop. The primary objective of the Workshop had been to bring together officials responsible for implementing the SPS Agreement for a technical, in-depth discussion of decision-making and communication during the risk analysis process.

8.6. Session 1 had set the framework for the subsequent presentations, focusing on the risk assessment provisions (Article 5) of the SPS Agreement and the important interpretations from the outcomes of WTO dispute settlement cases. Speakers in Session 2 had dealt with current and evolving practices in undertaking risk assessments, as well as some of the challenges in dealing with uncertainty, data availability and qualitative vs. quantitative risk assessments. In Session 3, the IPPC and WHO had presented on the procedures and guidelines used by those bodies in performing risk analysis. Unfortunately, the OIE had not been able to be present at the workshop. Practical experiences in managing risk had been presented by developed and developing country speakers in Session 4. The International Livestock Research Institute and IICA had presented information on research and capacity-building activities in Africa and in the Americas respectively, as well as the tools available to assist in the risk analysis area, in Session 5. The issue of resource constraints and finding resources to undertake risk assessments had been covered in Session 6. The session had included some useful examples and suggestions on leveraging resources for risk assessments, as well as experiences in using new ways to meet the WTO obligation in relation to risk assessment, such as the use of risk assessments drafted by parties other than the importing country. The challenges of communicating risk to various stakeholders had been discussed in Session 7, where practical experiences highlighted the importance of targeting specific messages to various stakeholders, the timing of these messages, how to communicate uncertainty and the use of new communication tools, such as smartphone applications, in disseminating information.

8.7. In summarizing the key outcomes of the various workshop sessions in Session 8, speakers had highlighted the rapidly evolving nature of the risk analysis area, indicating that while significant progress had been made, there still remained resource challenges, data-sourcing issues, communication challenges and issues with the prioritization of the many demands. In addition, an open discussion had touched on several aspects of risk analysis in the SPS area – key among which was the reminder that, according to the SPS Agreement, the importing Member had the legal obligation to ensure that its measures were based on a risk assessment. A detailed report on the workshop would be prepared, and all presentations would be posted on the SPS gateway page.⁶ Delayed streaming of the workshop had been possible through the partnership with IICA, who made available its streaming platform. The Secretariat announced that it would be possible to listen to the Workshop and watch video clips on demand via web links to be made available through the SPS gateway.

⁶ G/SPS/R/77 (forthcoming); <http://www.wto.org/sps>.

8.8. The United States expressed its satisfaction with the level of interest and participation in the risk analysis workshop and noted that the discussions and presentations had touched upon (i) challenges Members faced in aligning their legislative and regulatory frameworks with their WTO risk assessment obligations; (ii) increasing opportunities for Members to exchange data and information on risk analyses; and (iii) exploring whether Members could benefit from hearing about each other's experiences in addressing issues related to risk assessment, risk management and risk communication. The United States advised Members to follow the evolving approaches towards risk assessment and risk communication, and noted its willingness to work with other Members to explore additional activities that the Committee could undertake in this regard.

8.9. South Africa voiced its satisfaction with the risk analysis workshop, particularly in relation to the level of participation and engagement among Members, as well as the quality of the presentations. Like the United States, South Africa noted a number of issues arising from the workshop that could be taken up in future discussions.

8.10. Belize noted the balanced representation of developed and developing country speakers at the Workshop. Belize appreciated the opportunity to share its risk analysis experiences. Similarly, the Philippines also thanked the Secretariat and indicated its interest in future workshops on risk assessment.

8.1.3 STDF

8.11. The STDF Secretariat reported on the most recent activities of the STDF since the last SPS Committee meeting in July 2014 (G/SPS/GEN/1357). The STDF informed Members of its continued work on the implementation of SPS measures to facilitate safe trade. It encompassed regional research in selected countries in Southern Africa and East Asia, focusing on how SPS measures were implemented for selected agri-food products based on the relevant provisions of the SPS Agreement (notably Article 8 and Annex C). The STDF indicated that this work could also provide timely inputs towards the inclusion of SPS-related components in broader trade facilitation programmes. The STDF also informed Members that the regional research in Asia was completed, and the final report had been distributed to STDF Working Group members. The STDF indicated that the findings from the report on Asian countries would be discussed at the STDF Working Group meeting in October 2014.

8.12. The STDF further reported that, based on successful past collaborations, the STDF and the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) were preparing a joint study analyzing the coverage of SPS issues in Diagnostic Trade Integration Studies (DTIS) and identifying good practice for future studies and their implementation. Following a preliminary review of all DTIS reports, Cambodia, Tanzania and Senegal had been selected for field studies, whilst an additional 20 DTIS reports were selected for desk review. The STDF also informed the Committee that the results of the field work in Cambodia would be discussed with STDF Members during the course of the STDF Working Group meeting in October 2014. A total of 63 project preparation grants and 68 projects had been approved and funded by the STDF since its inception. The STDF noted that the next deadline to receive applications was 26 December 2014, and that new applications would be considered at the next STDF Working Group meeting. Lastly, the STDF Secretariat reported on the new STDF website, launched in August 2014, available in English, French and Spanish. The new website allowed the STDF Secretariat to publish, modify and edit content, and provided an upgraded version of the STDF virtual library.

8.13. The Philippines provided information on changes to its regulatory agencies' import and export control procedures. The STDF study on facilitating safe trade carried out in the Philippines had offered further recommendations and best practices to enhance the measures already in place, promoting the necessary attitude change among key players in this sector, with the objective of reducing costs and maintaining food safety standards. The Philippines informed Members that the project's next steps would be discussed at the STDF Working Group meeting in October 2014.

8.14. Thailand thanked the STDF for its assistance in implementing a project focusing on SPS-related trade facilitation within Thailand. Thailand had some comments on the final comparison report for Asian countries, which it would make available to the STDF before the final publication of the report.

8.15. Laos indicated that the STDF project on the implementation of SPS measures to facilitate safe trade had underscored that trade development would contribute to generating income and reducing poverty. Laos informed the Committee that the project, which was managed by the World Bank, provided assistance for improving SPS regulations, legislation, and border control measures with the aim of increasing health protection and minimizing cross-border transaction costs in Laos. Laos informed the Committee that the project was currently undergoing a public consultation period, and announced further progress updates in the future.

8.16. IGAD highlighted that, through its regional technical centre, it supported eight member states in trans-border disease control, SPS-related issues, and trade enhancement. In particular, IGAD informed the Committee of its focus on East African interregional livestock trade and livestock trade with the Middle East. IGAD enquired about the STDF's selection process for countries and projects, and noted that the current projects focused primarily on East Asian and Southern African countries. IGAD requested consideration of its members for future STDF projects and indicated its interest in collaborating with the STDF. The STDF secretariat explained that country selection within Africa and East Asia had been based on expressions of interest in this work. The Secretariat indicated its interest in discussing this issue further with IGAD.

8.2 Information from Members

8.2.1 Technical assistance to developing countries provided by Russia

8.17. The Russian Federation informed Members of its status as a donor country to FAO, WHO, the United Nations as well as the Three Sisters, in addition to providing technical assistance to more than ten developing countries within the Eurasian region. Russia reported that this technical assistance was provided in the fields of food safety and animal and plant health, with the objective of fostering a clear understanding of the key SPS provisions in international and bilateral trade agreements within the Eurasian region. Assistance provided included capacity building, workshops, mentorship programmes, and training of specialists in an effort to provide for transparent and predictable access for Russian exports. These efforts also increased developing countries' capacities to access the benefits of increased agricultural trade with Russia and to understand the Russian SPS regulatory system. Russia highlighted that many of its technical assistance activities were provided in collaboration with a number of Russian government agencies, including the Ministries of Agriculture and Economic Development. The Russian Federation invited any interested country requiring SPS-related technical assistance to contact the competent Russian authorities.

8.2.2 Belize

8.18. Belize provided information on technical assistance received (G/SPS/GEN/1373). Belize expressed gratitude to IICA for a twinning mechanism between the national Codex committees of Belize and Costa Rica, which included visits between officials of both countries in order to facilitate Belize's hosting of a National Codex Alimentarius workshop. Belize informed Members that the objectives of this twinning programme included: (i) strengthening the management capacities of Belize's contact point; (ii) identifying strategies and practices that would help improve Belize's participation in Codex; and (iii) strengthening internal management to enhance sustainability, participation and science-based decision making. Belize also expressed gratitude towards the European Union for the EDES Programme, which aimed to strengthen food safety systems among the ACP countries. Following a mission in June 2014, an action plan had been established to verify the status of the Belize food safety system.

8.19. Indonesia thanked New Zealand for providing technical assistance. Through a strategic framework lasting from 2012 until 2016, New Zealand would provide assistance on agricultural and SPS-related development issues.

8.3 Information from observers

8.20. IICA reported on its technical assistance activities (G/SPS/GEN/1359), which included supporting the participation of 17 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean in the Codex Commission. IICA also supported the participation of 20 countries in a Codex colloquium held in August 2014 in Chile, where discussions had centered on food hygiene, labelling, and inspection and certification. Similarly, together with the IPPC secretariat, a regional workshop on

phytosanitary standards had been held in September 2014 at which proposed phytosanitary standards had been discussed. Work currently underway in the Caribbean under the 10th European Development Fund included harmonization in the areas of animal and plant health and food safety, training and good practices for the public and private sectors, and modernization of services.

8.21. The African Union (AU) reported on its SPS-related activities (G/SPS/GEN/1363). In particular, during its August 2014 meeting, the African Union Commission (AUC) SPS cluster had discussed the implementation of AU SPS programmes and a strategy to enhance SPS compliance through a value-chain approach. The proposed strategy would also facilitate continental consultations for building common positions on SPS standards and structures at regional and national levels. The AU provided information on its African commodities strategy, which would review the state of play of agriculture, mining and energy commodities in Africa and identify national, regional and continental policies. The AUC has also organized training workshops on marketing and compliance of organic agricultural products for the SADC region in Zambia and Botswana. The Interafrican Phytosanitary Council had organized two continental meetings to enhance the capacity of African NPPOs in building common positions, and to review the draft international standards for phytosanitary measures and specifications of the IPPC.

8.22. SADC provided information about a regional workshop on SPS information management for National Enquiry Points and National Notification Authorities in Tanzania held in August 2014, which focused on enhancing the implementation of transparency obligations in the SPS Agreement. The workshop, in which 45 delegates had participated, had been supported by the European Union through the regional economic integration support programme. The workshop had also been attended by regional experts from Botswana, South Africa, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. SADC also received support from FAO for a technical cooperation programme on the management of fruit flies in Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

8.23. The Chairperson drew Members' attention to a report from OIRSA contained in G/SPS/GEN/1367, and a report from ITC circulated in document G/SPS/GEN/1369.

9 REVIEW OF THE OPERATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SPS AGREEMENT

9.1 Fourth Review

9.1.1 Report of the Informal Meeting

9.1. The Chairperson reported on the informal meeting on the Fourth Review of the Operation and Implementation of the SPS Agreement held on 15 October 2014. At the informal meeting, two points had been discussed: (i) the revised draft report of the Fourth Review; and (ii) outstanding proposals related to the Review. The Chairperson had reminded Members that, according to the agreed timetable, the goal had been to adopt the report of the Fourth Review at the current meeting of the Committee.

9.2. First, the Committee had taken up the revised draft report of the Fourth Review. Following the timetable adopted by the Committee, the Secretariat had circulated the revised draft report (G/SPS/W/280/Rev.1) on 18 September 2014, incorporating comments that had been received from several Members since the July meeting, as well as more recent information.

9.3. The Secretariat had highlighted the relevant sections affected by changes resulting from comments received from Argentina, Canada, China and the European Union, as well as from the inclusion of the latest developments in the work of the Committee.

9.4. The Chairperson had proposed that the language of the report be reviewed section-by-section, with a particular focus on the recommendations. The Secretariat had suggested that specific language be included in certain recommendations, to reflect the fact that the Committee had previously decided to undertake reviews of several of its decisions as part of the periodic reviews of the SPS Agreement. As these decisions related to the implementation of the Agreement, considering them in the context of the four-year reviews avoided confusion.

9.5. Some Members had expressed concerns with overloading the reviews while others had suggested that the specific time periods for reviewing certain decisions had been part of the

consensus for their adoption. The additional recommendations suggested by the Secretariat would be added in the next revision of the draft report of the Fourth Review, with the inclusion of information regarding previous agreements to conduct the reviews of each individual decision as part of the four-year reviews of the SPS Agreement. Furthermore, Members had agreed on changes to the sections on transparency and technical assistance.

9.6. However, the Committee had not reached consensus on two specific recommendations. These were (i) the fourth recommendation under the transparency section; and (ii) the second recommendation under the SPS-related private standards section.

9.7. The Chairperson had proposed that the Secretariat circulate a further revision of the draft report, reflecting the changes agreed upon by Members and updating figures in the report. She had invited Members to submit comments on the new revision of the document in writing by the end of the year, for discussion and hopefully for adoption at the Committee's next meeting in March 2015.

9.8. Next, the Committee had discussed the outstanding proposals submitted in the context of the Fourth Review. Canada had presented its revised joint proposal with Kenya on a catalogue of instruments available to WTO Members to manage SPS issues (G/SPS/W/279/Rev.1), which incorporated comments received by Members since our last meeting in July. In particular, useful inputs from the European Union had been taken into consideration. The instruments were now grouped by thematic areas in a progressive manner starting from bilateral contacts up to the use of the WTO dispute settlement mechanism. Kenya had highlighted that the Catalogue regrouped all instruments available with their corresponding document references. It also referred to the work of the Three Sisters, which were invited to submit comments.

9.9. Several Members had highlighted the usefulness of such a compendium of instruments available to address SPS-related trade issues, and had expressed their interest in reviewing it before its adoption. The Secretariat had clarified that once adopted it would become a reference document endorsed by the Committee in the series G/SPS/#.

9.10. The Chairperson had suggested that comments on the catalogue of instruments be submitted by 28 November 2014, and had invited Canada and Kenya to prepare a revision of the document, if needed, by 20 February 2015, for endorsement at the March 2015 meeting.

9.11. The second document under discussion, on transparency, was a joint proposal submitted by the European Union, Chile, Morocco and Norway (G/SPS/W/278). The European Union had thanked Argentina, Canada, China, India and the United States for their comments. The proponents had noted that there seemed to be a general agreement on the importance of the transparency provisions and the need to improve their implementation before considering a revision of the current Recommended Transparency Procedures as contained in G/SPS/7/Rev.3. The objective of the proposal was not to increase the administrative burden, in particular for developing or least developed countries, but rather to improve the quality and completeness of notifications. The proponents were open to considering alternative approaches on how to move forward with this issue, in particular in preparation of the October 2015 transparency workshop.

9.12. Several Members, including those who had submitted written comments, had re-iterated their concerns about changing the notification formats and the Recommended Transparency Procedures without first undertaking a diagnosis of the needs and difficulties of Members. Changing the formats and procedures could be a long and resource-consuming process.

9.13. The Secretariat had suggested that such a diagnosis could be carried out through a questionnaire, similarly to what had been done for past transparency workshops. It was also possible that some of the problems encountered by Members could be addressed within an on-going project that aimed to improve and modernize the SPS IMS and NSS applications.

9.14. There had been no objections to this proposal and, in closing the informal meeting, the Chairperson had suggested inviting Members to submit suggested questions for inclusion in the questionnaire by 28 November 2014.

9.15. The Chairperson noted that it had been clear at the informal meeting that the Committee would not be in a position to finalize the Fourth Review at its October 2014 meeting, and reiterated the suggestion that the Secretariat prepare a revision of the draft report to reflect all the changes agreed upon at the informal meeting. The Chairperson requested that the Secretariat suggest creative new wording for the two recommendations on which no consensus was reached, and invited Members to submit comments on the next revision to the Secretariat in writing before the end of the year, to be discussed at an informal meeting prior to the next Committee meeting in March 2015.

9.16. The Chairperson also recalled that some Members had indicated that they needed more time to consider the joint submission by Canada and Kenya on a Catalogue of Instruments Available to WTO Members to Manage SPS Issues (G/SPS/W/279/Rev.1). She reiterated her suggestion that Members submit their comments by 28 November 2014, and that Canada and Kenya prepare a revision of the documented, if needed, by 20 February 2015, for endorsement at the meeting in March 2015.

9.17. The Chairperson requested that the Secretariat develop a questionnaire to assess Members' needs and difficulties faced in the implementation of the transparency provisions of the SPS Agreement. To help the Secretariat, the Chairperson encouraged interested Members to submit suggested questions for inclusion in the questionnaire by 28 November 2014. The Secretariat would then circulate the questionnaire to Enquiry Points and National Notification Authorities, and report on the responses received at the meeting in March 2015.

10 MONITORING OF THE USE OF INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

10.1 New Issues

10.1. No Member raised any new issues under this agenda item.

10.2 Issues previously raised

10.2. No Member raised any issues under this agenda item.

11 CONCERNS WITH PRIVATE AND COMMERCIAL STANDARDS

11.1 Report of the Informal Meeting

11.1. The Chairperson reported on the informal meeting on SPS-related private standards held on 16 October 2014. At the informal meeting, the Chairperson had recalled that the Committee had agreed to develop a working definition of SPS-related private standards in order to set the framework for its discussions. Agreed Action 1 (G/SPS/55) did not propose a legal definition, but merely sought a framework to limit the scope of issues considered by the Committee.

11.2. The Chairperson had also reminded the Committee that, as stated in paragraph 4 of G/SPS/55, endorsement of the adopted actions had been without prejudice to the views of Members regarding the scope of the SPS Agreement.

11.3. Regarding the proposed working definition of an SPS-related private standard, the Chairperson had recalled that in July, the Committee had agreed that Members would submit by 5 September 2014 any comments they had on the draft definition in G/SPS/W/276 and regarding elements of other existing definitions in document G/SPS/GEN/1334/Rev.1 that could be incorporated into the co-stewards definition. It had also been agreed that the electronic working group (e-WG) would circulate its report on a compromise working definition to the Committee by the end of September, for consideration at the present meeting.

11.4. The co-stewards had circulated a report on the work of the e-WG in document G/SPS/W/281, dated 30 September 2014. As the co-stewards had not been able to consult the e-WG on the latest revision of the definition, they had put forward a revised draft working definition of an SPS-related private standard on their own responsibility.

11.5. The Chairperson had noted that the co-stewards had organized a meeting of the e-WG on Tuesday 14 October 2014, which had provided a useful opportunity to discuss the rationale behind the co-stewards proposed definition, and had helped further narrow the differences amongst e-WG members.

11.6. The Chairperson had acknowledged the leadership and constructive approach shown by China and New Zealand as co-stewards, and the considerable effort invested, in their personal capacity, into coming up with compromise language for a working definition. She had also thanked all of the members of the e-WG: Argentina, Australia, Belize, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Canada, China, the European Union, Japan, Singapore and the United States, for their engagement.

11.7. The co-stewards had introduced their report on the work of the e-WG, and had presented the proposed working definition of an SPS-related private standard contained therein. They had explained their consideration of the comments and suggestions submitted by e-WG members and Cuba, and had detailed the rationale in developing the draft definition contained in G/SPS/W/281.

11.8. The co-stewards had also reported on the e-WG meeting of 14 October 2014 and had referred to a room document circulated at that meeting with two options for the working definition. While the proposed definition was the same, one version had incorporated a disclaimer as part of the text of the Decision, and the other as a footnote.

11.9. The proposed text had been:

The working definition of an SPS-related private standard is: "An SPS-related private standard is a written requirement or condition, or a set of written requirements or conditions, related to food safety, or animal or plant life or health that may be used in commercial transactions and that is applied by a non-governmental entity that is not exercising governmental authority".

The proposed disclaimer, whether a footnote or in the text of the decision was: "This working definition is without prejudice to the rights and obligations of Members, or the views of Members on the scope of the WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures".

11.10. The co-stewards had reported that it had been clarified during the e-WG meeting that, in the WTO context, there appeared to be no difference, in terms of legal weight or legal value, if the text was in a footnote attached to the main decision text or if it was rather located in the main body of the decision itself.

11.11. It had been also noted that "working definition" had yet to be interpreted in WTO jurisprudence and that the term "working definition" related to work for a specific purpose, and would be a definition used for the work of the SPS Committee, designed to limit discussions to SPS-related private standards only.

11.12. The co-stewards had reported that some e-WG members had sought further clarifications and had signaled either support for, or some outstanding concerns with, the co-stewards proposed textual options. Several had indicated their need to revert to their capital before taking any formal decision.

11.13. The co-stewards had concluded their report by noting that the information discussed at the meeting had been forwarded to the e-WG and that they hoped that e-WG members would revert to the co-stewards, within a timeline to be agreed, so that discussions on a working definition could be successfully concluded by the March 2015 meeting of the Committee.

11.14. Following the co-stewards' reports, various Members had taken the floor to thank China and New Zealand for their leadership, and had stressed the need for the Committee to adopt a working definition of SPS-related private standards. Some Members had indicated their readiness to support the co-stewards' proposed working definition, with one Member stating its specific preference for one of the proposed options, and another Member suggesting a textual revision.

However, other Members had noted that they still had particular concerns with the suggested language and that more work was needed to reach a consensus on the co-stewards definition.

11.15. The Committee had agreed to give the co-stewards and the e-WG more time to pursue their efforts in trying to bridge differences and come up with a compromise working definition that could be presented for consideration and adoption by the Committee as soon as possible.

11.16. Regarding the implementation of Actions 2 to 5, under Action 2, Chile had referred to the OIE's continued cooperation with private standard-setting bodies to ensure that their standards were aligned with OIE standards. The OIE, and in particular Codex, should increase the participation of private standard-setting bodies as observers in their standard-setting processes. The collaboration of the Three Sisters with private standards-setting bodies would help improve private standard-setting bodies' credibility with regards to transparency and a science-based approach, and would also help improve the implementation of official science-based food safety and other standards.

11.17. Under Action 3, the Secretariat had noted that there had not been any recent relevant developments in other WTO fora, but that it would continue to liaise with the TBT and Trade and Environment Committees, and report back any relevant work.

11.18. Under Action 5, New Zealand had highlighted the importance of the word "explore", and sought an update on the implementation of this action. The Secretariat had noted that international standards were at the center of SPS training activities, such as regional seminars undertaken with the participation of Codex, IPPC and OIE. The Secretariat had recalled that one of the most valuable materials it used was the STDF film on Trading Safely, which showed the importance of standards in gaining or re-entering markets. The Secretariat had also noted that Codex had developed brochures, as well as a promotional video in the context of its 50th anniversary, on the role Codex standards could play in ensuring the trade of safe food. While both financial and human resources were limited, dissemination efforts would continue.

11.19. Regarding the implementation of proposed Actions 6 to 12, Belize, supported by Brazil, had indicated that it continued to support the establishment of a working group that could further work on actions 6 to 12. Belize had also noted specific linkages between some of the proposed actions identified in G/SPS/W/256 and had referred to its earlier submissions in that regard.

11.20. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines had noted the changing nature of private standards and of the concerns relating to them, and that actions 6 to 12 should be kept on the Committee's agenda. The United States had noted that there was no consensus on Actions 6 to 12 and that the Committee should focus its time and effort in agreeing on a working definition of SPS-related private standards.

11.21. Regarding other information on SPS-related private standards, Belize had referred to its document G/SPS/GEN/1240, which flagged the proliferation of SPS-related private standards and noted that access requirements applied by SPS-related private standard-setting bodies went beyond, and undermined the relevance of, national and international standards.

11.22. At a recent Belize Food Safety Department workshop on Good Agricultural Practices, the private sector had shared a variety of concerns related to market access and which challenged their financial viability. Those concerns related to: the increasing costs associated with certification; the difficulties with different schemes with conflicting requirements, and the increasing number of audits. Belize had noted that the private sector had also questioned the relevance of national food safety authorities, as a number of specific examples showed that official requirements were not the basis for market access.

11.23. Belize had registered its concern regarding the evolution in food safety certification requirements, as governments were responsible for setting SPS measures, with guidance from international standards. Belize had noted that a country's appropriate level of protection should not be set by the private sector, and stressed that the SPS Committee had a vital role to play in addressing the issues related to private standards and their impact on international trade.

12 OBSERVERS

12.1 Information from observer organizations

12.1. GSO provided a report on relevant activities (G/SPS/GEN/1360). As a non-profit organization, GSO was an umbrella for the Gulf Co-operation Council's work on standards, metrology, conformity assessment and accreditation. GSO informed Members that, through its technical committees and working groups, GSO developed standards and technical regulations that were based on international standards, and sought to address consumer and environmental protection, industry (import and export) requirements and health requirements. To date, GSO had issued more than 1200 standards and technical regulations in the food and agriculture sector alone, and its member states actively submitted notifications to the SPS Committee. GSO also provided information on the working group for halaal food, which established technical regulations and guidelines for halaal food certification bodies.

12.2. ITC provided information on various projects implemented since April 2014 (G/SPS/GEN/1369). In the Gambia, an EIF project focused on improving the exports of groundnuts, cashew nuts and sesame through the implementing HACCP procedures in selected enterprises, reducing the presence of aflatoxins in groundnuts, and enhancing the local capacities in the area of food safety. In Nigeria, ITC supervised STDF projects implemented by the Nigerian Export Promotion Council aimed at improving compliance with SPS measures for shea butter and sesame. In Sri Lanka, ITC provided assistance to improve the safety and quality of fruits and vegetables, training officers from the Department of Agriculture and assessing laboratory testing capacities within the agricultural sector. In Fiji, ITC continued to provide assistance to improve key services for non-sugar agriculture. A second programme, in collaboration with the European Union, focused on the livestock sector. In Zimbabwe, an EU funded programme focused on trade and private sector development in the form of (i) capacity building of conformity assessment services for pesticide residue testing, and (ii) an assessment of laboratory testing for aflatoxin, pesticide residues and vitamins. ITC also provided information on a High Level Regional Round Table discussion on non-tariff measures ("NTM") hindering trade within the Arab region, held in Tunis in April 2014, ITC presentations at the WTO Advanced Course on the SPS Agreement in October 2014; and new NTM surveys in Bangladesh and the Philippines, which aimed to increase transparency and promote an understanding of NTMs in order to facilitate long-term trade.

12.3. IGAD reported on its SPS-related projects, including (i) livestock projects, supported by the African Union; (ii) SPS standard-setting projects, undertaken in conjunction with the European Union; and (iii) the regional SPS committee meeting scheduled for November. IGAD also highlighted its role in establishing a national SPS committee in South Sudan, and informed Members of its ongoing efforts to provide technical assistance, training on compliance, and sharing of good practices with its member states.

12.4. SADC notified the Committee of its participation in a trilateral workshop on food safety exports systems held in September 2014 in South Africa. Sponsored by New Zealand and South Africa, the workshop focused on enhancing regional and international trade in food and agricultural products by addressing challenges facing the region. It had been attended by regulatory and industry representatives from 15 SADC member states. SADC also notified the Committee of its participation in the inaugural meeting for the continental working group, held in August 2014 in South Africa, which focused on mainstreaming SPS matters in the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) framework.

12.5. The Chairperson thanked all the organizations that had provided useful information to the Committee under this and other agenda items, and encouraged them to submit their reports in writing in advance of the March 2015 meeting to permit delegates to carefully read them before the meeting.

12.2 Requests for observer status

12.2.1 New Requests

12.6. There were no new requests received by the Secretariat.

12.2.2 Outstanding Requests

12.7. The Chairperson proposed that, as had been done the previous year, the SPS Committee invite the organizations with ad hoc observer status to participate in all SPS Committee meetings in 2015 - with the exception of any closed meeting - unless any Member objected to the participation of any of these observers in advance of a meeting. It was so agreed.

12.8. The Secretariat informed Members that five organizations with ad hoc observer status had not attended a single Committee meeting in 2014: the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD); the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS); the European Free Trade Association (EFTA); the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD); and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU). The Chairperson requested the Secretariat to contact these organizations to seek information regarding their continuing interest to participate as observers in the SPS Committee.

12.9. The Chairperson noted that there was still no consensus on the six outstanding requests for observer status from the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); CABI International; the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES); the Organisation Internationale de la Vigne et du Vin (OIV); the Asian and Pacific Coconut Community (APCC); and the International Cocoa Organization (ICCO).

12.10. The Chairperson informed the observer organizations that their contributions to the work of the SPS Committee and their assistance to Members were highly appreciated and the Committee looked forward to their continued participation in all unrestricted meetings during 2015. The Chairperson once again encouraged the observers to provide written reports on their relevant activities in advance of the March 2015 meeting.

13 CHAIRPERSON'S ANNUAL REPORT TO CTG

13.1. The Chairperson noted that she would make a factual annual report, under her own responsibility, on the activities of the Committee for consideration by the Council for Trade in Goods (CTG) in mid-November. Members could request a draft report from the Secretariat, and provide comments by 29 October 2014.

14 OTHER BUSINESS

14.1. No Member provided information under this agenda item.

15 DATE AND AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETINGS

15.1. The next meeting of the Committee was tentatively scheduled for 25 and 26 March 2015, with informal meetings on 24 March 2015.

15.2. The Committee agreed to the following tentative agenda for its March 2015 meeting:

1. Adoption of the agenda
2. Information on relevant activities
 - a. Information from Members
 - b. Information from the relevant SPS standard-setting bodies
3. Specific trade concerns
 - a. New issues
 - b. Issues previously raised
 - [c. Consideration of specific notifications received]
 - d. Information on resolution of issues in G/SPS/GEN/204/Rev.15
4. Operation of transparency provisions
5. Implementation of special and differential treatment
6. Equivalence – Article 4

- a. Information from Members on their experiences
 - b. Information from relevant Observer organizations
7. Pest- and Disease-free areas – Article 6
- a. Information from Members on their pest or disease status
 - b. Information from Members on their experiences in recognition of pest- or disease-free areas
 - c. Information from relevant Observer organizations
8. Technical assistance and cooperation
- a. Information from the Secretariat
 - i. WTO SPS activities
 - ii. STDF
 - b. Information from Members
 - c. Information from Observer organizations
9. Review of the Operation and Implementation of the SPS Agreement
- a. Fourth Review
 - i. Report of the informal meeting
 - ii. Adoption of Report of Fourth Review
10. Monitoring of the use of international standards
- a. New issues
 - b. Issues previously raised
11. Concerns with private and commercial standards
- a. Report on informal meeting
12. Observers
- a. Information from Observer organizations
 - b. Request for observer status
 - i. New requests
 - ii. Outstanding requests
13. Election of the Chairperson
14. Other business
15. Date and agenda of next meeting
- 15.3. Members were asked to take note of the following deadlines:
- For comments or suggestions on the draft annual report of the Committee: **29 October 2014**;
 - For comments on the Catalogue of Instruments (G/SPS/W/279/Rev.1), and for submission of suggested questions for the transparency questionnaire to be prepared by the Secretariat: **28 November 2014**;
 - For comments on the Revised Report of the Fourth Review (G/SPS/W/280/Rev.2): **the end of 2014**;
 - For identifying new issues for consideration under the monitoring procedure, and for requesting that items be put on the agenda: **Thursday, 12 March 2015**;
 - For the distribution of the Airgram, and for circulation of documents for the March meeting: **13 March 2015**.
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