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Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

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**STRENGTHENING NATIONAL SPS COMMITTEES TO ENHANCE COORDINATION AT THE
NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS**

RECOMMENDATION FOR A WORKSHOP OR THEMATIC SESSION

SUBMISSION BY BENIN, BURKINA FASO, BURUNDI, THE GAMBIA, GHANA,
KENYA, MADAGASCAR, MOROCCO, NIGERIA, THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND ZAMBIA

The following submission, dated 18 May 2018, is being circulated at the request of Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, the Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Morocco, Nigeria, the United States of America and Zambia.

1. Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, the Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Morocco, Nigeria, the United States and Zambia note the importance of National SPS Committees (NSCs) in ensuring effective implementation and operation of the SPS Agreement across agencies responsible for SPS matters at the national level. NSCs are also a vital forum for Members to develop and advance national SPS strategies to prevent and resolve trade barriers to their exports, as well as to improve human, animal and plant health. The success of such SPS strategies depends largely on effective coordination and engagement of the NSCs across multiple regional and international organizations, including regional trade arrangements such as the East African Community, Economic Community of West African States, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, the African Union, etc., as well as international bodies such as Codex, IPPC, the OIE, and, of course, the WTO SPS Committee. Such coordination and engagement can be challenging, particularly for Members with constrained resources and capacity.

2. We believe that the efficient organization and functioning of NSCs is essential in enabling greater and more productive coordination at all levels of engagement in order to achieve the goals of food security, increased trade and income growth. We understand that most Members have established NSCs, and many of these NSCs are instrumental in developing positions prior to WTO SPS Committee meetings. We also note some of these positions are building blocks in reaching consensus at the regional level, as well as building strategies for engagement at the regional and international levels. The proposed workshop or thematic session could be used for Members to share the following:

- **The mechanism for establishment and composition of NSCs:** Are NSCs established in more formal mechanisms such as legislation or regulations, or are they established through non-legislative approaches, such as inter-ministerial memorandum of understandings or inter-ministerial consensus terms of references? What are the advantages and disadvantages of these mechanisms? How are the roles and responsibilities distributed across agencies and what are frequencies of meetings? How are agendas of the NSCs meetings developed?
- **The role of the private sector in advising or providing input to NSCs:** Do NSCs rely on formal and informal procedures or mechanisms for advice and input into the development and implementation of national SPS policies, strategies and positions? If so, what are these mechanisms and procedures and how do they work?

- **The procedures for developing national SPS strategies and positions in regional and international organizations:** What are the procedures for developing consensus on national SPS policies, strategies and positions? How does the NSC engage effectively and consistently on those strategies and positions across regional and international organizations?
- **Use of established information exchange mechanisms:** The WTO has established online mechanisms, as well as participates in the SPS and TBT notification platform e-ping. How do Members make use of such mechanisms to share and get comments? What about mechanisms by standard setting bodies – do Members make use of these as well? Can the Members provide practical solutions on how to better use established mechanisms? Are there possible improvements?
- **Role of NSCs in advocacy:** Do NSCs have a role in communication and/or advocacy at the national level? Do Members see any role of NSCs in addressing threats including invasive pest species and food biological hazards?

3. We propose that the SPS Committee examine these matters, as well as others of interest to Members, through an exchange of experiences in a thematic session or workshop to be held in late 2018 or early 2019. Following the Committee's examination of these matters, we would welcome other Members' views as to whether a "good practices" document would be useful to Members. In our view, a collection of good practices could assist developing countries, recently acceded Members and countries seeking to accede to the WTO. We are interested in others' views.
