

**PROCEDURES ON REPORTING ON REGIONAL TRADE AGREEMENTS**

Approved by the Council for Trade in Goods on 30 November 1998

The following procedures recommended by the Committee on Regional Trade Agreements have been approved by the Council for Trade in Goods as general guidelines with respect to biennial reports/information on regional trade agreements submitted to it:<sup>1</sup>

1. Such reports/information will also be made available to the Committee on Regional Trade Agreements, since they are deemed to be particularly relevant to its specialized tasks. This will serve to enhance transparency on how regional trade agreements are proceeding and as an input to the Committee's work under item 1(d) of its terms of reference.
2. Where appropriate, the reports should include a description of developments in the agreements not contained in the information previously presented to the GATT/WTO<sup>2</sup> and trade statistics covering the last representative period, for both trade among parties to the agreements and trade with third parties.<sup>3,4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Regional trade agreements (RTAs) whose parties must report to the Council for Trade in Goods are customs unions, free-trade areas and interim agreements leading to the formation of a customs union or a free-trade area, notified under Article XXIV:7(a) of the GATT 1994. After the examination of the RTAs in accordance with paragraph 7 of the Understanding on the Interpretation of Article XXIV of the GATT 1994 (the Understanding), carried out by the Committee on Regional Trade Agreements, parties to the agreements are required to provide additional information/reports in the following cases:

- In the case of interim agreements undergoing "substantial changes" in the plan and schedule, parties should notify those changes (paragraph 9 of the Understanding).
- In the case of customs unions and free-trade areas, biennial reports are due on the "operation of the relevant agreement" (first sentence of paragraph 11 of the Understanding).
- In the case of customs unions and free-trade areas, "[a]ny significant changes and/or developments" are to be reported "as they occur" (last sentence of paragraph 11 of the Understanding).

Furthermore, in the case of interim agreements for which a further review is foreseen (under paragraph 8 of the Understanding), parties might also be required to supply supporting information.

<sup>2</sup> Particular attention should be given to the internal process of liberalization; to changes introduced with respect to the treatment of third parties; and to modifications to the rules of the agreements.

<sup>3</sup> In case particular products were excluded from, or partially covered by, the regional liberalization process, the relevant data should also be provided.

<sup>4</sup> Statistical information could be based on relevant annual data submitted to the Secretariat by the parties in accordance with the General Council Decision on 16 July 1997 (WT/L/225).

3. Where appropriate, parties to the agreements may make use, in the presentation of reports, of the Standard Format for Information on Regional Trade Agreements (document WT/REG/W/6). This would facilitate both the task of parties in reporting on their agreements and the task of WTO Members in considering the reports.

4. The Council for Trade in Goods and the Committee on Regional Trade Agreements will regularly receive an updated time-table for the submission of biennial reports on regional trade agreements, to be prepared by the Secretariat in coordination with the Members involved.

The above procedures will not in any way affect the legal rights and obligations of WTO Members.

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