

**VOLUNTARY TRANSPARENCY**

Full Texts, Translations, Comments

Thoughts from the United States SPS Enquiry Point / Notification Authority  
at the Special Meeting of the SPS Committee on Transparency Provisions  
held on 9 November 1999

1. Members agree to basic transparency through obligatory notifications. Notification occurs at an early enough stage so that other Members' comments can, as appropriate, lead to meaningful changes. Time constraints are very important in this process. Information is increasingly available and shared electronically. Additional voluntary sharing of information occurs, but not systematically nor equally.
2. The WTO Secretariat must not be unduly burdened with voluntary notifications. Current technology, however, enables Member-based, voluntary sharing initiatives, which the Secretariat could perform with minimal effort.
3. Members have unequal equal access to the world wide web. The Committee could consider how Members not currently enjoying full transparency benefits can do so and to what extent additional voluntary procedures may assist, in particular, developing Members in this regard. Focusing technical assistance towards ensuring adequate internet access for obligatory and voluntary transparency could be effective capacity building for developing countries.
4. **Full texts:** Currently Members request full texts (and supporting documents) from a notifying Member. If a notifying Member voluntarily publishes the full texts and relevant documents on their home web page, other Members can easily and quickly obtain these with less effort for all parties. The key is knowing when and where others' full texts are available.
5. **Translations:** Members may wish to publish full text translations in other languages for better understanding. Mostly, however, other Members translate for their own use a notifying Member's full text. Translation sharing currently occurs, but not equally. Systematic, voluntary posting of translations could build better understanding for broader audiences, especially for developing countries with limited resources to translate documents.
6. **Comments:** Members may publish their comments regarding another Member's proposed measure. Comments are now shared, but not equally. Systematic, voluntary posting of comments could build better analysis capacities, especially for developing countries with limited resources.

7. A key is knowing who on a voluntary basis makes what available, when, about what. One solution is systematically maintaining one web site to list all available (*required and voluntary*) information relative to SPS notifications. If maintained by the SPS Secretariat, substantive voluntary information would NOT reside on the Secretariat's home page, rather such would be maintained by Members on their own home pages. The Secretariat would systematically provide a "hot link" on its Document Dissemination home page as per a Member's voluntary notification. The WTO Document Dissemination site would simply note that a Member is volunteering information related to a notification and by clicking on this would activate the hot link to this additional voluntary information on the volunteering Member's web site. Distinctions could be made using extensions such as FT (full text), TRN (translation) and COM (comment). Three examples of how voluntary notifications could be constructed are provided below.

**WORLD TRADE  
ORGANIZATION**

**G/SPS/N/USA/N/500.FT**  
01 January 2000

(99-0000)

**Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures**

Original: English

Availability of United States' FULL TEXT  
G/SPS/N/USA/500

Location of Translated Full Text: <http://www.USDA.gov/WTO/SPS/500FT.htm>

**WORLD TRADE  
ORGANIZATION**

**G/SPS/N/MEX/400.TRN**  
01 January 2000

(99-0000)

**Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures**

Original: English

Availability of United States' informal TRANSLATION into English  
of the Full Text associated with G/SPS/N/MEX/400

Location of Full Text Translation: <http://www.USDA.gov/WTO/SPS/MEX/400TRN.htm>

**WORLD TRADE  
ORGANIZATION**

**G/SPS/N/MEX/300.COM**  
01 January 2000

(99-0000)

**Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures**

Original: English

United States COMMENTS  
on Mexico's G/SPS/N/MEX/300

Location of Comments: <http://www.USDA.gov/WTO/SPS/MEX/300COM.htm>