

# WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

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Committee on Trade and Environment

Original: English

## REQUEST FOR OBSERVER STATUS BY THE LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES

The following communication has been received from the League of Arab States requesting observer status in the Committee on Trade and Environment.

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Recognizing the importance of the WTO and the multilateral trading system and in the light of the increasing role of the League of Arab States in the field of economic and trade relations, the member States have unanimously endorsed a request for the League of Arab States to participate, as an observer, in the Ministerial Conference of the WTO, as well as the following bodies:

- The General Council
- The Council for Trade in Goods
- The Council for Trade in Services
- The Committee on Trade and Development
- The Committee on Regional Trade Agreements
- The Committee on Trade and Environment

As you are aware, the League of Arab States is an inter-governmental organization with a membership of 22 Arab States. It was established on 22 March 1945, almost six months before the creation of the United Nations.

In this context, I think it is important to mention that under the auspices of the League of Arab States a "Greater Arab Free-Trade area" has been established as of 1 January 1998. So far, 14 Arab States representing over 90 per cent of Inter-Arab Trade have joined. Among the 22 Arab States members of the League, nine are full-fledged members of the WTO, while seven others enjoy observer status.

The Declaration of the establishment of the Greater Arab Free-Trade area included in numerous ways the fundamentals and principles of the World Trade Organization.

I expect that the participation by the League of Arab States, as an observer in the work of WTO would significantly facilitate the task of WTO in dealing with the Arab States in all economic and trade fields. It would also strengthen cooperation between the two organizations and support the efforts of the Arab States towards trade liberalization and integration in the world economy.

It is a pleasure for me to enclose herewith some information on the activities of the League of Arab States in the field of trade and economic relations. For further clarification, the Permanent Delegation of the League of Arab States in Geneva will provide the additional information required.

I hope that our request will enjoy your support.

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