



14 October 2019

(19-6664)

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**REPORT (2019) OF THE COMMITTEE ON IMPORT LICENSING
TO THE COUNCIL FOR TRADE IN GOODS**

1. The Agreement on Import Licensing Procedures (hereinafter "the Agreement") which entered into force on 1 January 1995, establishes disciplines on users of import licensing systems with the principal objective of ensuring that the procedures applied for granting import licences do not in themselves restrict trade. It aims to simplify, clarify and minimize the administrative requirements necessary to obtain import licences.

2. The Committee on Import Licensing was established to afford Members the opportunity of consulting on any matter relating to the operation of the Agreement or the furtherance of its objectives. The Committee's Rules of Procedure, which were approved by the Council for Trade in Goods, are contained in document G/L/147.

3. All Members of the WTO are *ipso facto* members of the Committee. Observer governments in the General Council of the WTO have Observer status in the Committee. The International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and UNCTAD have regular Observer status in the Committee.

4. The focus of this report is on the period since the Committee's last annual report (G/L/1269), namely 23 October 2018 – 4 October 2019 (hereinafter "the review period"). In 2019, the Committee held two formal meetings on 4 April and 4 October 2019 (G/LIC/M/49 and G/LIC/M/50) and two informal meetings on 8 March and 18 September 2019. On 6 June 2019, the Committee elected, Ms. Carol Tsang (Hong Kong, China) as Chairperson for the Committee of 2019.¹ Pursuant to the Committee's Rules of Procedure, the officers shall hold office until the end of the first meeting of the following year.

5. Pursuant to Articles 1.4(a) and/or 8.2(b) of the Agreement and procedures agreed by the Committee, all Members are required to notify their laws, regulations and administrative procedures relevant to import licensing and to submit copies of any relevant publications or laws and regulations upon becoming a WTO Member. Any subsequent changes to these laws, regulations and administrative procedures are also required to be published and notified. During the review period, the Committee reviewed two notifications (Annex I) from the following two Members: Myanmar; and Tajikistan. These notifications can be found in the document series G/LIC/N/1/-. Copies of publications and legislation submitted with these notifications are available for consultation via the Secretariat.

6. The Committee also reviewed, pursuant to paragraphs 5.1-5.4 of Article 5, 18 notifications (Annex II) relating to the institution of new import licensing procedures or changes in these procedures from nine Members: Angola; Costa Rica; Hong Kong, China; Morocco; Myanmar; the Russian Federation; Singapore; Switzerland; and Ukraine.² These notifications can be found in document series G/LIC/N/2/-. Article 5.5 of the Agreement allows Members to submit reverse notifications, where a Member considers that another Member has not notified the institution of a licensing procedure or changes in the procedures. However, no such reverse notifications have been received under this provision since the entry into force of this Agreement.

7. Article 7.3 of the Agreement requires all Members to provide replies to the Questionnaire on Import Licensing Procedures³ by 30 September each year. During the review period, the Committee

¹ Mr Gregory Macdonald (Canada) was elected Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on 8 October 2019.

² New notifications under Article 5.1-5.4 have been received from Switzerland-Liechtenstein and Chinese Taipei, which would be reviewed at the Committee's next meeting.

³ Annexed to document G/LIC/3.

reviewed 23 notifications (Annex III) from the following 19 Members: Argentina; Australia; Canada; Colombia; Costa Rica; El Salvador; the European Union; Georgia; India; Kazakhstan; Macao, China; Mauritius; Mexico; Montenegro; Nicaragua; Panama; Singapore; South Africa; and Uruguay.⁴ These notifications can be found in document series G/LIC/N/3/-.

8. During the review period, Myanmar submitted its first notification to this Committee. The Chair urged Members that had not yet notified and those that had not updated their notifications to do so as soon as possible.

9. The Committee has provided a regular forum for exchanging views on notifications submitted by Members. Written comments and questions concerning notifications submitted to the Committee and/or on import licensing procedures maintained by Members, and replies thereto, may be found in the document series G/LIC/Q/-. During the review period: the European Union posed follow-up questions or comments to Brazil (G/LIC/Q/BRA/23 and G/LIC/Q/BRA/24); China (G/LIC/Q/CHN/27); and Thailand (G/LIC/Q/THA/4). The United States posed questions to the Dominican Republic (G/LIC/Q/DOM/1); Ghana (G/LIC/Q/GHA/2 and G/LIC/Q/GHA/4); and Myanmar (G/LIC/Q/MMR/1). The following Members provided written responses to comments and questions: the Russian Federation to the European Union (G/LIC/Q/RUS/5); and Ghana to the United States (G/LIC/Q/GHA/3).

10. In addition, the following Members requested to include on the Committee's agenda specific issues regarding other Members' import licensing regimes or measures. At Committee meeting(s) held during the review period, the United States made statements on Indonesia's import licensing regime for cellphones, handheld computers and tablets; on India's import licensing requirements for boric acid; on Myanmar's import licensing requirements on agricultural products; on Viet Nam's import licensing for cyber security products; on the Dominican Republic's import permits for agricultural products; on China's import licensing on certain recoverable materials; and on Ghana's import licensing requirements for poultry products. Canada made a statement on India's quantitative restrictions on certain pulses. The European Union made a statement on Tunisia's import restrictive measures, introduced on 28 November 2018. Members whose licensing measures had been questioned responded at the meetings to Members' questions.

11. Improving transparency in notification procedures and templates has been a standing issue on the agenda of the Committee's meetings. At the informal meeting held on 8 March 2019, with a view to clarifying and streamlining notification requirements under different provisions of the Agreement, the Secretariat made a presentation (circulated in document RD/LIC/13) on a new form for notifications under Articles 5.1-5.4, which can also be used for notification under Article 1.4(a) and Article 8.2(b). The template had been drafted based on the views expressed by and best practices of Members. At its formal meeting held on 4 April 2019, certain Members, including Colombia, Japan, Myanmar, and Chinese Taipei, shared their experience in using the new form. The Committee agreed that the notification form, circulated in document G/LIC/W/28, would be used by Members on a voluntary basis for notifications under the Agreement's respective provisions.

12. On the new import licensing website (<https://importlicensing.wto.org>), at the formal meeting on 4 April 2019, the Secretariat informed the Committee that all Member Profiles, which had been prepared for each Member based on its notifications, had been uploaded on the website for Members' verification. Members appreciated the work carried out by the Secretariat and believed that the website would enhance transparency and facilitate trade upon its official launch. So far, only a few Members had completed the verification of their profile and work was still ongoing for most other Members. The website would be launched when the verification work was completed.

13. Regarding the Committee's future work, the Chairperson tabled a number of issues for discussion with Members at the informal meeting held on 18 September 2019, including how to improve the level of notification performance and the functioning of the Committee to facilitate Members' active participation in its work. In response, Members provided some preliminary feedback and tabled some

⁴ New notifications under Article 7.3 have been received from Cameroon; Cuba; Hong Kong, China; Japan; the Republic of Korea; Mauritius; the Russian Federation; Sri Lanka; Switzerland-Liechtenstein; Chinese Taipei; Turkey; Ukraine; and the United States, which are under preparation and will be circulated soon. They will be reviewed at the Committee's next meeting.

new ideas. The Chairperson proposed to organize further consultations to follow up on these discussions.

14. With a view to addressing developing Members' capacity constraints in fulfilling their notification obligations under the Agreement, in particular those of least developed countries (LDCs), the third Workshop on Import Licensing was held from 30 September to 4 October 2019, in Geneva. Thirty Capital-based officials representing 30 WTO developing Members (including LDCs) participated in this workshop. All participants were also invited to attend the Committee's formal meeting of 4 October 2019. The feedback on the workshop was very positive and participants also appreciated the opportunity of attending the Committee meeting as it enabled them to link theory with practice. In addition, during the review period, upon the request of individual Members, Member-specific technical assistance workshops on import licensing and notifications were held in the Kingdom of Bahrain, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Philippines, and Chinese Taipei. Feedback from these Members indicated that these technical assistance activities not only improved the overall understanding of the Agreement but also effectively enhanced the capacities of government officials of the relevant administrative bodies to prepare import licensing notifications. At the Committee's formal meetings, Members encouraged the Secretariat to continue its targeted technical assistance in this regard.

**ANNEX I: NOTIFICATIONS REVIEWED DURING THE REVIEW PERIOD PURSUANT
TO ARTICLES 1.4(A) AND/OR 8.2(B) OF THE AGREEMENT
FROM 23 OCTOBER 2018 TO 4 OCTOBER 2019**

| MEMBER | DOCUMENT | DATE OF ISSUANCE OF THE DOCUMENT |
|---------------|-----------------|---|
| MYANMAR | G/LIC/N/1/MMR/1 | 25.03.2019 |
| TAJIKISTAN | G/LIC/N/1/TJK/2 | 19.12.2018 |

**ANNEX II: NOTIFICATIONS REVIEWED DURING THE REVIEW PERIOD
PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 5.1-5.4 OF THE AGREEMENT¹
FROM 23 OCTOBER 2018 TO 4 OCTOBER 2019**

| MEMBER | DOCUMENT | DATE OF ISSUANCE OF THE DOCUMENT |
|--------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| ANGOLA | G/LIC/N/2/AGO/1 | 30.10.2018 |
| | G/LIC/N/2/AGO/2 | 30.10.2018 |
| COSTA RICA | G/LIC/N/2/CRI/3 | 12.12.2018 |
| HONG KONG, CHINA | G/LIC/N/2/HKG/9 | 08.02.2019 |
| | G/LIC/N/2/HKG/10 | 08.02.2019 |
| | G/LIC/N/2/HKG/11 | 08.02.2019 |
| | G/LIC/N/2/HKG/12 | 07.03.2019 |
| | G/LIC/N/2/HKG/13 | 12.09.2019 |
| MOROCCO | G/LIC/N/2/MAR/2 | 12.09.2019 |
| | G/LIC/N/2/MAR/3 | 12.09.2019 |
| | G/LIC/N/2/MAR/4 | 12.09.2019 |
| MYANMAR | G/LIC/N/2/MMR/1 | 25.03.2019 |
| RUSSIAN FEDERATION | G/LIC/N/2/RUS/3 | 09.08.2019 |
| | G/LIC/N/2/RUS/4 | 09.08.2019 |
| SINGAPORE | G/LIC/N/2/SGP/6 | 13.09.2019 |
| SWITZERLAND | G/LIC/N/2/CHE/3 | 07.03.2019 |
| UKRAINE | G/LIC/N/2/UKR/8 | 26.03.2019 |
| | G/LIC/N/2/UKR/8/ADD.1 | 02.04.2019 |

¹ New notifications from Switzerland-Lichtenstein and Chinese Taipei have been received, which will be reviewed at the Committee's next meeting.

**ANNEX III: NOTIFICATIONS REVIEWED DURING THE REVIEW PERIOD
PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 7.3 OF THE AGREEMENT¹
FROM 23 OCTOBER 2018 TO 4 OCTOBER 2019**

| MEMBER | DOCUMENT (YEAR NOTIFIED FOR) | | DATE OF ISSUANCE OF THE DOCUMENT |
|----------------|---------------------------------|------|-------------------------------------|
| ARGENTINA | G/LIC/N/3/ARG/15 | 2019 | 19.09.2019 |
| AUSTRALIA | G/LIC/N/3/AUS/11 | 2018 | 20.09.2019 |
| | G/LIC/N/3/AUS/12 | 2019 | 23.09.2019 |
| CANADA | G/LIC/N/3/CAN/18 | 2018 | 24.09.2019 |
| COLOMBIA | G/LIC/N/3/COL/12 | 2018 | 22.03.2019 |
| COSTA RICA | G/LIC/N/3/CRI/13 | 2016 | 12.12.2018 |
| | G/LIC/N/3/CRI/14 | 2017 | 12.12.2018 |
| | G/LIC/N/3/CRI/15 | 2018 | 12.12.2018 |
| EL SALVADOR | G/LIC/N/3/SLV/3 | 2018 | 17.12.2018 |
| EUROPEAN UNION | G/LIC/N/3/EU/8 | 2019 | 24.09.2019 |
| GEORGIA | G/LIC/N/3/GEO/8 | 2018 | 19.11.2018 |
| INDIA | G/LIC/N/3/IND/18 | 2018 | 17.01.2019 |
| KAZAKHSTAN | G/LIC/N/3/KAZ/3 | 2018 | 26.02.2019 |
| MACAO, CHINA | G/LIC/N/3/MAC/22 | 2019 | 27.05.2019 |
| MAURITIUS | G/LIC/N/3/MUS/8 | 2018 | 12.10.2018 |
| MEXICO | G/LIC/N/3/MEX/6 | 2019 | 24.09.2019 |
| MONTENEGRO | G/LIC/N/3/MNE/3 | 2019 | 27.05.2019 |
| NICARAGUA | G/LIC/N/3/NIC/10 | 2018 | 14.03.2019 |
| PANAMA | G/LIC/N/3/PAN/9 | 2018 | 20.05.2019 |
| | G/LIC/N/3/PAN/10 | 2019 | 20.05.2019 |
| SINGAPORE | G/LIC/N/3/SGP/14 | 2018 | 26.11.2018 |
| SOUTH AFRICA | G/LIC/N/3/ZAF/7 | 2018 | 19.12.2018 |
| URUGUAY | G/LIC/N/3/URY/12 | 2018 | 25.01.2019 |

¹ New notifications have been received from Cameroon, Cuba, Hong Kong, China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Mauritius, Switzerland-Lichtenstein, Russian Federation, Chinese Taipei, Ukraine, and the United States, which will be reviewed at the Committee's next meeting.