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Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade

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**PROPOSALS ON TRANSPARENCY, AND THE SHARING OF WRITTEN QUESTIONS AND
RESPONSES FROM MEMBERS ON SPECIFIC TRADE CONCERNS**

NINTH TRIENNIAL REVIEW

Submission from Singapore

The following submission, dated 28 May 2021, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of Singapore.

**1 PROPOSAL ON TRANSPARENCY: PROVISION OF TRANSLATIONS FOR ALL NOTIFIED
DOCUMENTS IN THE WTO'S THREE OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

1.1. Singapore recognises the importance for Members to notify new and revised technical regulations, standards and their related conformity assessment procedures in a timely and comprehensive manner, to allow other Members and relevant stakeholders to acquaint themselves with and adapt to new measures. A key aspect is ensuring access to the notified documents in the three WTO languages. The Committee should continue its work on facilitating the sharing of translations, including unofficial translations.

1.2. In light of technological advancements on translation software, which could translate a large amount of text in a short period, the Committee and the Secretariat could explore incorporating the use of such software in Members' submission of notifications. This could offer benefits, such as:

- a. Addressing Members' concerns on the lack of translation capacity, especially for developing and least developed Members, to make timely notifications of their proposed TBT measures or review the large number of notifications by other Members.
- b. By providing fast translations of the notified documents, the comment period of the notified measures is better optimised to allow stakeholders to promptly understand the proposed new requirements and engage with the notifying Member.

1.3. Possible outcome: Building on Members' obligations under the TBT Agreement and the Committee's recommendations and work, Singapore proposes for the Committee and the Secretariat to explore the use of available IT tools such as translation software. Such translation software could be employed on the WTO's TBT Notification Submission System (NSS) to provide unofficial translations of all notified documents into the three official WTO languages, if official translations are not already provided. In addition to the benefits mentioned above, the proposal enables WTO Members to have a common unofficial translation. When compared with each Member having their own translations, the proposal could benefit notifying Members in potentially reducing the enquiries for clarifications on their notified measure due to translation accuracy. Notifying Members may also choose to verify the automatically translated texts and make any revisions as necessary.

2 PROPOSAL ON SHARING OF INFORMATION ON MEMBERS' ENGAGEMENTS RELATING TO SPECIFIC TRADE CONCERNS THAT ARE NOT CIRCULATED WITHIN THE TBT COMMITTEE

2.1. Over the years, there has been a steady increase in the number of STCs raised at the TBT Committee meetings, with bulk of the time at these meetings being dedicated to the discussion of STCs. It has been a longstanding interest of Members to ensure that STCs are discussed more efficiently at the Committee.

2.2. Singapore observes that in the discussion of STCs, the responding Member may require additional time (e.g. for internal coordination or domestic consultation) to provide a response, and may request to provide the response intersessionally. Such intersessional responses are often provided bilaterally. Members often raise overlapping concerns, some of which may have been, or will be, addressed in the bilateral responses to other Members' enquiries. Hence, sharing such bilateral responses with the Committee could help to advance discussions and facilitate healthy progress towards resolving STCs. This would also increase the efficiency of discussions on STCs during the TBT Committee meetings.

2.3. Possible outcome: For the Committee to recommend that Members share information on their engagements that relate to discussions on Specific Trade Concerns, which are held outside of the Committee's regular meetings. Information on such engagements can be published in the WTO Documents Online portal. To facilitate the tracking of such information, Members should inform the Secretariat to reference the uploaded documents according to the respective the IMS IDs, on the TBT IMS. To enable these shared information to complement the discussions on STCs at the TBT Committee meetings, an additional column can be included within the annotated draft agenda and/or the eAgenda, with links to access the information, where available. This would make it easier for Members to refer to such information during their preparations ahead of the TBT Committee meetings.
