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Committee on Budget, Finance and Administration

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PROPOSAL TO REDUCE DOCUMENTATION AND POSTAL COSTS IN THE WTO

COMMUNICATION FROM AUSTRIA, CANADA, CHILE, CHINA, COSTA RICA, FINLAND, GERMANY, ISRAEL, JAPAN, KOREA, LITHUANIA, MEXICO, NEW ZEALAND, NORWAY, QATAR, SINGAPORE, SWITZERLAND, CHINESE TAIPEI, UNITED KINGDOM, UNITED STATES

Revision

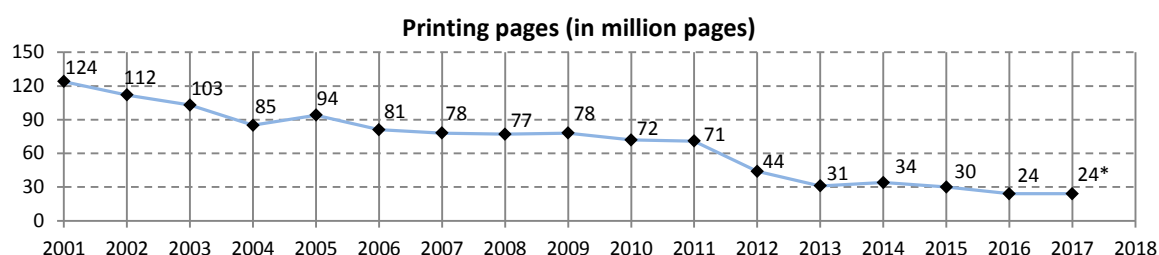
1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. At present, WTO Members and Observers have the option of receiving WTO documents in printed hardcopy or in electronic copy through the WTO website. For Members and Observers who choose to receive their documents in printed hardcopy, these documents are either delivered to their WTO pigeonholes, or sent to them by post.

1.2. In 2017, a total of 24.4 million pages have been printed at the WTO (17 million in black and white, 7.4 million pages in colour).

1.3. There has been a downward trend in recent years both in terms of number of pages printed, and consequently the document production and postal costs. In 2001, a total of 124 million pages were printed. This is 81% more than today's printing volume (see [Table 1](#)). Consequently, the budgetary expenditure for documents reproduction and distribution in the WTO has also decreased. Since 2012, the budget of documentation equipment has been considerably reduced. More recently, the budget amounts for 2016, relative to that for 2015, for Reproduction Equipment and Postal expenses were reduced by CHF 516,000 and CHF 475,000 respectively. The amount was reallocated to other areas such as increasing the ITC budget, funding the Building Renovation Fund and increasing the Building Maintenance Budget (subsequent to the donation of the WTO premises by the Swiss Government to the WTO).

Table 1 Evolution of printed pages 2001 - 2017



* projected until year-end

1.4. Overall, this is a positive trend both in terms of cost savings and for the environment. One of the main contributors to the reduction in printed documents and documentation and postal costs is the gradual shift towards electronic documents. All WTO documents are now available online.

Further, the recent introduction of e-subscription¹ offers Members and Observers the possibility to select the documents they wish to receive by email on the date of issue in electronic form.

2 SHIFTING TO ELECTRONIC DOCUMENTS

2.1. More can be done at the WTO in reducing the number of printed hardcopy documents, and consequently further reducing documentation and postal costs. Members and Observers should, as far as possible, shift to receiving only electronic versions of WTO documents. The default for all Members and Observers should be that of receiving only electronic documents.

2.2. That said, it is recognised that some delegations may still wish to receive printed hardcopy documents. This shall continue to be made available to delegations upon request.

2.3. To facilitate the transition, the Secretariat shall contact each delegation to confirm its preference for the receipt of WTO documents. The Secretariat shall also conduct more information sessions and outreach on the e-subscription system, which will facilitate a smooth transition.

3 PROPOSAL

3.1. Based on the above, it is proposed that the Committee on Budget, Finance and Administration:

- a. Decide that the default method of distribution of all WTO documents, starting from 31 January 2018, be in electronic form;
- b. Mandate the Secretariat to contact each delegation during the transition period to confirm its preference for the receipt of WTO documents (hardcopy or electronic);
- c. Instruct the Secretariat to conduct more information sessions and outreach on the e-subscription system.

¹ See the following link for more information on e-subscription:
https://www.wto.org/english/forums_e/members_e/xmembers_e/esubs_howto_e.pdf.