



IMPROVEMENTS IN THEMATIC SESSIONS PROCESS

TENTH TRIENNIAL REVIEW

Proposal from the United Kingdom

The following submission, dated 22 February 2024, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of the United Kingdom.

1 BACKGROUND

1.1. Thematic Sessions have enriched the work of the TBT Committee, by providing a forum to discuss key issues relating to the application and implementation of the TBT Agreement and Committee functioning. These sessions support regulatory transparency and encourage regulatory cooperation and collaboration between Members. The value of these sessions has been noted by the Council for Trade Goods¹ and several other WTO have replicated these sessions.

1.2. Whilst we have an active and varied schedule of session topics, there is space to improve the processes associated with the planning and notice to Members of these thematic sessions. Delays to appointing a moderator adversely affect the planning necessary and the ability of Members to recruit appropriate speakers, which in turn may also reduce the diversity of the Members who are participating in the Thematic Sessions. These concerns have previously been raised and discussed formally by Members².

2 PROPOSAL

2.1. The United Kingdom proposes that the Committee formally set out the following processes in the organisation of the TBT Committee Thematic sessions:

- a. Reassert the Committee's intention to confirm the specific topics to be discussed in the following year no later than the last meeting of the year.
- b. Agree and announce moderators during the preceding Committee meeting to thematic sessions.
- c. Finalise and circulate the Agenda of the Thematic sessions in the Committee meeting Agenda, issued prior to the formal Committee meeting.
- d. Encourage more stakeholder engagement and awareness of the TBT Thematic sessions, to facilitate a wider audience. This could be done by enhancing the circulation and dissemination of key findings from these sessions.

¹ [JOB/CTG/35/Rev.2](#) – Council for Trade in Goods – [Draft] Report on the WTO response to the Covid-19 Pandemic and Preparedness for future pandemics

² [G/TBT/M/89](#) – Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade – Minutes of the Meeting 8-10 March 2023.

2.2. We hope that these minor changes in agreed process will broaden the participation in these sessions by enabling Members to prepare early and secure speakers in advance. This will strengthen the sessions and ensure they continue to be an important forum in which we can explore the application of TBT principles in issues relevant to the contemporary trading landscape.

2.3. The increased time to prepare these sessions would give more space for moderators to consider different formats for discussion. In turn, this would enable more interactive sessions, increased inclusivity and facilitate fruitful discussion.
