

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

RESTRICTED

WT/REG/W/6

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(96-3224)

Committee on Regional Trade Agreements

STANDARD FORMAT FOR INFORMATION ON REGIONAL TRADE AGREEMENTS¹

Note by the Chairman

The objective of the Standard Format for Information on Regional Trade Agreements is to facilitate and standardize the provision of initial information by parties to regional trade agreements.² Parties may adhere to the requirements of the Standard Format on a voluntary basis; in this respect, it should be viewed as Guidelines by the Chairman as to basic information that could be provided by parties notifying regional trade agreements to the WTO.

In line with the terms of reference adopted for the examination of regional agreements (including the accompanying understandings)³, the Standard Format includes some relevant information for the transparency and the consistency aspects of the examination process. The information requested in this Standard Format does not prejudice the scope and coverage of the consistency aspect of the examination process, nor does it replace the requirement for parties to regional trade agreements to provide Members with all relevant texts of laws and detailed trade and tariff data. Further, it does not preclude Members from posing questions in writing and seeking additional information from parties.⁴

As the information sought in the Standard Format relates primarily to trade disciplines applied in accordance with the regional trade agreement, it is unlikely that there would be a duplication of the information submitted to other WTO Bodies.

¹The Committee on Regional Trade Agreements, at its meeting of 31 July 1996, took note of the Standard Format for Information on Regional Trade Agreements.

²Information relating to trade in services may be integrated into the request for information in the light of the experience gained in the examination of agreements on trade in services.

³Starting with the terms of reference for the Enlargement of the European Communities adopted in the meeting of the Council for Trade in Goods held on 20 February 1995 (WT/REG3/1), all terms of reference are adopted together with an understanding by the Chairman which states that "although the Working Party would conduct its examination in light of the relevant provisions of the Agreements contained in Annex 1A of the WTO Agreement, the conclusions of the Report of the Working Party would be confined to reporting on consistency with the provisions of Article XXIV."

⁴"Any contracting party deciding to enter into a customs union or free-trade area, or an interim agreement leading to the formation of such a union or area, shall promptly notify the CONTRACTING PARTIES and shall make available to them such information regarding the proposed union or area as will enable them to make such reports and recommendations to contracting parties as they may deem appropriate." (paragraph 7(a) of Article XXIV).

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REGIONAL TRADE AGREEMENTS**

Chairman's Guidelines

I. Background Information on the Agreement

1. Membership and dates of signature, ratification and entry into force.
2. Type of agreement
Customs union, free-trade area, preferential agreement among developing countries, interim agreement. Plan and schedule.
3. Scope
Products covered by, and excluded from, the Agreement, including data on trade coverage. Products to be covered by the Agreement at a later stage.
4. Trade data
Data on intra and extra-trade for the most recent period for which statistics are available, according to major products and partners. To the extent possible, available estimates on trade-creating and trade-diverting effects.

II. Trade Provisions

1. Import restrictions
Intra-trade restrictions currently in place and the trade affected by the restrictions. Time-table foreseen in the Agreement for dismantling the restrictions. Intra-trade restrictions that will remain in effect after the Agreement is fully implemented.
 - 1.1 Duties and charges
Customs duties, tariff quotas, charges having an equivalent effect to customs duties and fiscal duties on the trade of products covered by the Agreement: restrictions in place and trade affected, calendar for their dismantling, and residual restrictions.
 - 1.2 Quantitative restrictions
Quantitative restrictions (QRs) and measures having an equivalent effect to QRs on the trade of products covered by the Agreement: restrictions in place and trade affected, calendar for their dismantling, and residual restrictions.
 - 1.3 Common External Tariff
Methodology for establishing the Common External Tariff (CET). Stage of implementation of the CET. Information on negotiations under Article XXIV:6.
2. Export restrictions
Intra-trade restrictions currently in place and the trade affected by the restrictions. Time-table foreseen in the Agreement for dismantling the restrictions. Intra-trade restrictions that will remain in effect after the Agreement is fully implemented.

- 2.1 Duties and charges
Customs duties, tariff quotas, charges having an equivalent effect to customs duties and fiscal duties on the trade of products covered by the Agreement: restrictions in place and trade affected, calendar for their dismantling, and residual restrictions.
 - 2.2 Quantitative restrictions
Quantitative restrictions and measures having equivalent effect to QRs on the trade of products covered by the Agreement: restrictions in place and trade affected, calendar for their dismantling, and residual restrictions.
3. Rules of origin
General criteria used for the purpose of determining the origin of products to which the Agreement applies; in particular, the criterion of substantial transformation (i.e. change in tariff classification, ad-valorem percentages and/or manufacturing or processing operations). Information on whether the rules of origin provide for any type of cumulation. Specific criteria to which certain sectors/products may be subjected.
4. Standards
Main elements of any provisions relating to standards to be applied on intra-trade; in particular, whether they provide for common standards or mutual recognition of certificates. In the case of customs unions, or interim agreements leading to a customs union, information on whether the parties intend to apply common standards for imports from third parties.
 - 4.1 Technical barriers to trade
 - 4.2 Sanitary and phytosanitary measures
5. Safeguards
Description of the emergency measures and other safeguard mechanisms applicable to intra-trade (e.g. balance-of-payments difficulties, developmental matters, special safeguards for agriculture), in cases where they differ from those applied on a MFN basis. In the case of customs unions, or interim agreements leading to a customs union, information on whether the parties intend to apply a common safeguard regime to imports from third parties. Information on whether the Agreement provides for the exclusion of parties to the Agreement from safeguard measures applied on imports from third parties.
6. Anti-dumping and countervailing measures
Description of the anti-dumping and countervailing measures applicable on intra-trade, in cases where they differ from those applied on a MFN basis. In the case of customs unions, or interim agreements leading to a customs union, information on whether the parties intend to apply a common regime on anti-dumping and countervailing measures to imports from third parties.
7. Subsidies and State-aid
Description of the treatment provided for in the Agreement relating to subsidies and State-aid, and an indication of the remedies available under the Agreement to counter their effects on intra-trade.

8. Sector-specific provisions
Specific provisions applicable to intra-trade in individual sectors (e.g. agriculture, fisheries, textiles and clothing, automotive sector). In the case of customs unions, or interim agreements leading to a customs union, information on whether the parties intend to apply any common sector-specific regime on imports from third parties.
9. Other
Information on provisions relating to, for example, cooperation in customs administration, import licensing and customs valuation, in cases where they differ from those applied on a MFN basis. Intra-trade treatment of products from free-trade zones established in any of the parties to the Agreement.

III. General Provisions of the Agreement

1. Exceptions and reservations
General and security exceptions provided for in the Agreement. Reservations entered into by any of the parties to the Agreement.
2. Accession
Information on any provision that allowing other countries to accede to the Agreement.
3. Dispute settlement procedures
Description of the mechanisms provided for resolving disputes among parties to the Agreement, and its relationship with intergovernmental dispute settlement instruments entered into by the parties under other bilateral, plurilateral and/or multilateral agreements.
4. Relation with other trade agreements
Information relating to whether or not the Agreement establishes any specific relation with other bilateral, plurilateral and/or multilateral trade agreements.
5. Institutional framework
Structure and functions of intergovernmental and/or supranational institutions created to operate the Agreement. Responsibilities of national entities for formulating and implementing policies relating to the Agreement.

IV. Other

For transparency purposes, any other relevant information related to the provisions of the Agreement.