



**Council for Trade in Goods
Committee on Import Licensing**

**REPORT ON IMPROVEMENTS IN THE FUNCTIONING OF
THE COMMITTEE ON IMPORT LICENSING**

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. This report has been prepared at the request of the Council for Trade in Goods (CTG)¹ to update the Council on the recent discussions on measures to improve the functioning of the Committee on Import Licensing (CIL). It complements information contained in the report prepared by the Chairperson of the CIL, with the assistance of the Secretariat, which was circulated on 2 December 2022 ([G/L/1462](#); [G/LIC/W/58](#)). This report covers all improvements introduced in the Committee since the conclusion of MC12 in June 2022, following extensive discussions by Members and with a view to better responding to their mandate and terms of reference.

2 PROCESS AND PROPOSALS

2.1. As indicated in the 2022 report by the Chairperson of the CIL to the CTG and in the Secretariat comparative matrix ([G/C/W/824/Rev.1](#)), the Committee has introduced a number of new tools and practices in its work over the past years. The significant progress made by the CIL until now, particularly in the area of development of databases and digital tools, explains why only relatively small changes were needed to improve the way in which this committee functions.

2.2. Following the CTG informal meeting of 31 January 2023, the CIL started discussions on how to further improve its functioning at its informal meeting of 14 March 2023². At that meeting, Members were asked to reflect on whether the CIL should begin a process for discussing improvements to its functioning and, if so, what areas should be improved. Based on the suggestions by Members at the meeting and subsequent written submissions, on 15 May 2023 the Chairperson of the CIL circulated a document containing a preliminary list of issues for discussions by the Committee (document [JOB/LIC/2](#)). The issues were grouped taking into account the comparative matrix and the structure proposed in the preliminary list circulated by the CTG Chairperson in document [ICN/CTG/9](#).

2.3. The CIL held discussions in informal mode on how to further improve its functioning at its formal meeting of 23 May 2023, based on the preliminary list of issues.³ At that formal meeting, it was agreed that the Committee would continue to hold substantive discussions on how to improve its functioning at its next informal meeting, which subsequently took place on 29 September 2023.

2.4. During the informal discussions held within the formal meeting of the CIL of 23 May 2023, the Committee was informed about the progress that was made on a number of items identified in document [JOB/LIC/2](#), including the implementation of the eAgenda and the development of an online Import Licensing Notification Portal.⁴ Some of these improvements had budgetary implications and, by acting early, the CIL benefited of available resources. At that meeting, the Chairperson also proposed to reflect the status of the Committee's work on how to improve its functioning until that date in a report to the CTG, and to continue the discussions based on Members' interests and requests.

¹ See documents [JOB/CTG/29](#) and [JOB/CTG/33](#).

² See documents [ICN/LIC/1](#) and [ICN/LIC/1/Add.1](#).

³ See documents [G/LIC/M/56](#), agenda item 14 and [ICN/LIC/2/Add.1](#), summarizing the informal discussions.

⁴ See document [ICN/LIC/2/Add.1](#).

2.5. Specifically with regard to the proposals, the list of issues for discussions by the CIL identified 24 items (see [JOB/LIC/4](#)) based on written and oral inputs received by Members. Noting that the Committee had already been applying many of the suggestions proposed by Members⁵, discussions in the CIL focused on the following areas where further improvements could be undertaken in the work of the Committee:

- a) Assistance to capital-based and Geneva-based delegates;
- b) Planning and organization of meetings;
- c) Working procedures for formal and informal meetings; and
- d) Use of digital tools.

2.6. It was also recognized that several of the proposals raised by Members in the CIL were horizontal in nature and linked to ongoing discussions in other WTO bodies. As such, no specific action by the CIL or the Secretariat was required, as they would be implemented as part of the WTO-wide improvement efforts.

2.7. In preparation for the September informal meeting, and following the model used by the CTG and some of its subsidiary bodies, the Chairperson asked the Secretariat to convert the preliminary list of issues into a table showing the current status on each issue in order to inform Members' discussions. The draft table was circulated by email to all Members on 31 August 2023 as [JOB/LIC/4](#) and was included in the agenda of the informal meeting held on 29 September 2023.⁶

3 IMPROVEMENTS TO THE FUNCTIONING OF THE COMMITTEE

3.1. As a result of the process and proposals described above, the Committee agreed to implement the following improvements to the way it is functioning, including improvements on which work was underway when this process was initiated.

3.2. The improvements included or to be included in the work of the Committee are:

General area	Improvements in the functioning of the Committee on Import Licensing
A. Assistance to delegates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Secretariat will continue to hold in-person annual Workshops on Import Licensing Procedures and Notifications for capital-based participants from WTO Members entitled to technical assistance. The Secretariat will hold an annual presentation for new delegates on the functioning of the CIL and on the Import Licensing Agreement to be held back-to-back with one of its meetings. The Secretariat developed a new section of the WTO website that serves as a manual to explain the work of the CIL and consolidates all the digital tools used by the Committee in one page.⁷ The Secretariat developed an e-learning training module on Import Licensing, which was made available for the public at large.
B. Planning and organization of meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whenever possible, meetings of the Committee will continue to be scheduled to avoid overlap with other meetings and in particular those that are attended by the same delegates who also attend the CIL. The Secretariat will circulate a written explanation for the cancellation or postponement of a meeting, as required. The Secretariat will prepare an annotated agenda for formal meetings with links to electronic documents for the meeting. ICN (Informal Convening Notice) documents have been used to convene informal meetings of the Committee starting in 2023. It had been the practice of the Committee for some time to have written summaries of informal meetings circulated under the responsibility of the Chairperson. Starting in 2023 these summaries have been circulated as ICN documents.

⁵ See annex table in document [G/C/W/824/Rev.1](#).

⁶ See document [ICN/LIC/3](#).

⁷ https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/implic_e/implic_com_e.htm.

General area	Improvements in the functioning of the Committee on Import Licensing
E. Digital tools used by the Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The eAgenda for the Committee on Import licensing was launched in October 2022 and since then it is fully operational.• Import Licensing Trade Concerns Database became operational as of May 2023. Links were added to trade concerns raised in other committees that may be related.• The new Import Licensing Notification Portal was launched at the Committee meeting held on 31 of October 2023. The existing Import Licensing website / database, launched in 2020, has been merged with the new Import Licensing Notification Portal and overhauled to include an online notification tool and searchability by product. Notification reminders will be issued through the WTO notification portal.• The Secretariat will add, wherever possible, hyperlinks to documents in the eAgenda and reports.
