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**REPORT (2019) OF THE COMMITTEE ON RULES OF ORIGIN  
TO THE COUNCIL FOR TRADE IN GOODS**

1. This note reports activities of the Committee on Rules of Origin (CRO) and summarizes the work undertaken by the Committee in respect of the objectives of the Agreement on Rules of Origin. Article 6.1 of the Agreement which provides that "The Committee shall review annually the implementation and operation of Parts II and III of this Agreement having regard to its objectives" and "inform the Council for Trade in Goods of developments during the period covered by such reviews."

2. The CRO held two formal meetings in 2019: on 15-16 May and on 17-18 October. The minutes of these meetings are contained in documents G/RO/M/72 and G/RO/M/73<sup>1</sup> respectively. In addition, the Committee held informal meetings as well as several small-group and bilateral consultations on several matters. Ms Uma MUNIANDY (Singapore) was elected Chairperson of the Committee in June 2019. She followed Mrs Thembekile MLANGENI (South Africa) as Chairperson of the Committee.

3. At its meeting of 17 and 18 October, the CRO conducted the twenty-fifth review of the implementation and operation of the Agreement (document G/RO/W/189) and a yearly review of developments with relation to preferential rules of origin for LDCs.

4. With relation to non-preferential rules of origin, the Committee did not hold discussions specifically related to the Harmonization Work Programme (HWP). Discussions on this work programme, mandated under Part IV of the Agreement, have been stalled since 2007. Members held different views regarding the implications of adopting harmonized non-preferential rules of origin for other trade policy measures. These "core policy issues" were described in the 2013 Report of the CRO to the Council for Trade in Goods (G/L/1047). Members continue to hold different views regarding the need to finalize or not the HWP.

5. Pending the continuation of the HWP, the Committee has considered a proposal to "enhance transparency on non-preferential rules of origin" (G/RO/W/182/Rev.1 and G/RO/W/182/Rev.1/Add.1). Under the proposal Members would commit to updating their notifications of non-preferential rules of origin and origin requirements. Such notifications would be prepared following a template that would standardize the information provided by each Member. All the information received would be made available by the Secretariat through an electronic platform for easier access and the CRO would initiate a focused examination of the information received. Consultations are ongoing on the proposal.

6. With respect to preferential rules of origin, the Committee continued to review the implementation of the 2013 and 2015 Ministerial Decisions on preferential rules of origin for least developed countries (LDCs) (WT/L/917 and WT/L/917/Add.1). The Committee took note of reports by preference-granting Members about the efforts being made to implement the Decision. The Committee also reviewed the latest status of notifications (G/RO/W/163/Rev.6). Members examined substantive matters related to preferential rules of origin, including: rules based on the change-of-tariff-classification criterion, direct consignment requirements and utilization rates for the LDC preferences of Switzerland and China. A detailed report describing these activities has been prepared for the General Council (G/RO/89) and an oral report will be delivered for the Sub-Committee on LDCs.

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<sup>1</sup> To be issued.