

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

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RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE ON TECHNICAL BARRIERS TO TRADE*

Approved by the Council for Trade in Goods on 1 December 1995

Chapter I — Meetings

Rule 1

The Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade (hereinafter the Committee) shall meet as necessary, but not less than once a year.

Rule 2

Meetings of the Committee shall be convened by the Director-General by a notice issued, preferably three weeks, and in any event not less than ten calendar days, prior to the date set for the meeting. In the event that the tenth day falls on a weekend or a holiday, the notice shall be issued no later than the preceding WTO working day. Meetings may be convened with shorter notice for matters of significant importance or urgency at the request of a Member concurred in by the majority of the Members.

Chapter II — Agenda

Rule 3

A list of the items proposed for the agenda of the meeting shall be communicated to Members together with the convening notice for the meeting. It shall be open to any Member to suggest items for inclusion in the proposed agenda up to, and not including, the day on which the notice of the meeting is to be issued.

Rule 4

Requests for items to be placed on the agenda of a forthcoming meeting shall be communicated to the Secretariat in writing, together with the accompanying documentation to be issued in connection

*These rules follow the rules adopted by the General Council, incorporating changes made by the Council for Trade in Goods in its rules, with relevant changes to make the rules applicable to the Committee. Where a particular provision is indicated as being "not applicable", it means that the correspondingly numbered provision of the General Council's rules is not applicable to the Committee's proceedings.

with that item. Documentation for consideration at a meeting shall be circulated not later than the day on which the notice of the meeting is to be issued.

Rule 5

Not applicable

Rule 6

The first item of business at each meeting shall be the consideration and approval of the agenda. Representatives may suggest amendments to the proposed agenda, or additions to the agenda under "Other Business". Representatives shall provide the Chairperson or the Secretariat, and the other Members directly concerned, whenever possible, advance notice of items intended to be raised under "Other Business".

Rule 7

The Committee may amend the agenda or give priority to certain items at any time in the course of the meeting.

Chapter III — Representation

Rule 8

Each Member shall be represented by an accredited representative.

Rule 9

Each representative may be accompanied by such alternates and advisers as the representative may require.

Chapter IV — Observers

Rule 10

Representatives of States or separate customs territories may attend the meetings as observers on the invitation of the Committee in accordance with the guidelines in Annex 1 to these Rules.

Rule 11

Representatives of international intergovernmental organizations may attend the meetings as observers on the invitation of the Committee in accordance with the guidelines in Annex 2 to these Rules.

Chapter V — Officers

Rule 12

The Committee shall elect a Chairperson¹ and may elect a Vice-Chairperson from among the representatives of Members. The election shall take place at the first meeting of the year and shall take effect at the end of the meeting. The Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson shall hold office until the end of the first meeting of the following year.

Rule 13

If the Chairperson is absent from any meeting or part thereof, the Vice-Chairperson shall perform the functions of the Chairperson. If no Vice-Chairperson was elected or if the Vice-Chairperson is not present, the Committee shall elect an interim Chairperson for that meeting or that part of the meeting.

Rule 14

If the Chairperson can no longer perform the functions of the office, the Committee shall designate the Vice-Chairperson referred to in Rule 12 or, if no Vice-Chairperson was elected it shall elect an interim Chairperson to perform those functions pending the election of a new Chairperson.

Rule 15

The Chairperson shall normally participate in the proceedings as such and not as the representative of a Member. The Chairperson may, however, at any time request permission to act in either capacity.

Chapter VI — Conduct of business

Rule 16

The Chairperson may consider postponing a meeting in the event that he or she feels that doing so may result in a more representative level of participation by WTO Members.

Rule 17

In addition to exercising the powers conferred elsewhere by these rules, the Chairperson shall declare the opening and closing of each meeting, shall direct the discussion, accord the right to speak, submit questions for decision, announce decisions, rule on points of order and, subject to these rules, have complete control of the proceedings. The Chairperson may also call a speaker to order if the remarks of the speaker are not relevant.

¹The Committee shall apply the relevant guidelines contained in the "Guidelines for Appointment of Officers to WTO Bodies" (WT/L/31 dated 7 February 1995).

Rule 18

During the discussion of any matter, a representative may raise a point of order. In this case the Chairperson shall immediately state the ruling. If the ruling is challenged, the Chairperson shall immediately submit it for decision and it shall stand unless overruled.

Rule 19

During the discussion of any matter, a representative may move the adjournment of the debate. Any such motion shall have priority. In addition to the proponent of the motion, one representative may be allowed to speak in favour of, and two representatives against, the motion, after which the motion shall be submitted for decision immediately.

Rule 20

A representative may at any time move the closure of the debate. In addition to the proponent of the motion, not more than one representative may be granted permission to speak in favour of the motion and not more than two representatives may be granted permission to speak against the motion, after which the motion shall be submitted for decision immediately.

Rule 21

During the course of the debate, the Chairperson may announce the list of speakers and, with the consent of the meeting, declare the list closed. The Chairperson may, however, accord the right of reply to any representative if a speech delivered after the list has been declared closed makes this desirable.

Rule 22

The Chairperson, with the consent of the meeting, may limit the time allowed to each speaker.

Rule 23

Representatives shall endeavour, to the extent that a situation permits, to keep their oral statements brief. Representatives wishing to develop their position on a particular matter in fuller detail may circulate a written statement for distribution to Members, the summary of which, at the representative's request, may be reflected in the records of the Committee.

Rule 24

In order to expedite the conduct of business, the Chairperson may invite representatives that wish to express their support for a given proposal to show their hands, in order to be duly recorded in the records of the Committee as supporting statements; thus, only representatives with dissenting views or wishing to make explicit points or proposals would actually be invited to make a statement. This procedure shall only be applied in order to avoid undue repetition of points already made, and will not preclude any representative who so wishes from taking the floor.

Rule 25

Representatives should avoid unduly long debates under "Other Business". Discussions on substantive issues under "Other Business" shall be avoided, and the Committee shall limit itself to taking

note of the announcement by the sponsoring delegation, as well as any reactions to such an announcement by other delegations directly concerned.

Rule 26

While the Committee is not expected to take action in respect of an item introduced as "Other Business", nothing shall prevent the Committee, if it so decides, to take action in respect of any such item at a particular meeting, or in respect of any item for which documentation was not circulated at least ten calendar days in advance.

Rule 27

Representatives should make every effort to avoid the repetition of a full debate at each meeting on any issue that has already been fully debated in the past and on which there appears to have been no change in Members' positions already on record.

Rule 28

Proposals and amendments to proposals shall normally be introduced in writing and circulated to all representatives not later than twelve hours before the commencement of the meeting at which they are to be discussed.

Rule 29

If two or more proposals are moved relating to the same question, the meeting shall first decide on the most far-reaching proposal and then on the next most far-reaching proposal and so on.

Rule 30

When an amendment is moved to a proposal, the amendment shall be submitted for decision first and, if it is adopted, the amended proposal shall then be submitted for decision.

Rule 31

When two or more amendments are moved to a proposal, the meeting shall decide first on the amendment farthest removed in substance from the original proposal, then, if necessary, on the amendment next farthest removed, and so on until all the amendments have been submitted for decision.

Rule 32

Parts of a proposal may be decided on separately if a representative requests that the proposal be divided.

Chapter VII — Decision-Making

Rule 33

Where a decision cannot be arrived at by consensus, the matter at issue shall be referred to the Council for Trade in Goods.

Rule 34

Not applicable.

Chapter VIII — Languages

Rule 35

English, French and Spanish shall be the working languages.

Chapter IX — Records

Rule 36

Records of the discussions of the Committee shall be in the form of minutes.²

Chapter X — Publicity of meetings

Rule 37

The meetings of the Committee shall ordinarily be held in private. It may be decided that a particular meeting or meetings should be held in public.

Rule 38

After a private meeting has been held, the Chairperson may issue a communiqué to the Press.

Chapter XI — Revision

Rule 39

The Committee may decide at any time to revise these rules or any part of them.

²The customary practice under the GATT 1947, whereby representatives may, upon their request, verify those portions of the draft records containing their statements, prior to the issuance of such records, shall be continued.

ANNEX 1

GUIDELINES FOR OBSERVER STATUS FOR GOVERNMENTS IN THE WTO

1. The purpose of observer status in the General Council and its subsidiary bodies is to allow a government to better acquaint itself with the WTO and its activities, and to prepare and initiate negotiations for accession to the WTO Agreement.
2. Observer governments shall have access to the main WTO document series. They may also request technical assistance from the Secretariat in relation to the operation of the WTO system in general, as well as to negotiations on accession to the WTO Agreement.
3. Representatives of governments accorded observer status may be invited to speak at meetings of the bodies to which they are observers normally after Members of that body have spoken. The right to speak does not include the right to make proposals, unless a government is specifically invited to do so, nor to participate in decision-making.

ANNEX 2

OBSERVER STATUS FOR INTERNATIONAL INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN THE WTO³

1. The purpose of observer status for international intergovernmental organizations (hereinafter referred to as "organizations") in the WTO is to enable these organizations to follow discussions therein on matters of direct interest to them.
2. Requests for observer status shall accordingly be considered from organizations which have competence and a direct interest in trade policy matters, or which, pursuant to paragraph V:1 of the WTO Agreement, have responsibilities related to those of the WTO.
3. Requests for observer status shall be made in writing to the WTO body in which such status is sought, and shall indicate the nature of the work of the organization and the reasons for its interest in being accorded such status. Requests for observer status from organizations shall not, however, be considered for meetings of the Committee on Budget, Finance and Administration or of the Dispute Settlement Body.⁴
4. Requests for observer status shall be considered on a case-by-case basis by each WTO body to which such a request is addressed, taking into account such factors as the nature of work of the organization concerned, the nature of its membership, the number of WTO Members in the organization, reciprocity with respect to access to proceedings, documents and other aspects of observership, and whether the organization has been associated in the past with the work of the CONTRACTING PARTIES to GATT 1947.
5. In addition to organizations that request, and are granted, observer status, other organizations may attend meetings of the Ministerial Conference, the General Council or subsidiary bodies on the specific invitation of the Ministerial Conference, the General Council or the subsidiary body concerned, as the case may be. Invitations may also be extended, as appropriate and on a case-by-case basis, to specific organizations to follow particular issues within a body in an observer capacity.
6. Organizations with which the WTO has entered into a formal arrangement for cooperation and consultation shall be accorded observer status in such bodies as may be determined by that arrangement.
7. Organizations accorded observer status in a particular WTO body shall not automatically be accorded such status in other WTO bodies.
8. Representatives of organizations accorded observer status may be invited to speak at meetings of the bodies to which they are observers normally after Members of that body have spoken. The right to speak does not include the right to circulate papers or to make proposals, unless an organization is specifically invited to do so, nor to participate in decision-making.
9. Observer organizations shall receive copies of the main WTO documents series and of other documents series relating to the work of the subsidiary bodies which they attend as observers. They

³These guidelines shall apply also to other organizations referred to by name in the WTO Agreement.

⁴In the case of the IMF and the World Bank, their requests for attendance as observers to the DSB will be acted upon in accordance with the arrangements to be concluded between the WTO and these two organizations.

may receive such additional documents as may be specified by the terms of any formal arrangements for cooperation between them and the WTO.

10. If for any one-year period after the date of the grant of observer status, there has been no attendance by the observer organization, such status shall cease. In the case of sessions of the Ministerial Conference, this period shall be two years.