

**Council for Trade in Goods
Committee on Trade Facilitation**

**REPORT ON IMPROVEMENTS IN THE FUNCTIONING OF
THE COMMITTEE ON TRADE FACILITATION**

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. In October 2022, the Chairperson to the Council for Trade in Goods (CTG) requested the fourteen Chairpersons of the CTG subsidiary bodies to report, under their own responsibility and with the assistance of the Secretariat, on the current functioning of the Committees.¹ The Chairperson of the Committee on Trade Facilitation (CTF) submitted such a report, providing clarity on the development of the Committee's procedures to oversee the operation and implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement.²

1.2. Following discussions and suggestions by the Members at the informal meeting of the CTG held on 27 February 2023³, the Chairperson of the CTG requested the Chairpersons of the subsidiary bodies to organize discussions in each respective body, in the context of formal or informal meetings, concerning the functioning of each Committee to identify possible areas of improvement, taking into account the comparative matrix that was prepared by the Secretariat.⁴

1.3. Further, subsidiary bodies were requested to submit a written report to the CTG describing the discussions held and improvements introduced and, to the extent possible, submit such written reports for consideration at the formal meeting of the CTG scheduled to take place on 30 November 2023.⁵

1.4. This draft report describes the discussions held and improvements introduced in the Committee on Trade Facilitation in the context of the WTO "Reform by Doing" process since the conclusion of MC12 (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. At the meeting of 28-29 November and 1 December 2022 of the CTF, the Chairperson informed delegations about the request made by the CTG Chairperson to the subsidiary bodies to prepare a report, under the Chairpersons' own responsibility, describing the concrete actions their Committees had adopted over the past years to improve their work, as well as any proposals for improvements.⁶ The Chair circulated a draft report to Members and invited them to submit comments on the draft in writing. The report was circulated in document [G/TFA/W/88](#); [G/L/1474](#) and presented at the CTG meeting on 31 January 2023.

2.2. At the formal meeting of the CTF of 21-22 March 2023⁷, Members discussed ideas for the improvement of the functioning of the Committee and proponents referred to the following documents:

¹ [JOB/CTG/18](#).

² [G/TFA/W/88](#).

³ [JOB/CTG/23](#).

⁴ [G/C/W/824/Rev.1](#).

⁵ [JOB/CTG/33](#).

⁶ [G/TFA/M/24](#).

⁷ [G/TFA/M/25](#).

- a. [JOB/TF/232/Rev.1](#) - "Functioning of the CTG and its Subsidiary Bodies - Communication from Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, and Uruguay".
- b. [JOB/GC/223/Rev.1](#) - "LDC Views On WTO Reform Discussions and Proposals - Communication from Chad on behalf of the LDC Group".

2.3. As a follow-up to that exchange, the Chair of the Committee circulated, on 3 April 2023, a summary of the inputs from the March meeting, requesting additional ideas and suggestions which could be consolidated into a document as a basis for further discussions in the Committee. At the request of the Chair, the Secretariat prepared document [JOB/TF/234](#) which contained the consolidated list of suggestions identified by Members, the current practice in the CTF regarding the suggestions made. The Chair also took the opportunity to include some comments and identify a number of the suggestions under his own responsibility.

2.4. At the formal meeting of the Committee of 15-16 June⁸, Members discussed further ideas for the improvement of the functioning of the Committee and proponents referred to the following documents:

- a. [WT/GC/W/877](#) - "Improving The Operation of WTO Bodies to Revitalise the WTO's Monitoring and Deliberative Function - Communication From Australia; Brunei Darussalam; Canada; Chile; Costa Rica; European Union; Guatemala; Iceland; Israel; Japan; Republic of Korea; Republic of Moldova; Montenegro; New Zealand; North Macedonia; Norway; Peru; The Philippines; Singapore; Switzerland; The Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu; Thailand; Ukraine; and the United Kingdom".
- b. [WT/GC/W/874](#) - "WTO reform: incremental changes to improve the functioning of the various WTO bodies - Communication from India".

2.5. The Committee held an informal meeting on 26 July 2023 where document [JOB/TF/234](#) formed the basis of the discussion on improving the functioning of the Committee. The Committee identified six measures which could be implemented immediately without further action and agreed that two further measures would be proposed for formally adoption through written procedures.⁹ The Chair circulated a Summary Report of the informal meeting in document [JOB/TF/235](#) outlining the discussions and outcomes of the meeting.

3 IMPROVEMENTS ON THE FUNCTIONING OF THE COMMITTEE

3.1. As a result of these discussions, the Committee agreed to implement eight changes with a view to improving its functioning, comprising two changes adopted through formal written procedures ([JOB/TF/237](#) and [G/TFA/7](#)) and six changes where the Secretariat would introduce to the way in which it supports the work of the Committee.¹⁰

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

General area	Improvements in the functioning of the Committee on Trade Facilitation
Assistance to delegates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizing periodic introductory sessions twice a year about the TFA, the TFA database, and update on the work of the CTF. • Drafting a manual describing the main procedural and substantive aspects of the work of the CTF. An outline will be shared with Members in advance. • Organizing capacity building sessions on TFA notification submissions on an annual basis, in the context of informal meetings. Additional sessions to be held on and ad hoc basis as requested by Members. Participation of capital-based officials in the sessions will be considered.

⁸ [G/TFA/M/26](#).

⁹ [JOB/TF/237](#).

¹⁰ The LDC Group expressed their systemic concern regarding written procedures and the view that different suggestions under the "reform by doing" discussions should be considered on a trial basis.

General area	Improvements in the functioning of the Committee on Trade Facilitation
Conduct of formal meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Secretariat to circulate an annotated agenda ahead of formal meetings of the CTF, ten days in advance of the meeting. The document could describe each agenda item and provide relevant background to help the preparation by delegations The Secretariat to circulate documents with a document symbol sufficiently in advance of meetings so that they could be translated and made available through Documents Online, (Reference: JOB/CTG/32 item f.1.1). Both Members and the Secretariat will make their best efforts to ensure that all presentations are circulated and made available online (i.e. under the RD document series) prior to the meetings, (Reference: JOB/CTG/32 item f.1.2). The Secretariat to circulate the Chairperson's written reports or statements when this can be useful or when it is requested by delegations
Conduct of informal meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Secretariat to circulate the Chairperson's written reports or statements when this can be useful or when it is requested by delegations.

4 NEXT STEPS

4.1. The CTF will conduct further analysis and sharing of views needed regarding the format and preparation of the minutes of the CTF and discuss any possible recommendations in this area.
