



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

**CURRENT FUNCTIONING OF THE
COMMITTEE ON SAFEGUARDS**

**REPORT TO THE COUNCIL FOR TRADE IN GOODS
BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMITTEE ON SAFEGUARDS**

The following report has been prepared by Ms Maryam Abdulaziz Aldoseri, under her own responsibility as Chairperson of the Committee on Safeguards, with the assistance of the Secretariat, at the request of the Chairperson of the Council for Trade in Goods.¹

1 PAST EFFORTS TO IMPROVE THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

Other than the efforts undertaken earlier, from which the current status of the Committee's practices as described in Section 2 was derived, the following development is noteworthy: In August 2016, a proposal was made to establish a Working Group on Implementation. The proposed purpose of this Working Group was to function as a forum where Members will exchange views on technical matters related to the implementation of the Safeguards Agreement and to prepare recommendations to the consideration of the Committee on Safeguards ("Committee"). The Committee discussed this proposal in autumn 2016 and in spring 2017, but could not reach consensus on the matter.²

2 CURRENT STATUS OF COMMITTEE PRACTICES

2.1 Assistance to delegates

The Committee does not regularly organize training activities for Geneva-based delegates on the practical aspects of its functioning and has never been requested by Members to provide such activities. The Secretariat systematically provides assistance to all delegations involved in the meetings before and after the meetings. The Secretariat circulates a deadlines document containing the specific dates by which Members should submit the various documentation in connection with the last meeting and in conjunction with the following meeting. It reminds delegates of the issues raised and whether there are any outstanding questions to answer before or at the meeting.

At every meeting of the Committee, the Chair regularly promotes the use of the e-subscription tool and the use of Documents for Meetings, and urges delegates to subscribe to the "contact list" (see details below in section 2.2.2).

The Committee has not undertaken specific initiatives to increase the participation of capital-based officials *per se*, as the Committee has always been heavily attended by large capital-based delegations. The fact that the dates of the meetings were decided by the Committee, in the 1990s, to take place in the last week of April and the last week of October (unless that falls on a WTO holiday) made it easy for capital-based officials to plan their travel and organize their meeting dates with certainty and predictability. The only exception was during the COVID-19 pandemic when capital-based officials and in a couple of meetings Geneva-based delegates, were unable to attend in person. However, despite time zone differences capital-based officials attended online meetings via Interprefy and interacted effectively. The continued use of Interprefy, even after the COVID-19

¹ See document JOB/CTG/18.

² See minutes of the Committee G/SG/M/51, agenda item 3.

pandemic, has definitely increased attendance and enhanced participation of more capital-based officials who can now attend such meetings online via a flexible virtual tool.

2.2 Organization of Committee work

2.2.1 Digital tools used for Committee work

The Committee routinely makes use of the e-subscription tool, the Documents for Meetings and the contact list (see below in section 2.2.2).

2.2.2 Planning and organization of meetings

The Committee has fixed dates for its regular meetings, by virtue of a 1997 decision (G/SG/M/9). These are usually held in the last week of April (the spring meeting) and the last week of October (the autumn meeting), which allows for advance planning and predictability. In the rare occurrence that any day of these weeks fall on a WTO official holiday, the Committee is informed and decides on an alternative meeting date, usually the following week.

It should be noted that the dates of the Committee's meetings are coordinated with the Committee on Anti-Dumping Practices (ADP) and the Committee on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures (SCM), which hold their meetings in the same weeks (the "Rules week" meetings). The same coordination is also extended to the Working Party on State Trading Enterprises, which holds its meetings back-to-back with the three Committees. All four bodies involve to a large extent the same capital-based officials.

In addition to its Rules of Procedures, the Committee has adopted specific procedures for the review of its legislative notifications in 1996 (S/SG/W/116), which is a crucial part of its work and monitoring function.

(Annotated draft agenda and airgrams)

The Committee issues – since 1995 - detailed annotated draft agenda approximately six weeks before each regular the meeting, where different items are listed along with the relevant information and deadlines. The annotated draft agenda also inform Members of the date by which they can submit any comments or add any items to the agenda, prior to the issuance of the formal airgram convening the meeting. All unanswered written questions posed regarding legislative notifications are identified in the annotated draft agenda and are retained in the final airgram of the meeting.

The formal airgram is issued minimum 10 days prior to the meeting. The airgram contains the proposed agenda, as foreshadowed in the annotated draft agenda document, along with any items requested, by the set deadline, to be placed on the agenda by any Member.

In all regular Committee meetings, the first section of the agenda relates to legislative notifications and the second section relates to safeguard actions. Both sections are standardized in the sense that they include all notifications submitted since the last regular meeting. The items therein are organized in alphabetical order of the notifying Member. The following sections contain other specific items requested by Members.

A list of contact details of the delegates responsible for the Committee has been created many years ago. It is updated continuously, and is issued as a room document prior to each meeting. Annotated draft agenda, airgrams, draft annual reports and all communications issued by the Committee or the Chair are placed online prior to the meetings, and are also sent by email to this contact list to keep delegates attending the meetings informed.

(Other documents circulated before and after meetings)

Prior to each meeting, the Secretariat circulates an updated list of contact details of delegations for Members' review and submission of further updates, if any.

Prior to the October meeting each year, the Secretariat circulates the draft annual report for Members' review and written comments.

Immediately after meetings, the Secretariat circulates a deadlines document -- for follow-up documents related to the meeting just concluded, and for documents to be submitted for consideration at the next meeting. In addition, following a meeting of the Committee the Secretariat normally prepares a strictly factual news item for the WTO website, approved by the Chair of the Committee, reflecting the main topics that were raised at the meeting.

(Preparation of the minutes)

For each Regular meeting, the Secretariat starts drafting the minutes of the meetings immediately after the Regular meeting but can only finalize the first draft when it receives all of the written versions of the statements or after the recording of the meeting is transcribed to make sure that the minutes are comprehensive, accurate and complete. The minutes are basically a detailed summary of what Members said at the meeting. The Secretariat normally awaits the deadlines - pertaining to the questions and answers to be provided following the meeting - to lapse (these questions and answers are usually circulated and referred to in the draft minutes) before the draft minutes are sent to Members for comments. The draft minutes are then sent to Members that took the floor at the meeting to comment on the summaries of their interventions. The draft minutes are also sent to Members regarding which an item was raised, even if they did not take the floor. Members who took the floor at the meeting are given 10 calendar days to comment on their own interventions. The minutes are then immediately circulated once any necessary changes have been introduced. (See Table 3 for more details.)

Table 1: Number of formal and informal meetings

Year	Formal meeting (number and duration)	Informal meetings (number and duration)	Other (e.g. workshops, symposia, etc.)
2019	Twice (half day for the spring meeting and one day for the autumn meeting)	Twice (half day each)	Meeting of the "Friends of SG Proceedings" ³ (in conjunction with the spring meeting) Meeting of the "Friends of SG Proceedings" (in conjunction with the autumn meeting)
2020	Once (half day in autumn) (No meeting in spring due to COVID.)	Four times (half day each)	n.a.
2021	Twice (one day each)	Twice (half day each)	n.a.
2022	Twice (one day for the spring meeting and half day for the autumn meeting)	None.	Notification seminar (in conjunction with the spring meeting)

Table 2: Preparation of annotated draft agendas and airgrams

Year	Date of formal meeting	Date of circulation of airgram	No. of days before the meeting
2019	29 April 18 November	18 April 8 November	11 calendar days 10 calendar days
2020	26 October	16 October	10 calendar days

³ A meeting of the "Friends of SG Proceedings" is organized by certain Members, open to all WTO Members. Its purpose is explained to be sharing each other's experiences and learning from each other.

Year	Date of formal meeting	Date of circulation of airgram	No. of days before the meeting
2021	26 April	16 April	10 calendar days
	25 October	15 October	10 calendar days
2022	25 April	14 April	11 calendar days
	24 October	14 October	10 calendar days

Table 3: Preparation of the minutes/summary reports

Year	Last date of the formal meeting	Date of circulation of the minutes	No. of pages	No. of days after the meeting
2019	29 April	22 August	17	115
	18 November	31 March 2020	20	134
2020	(No meeting in spring due to COVID-19)			
	26 October	23 February 2021	28	120
2021	26 April	27 July	19	92
	25 October	21 February 2022	18	119
2022	25 April	16 September	17	144
	24 October	(not yet)		

2.2.3 Informal meetings

Informal meetings are convened by e-mails (see above, in section 2.2.2), and after September 2021, via an ICN document as well. Convening notices always provide explanations by the Chairperson on the purpose of the meeting.

Table 4: Convening of informal meetings

Year	Date of informal meeting	Date of communication convening the informal meeting	No. of days between the two timings
2019	1 February	21 January	11
	27 September	16 September	11
2020	10 March	5 February	33
	27 July	7 July	20
	29 September	15 September	14
	14 December	3 December	11
2021	2 March	17 February	13
	6 October	24 September	12
2022	(none until now)		--

2.3 Substantive work

2.3.1 Thematic sessions

All of the informal meetings referred to in table 4 were held for the purpose of discussing a specific theme.

2.3.2 Notifications

The Secretariat has created and updated the Handbook of SG-related Notification Obligations. The Handbook, which can be found on the WTO webpage under the SG section, can provide additional clarity as to how and when the notifications should be made.

At every regular Committee meeting, the Chair raises the issue of missing legislative notifications, and urges Members to fulfil their notification obligations. This is reflected in the minutes of all Committee meetings and in the Committee's annual reports.

The notification format has been revised three times – in 2009, in 2020 and in 2021. The latest format is contained in document G/SG/1/Rev.3.

The Committee held a notification seminar in the spring of 2022.

2.3.3 Reports prepared by the Secretariat

Prior to the October meeting each year, the Secretariat sends (by e-mail, by circulating, and by posting on the Documents for Meetings), as an "RD" document, the draft annual report to Members for comments. These reports are adopted by the Committee at the end of the October meeting each year.

At its October 2015 meeting, the Committee agreed to make the information in one of the Annexes of the annual report (mapping all the notifications received in the course of the year) more informative. At its October 2018 meeting, the Committee agreed to a further brush-up of the same Annex.

2.3.4 Participation by external stakeholders

The International Monetary Fund, World Bank and UNCTAD have regular Observer status in the Committee. Pursuant to a decision of the Committee in October 1998, the Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States ("OACPS") and the OECD are invited to attend meetings on an *ad hoc* basis.

2.3.5 Work with other Committees or WTO bodies

Procedures, including the timing of the meetings, are closely coordinated among the three Committees of SG, ADP, and SCM. (See also section 2.2.2.)
