



16 October 2023

(23-6966)

Page: 1/4

**Council for Trade in Goods
Committee on Market Access**

**REPORT ON IMPROVEMENTS IN THE FUNCTIONING OF
THE COMMITTEE ON MARKET ACCESS¹**

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. This report has been prepared at the request of the Council for Trade in Goods (CTG)² to update the Council on the recent discussions on measures to improve the functioning of the Committee on Market Access (CMA or Committee). It complements information contained in the report prepared by the former Chairperson of the CMA, with the assistance of the Secretariat, which was circulated on 1 December 2022 ([G/L/1460; G/MA/W/182](#)).³

2 PROCESS AND PROPOSALS

2.1. As indicated in the 2022 report by the former Chairperson of the CMA to the CTG and 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 considerable progress made by the CMA until now 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 CMA started the discussions on how to further improve its functioning at its first informal meeting of 21 February 2023.⁴ At that meeting, Members were asked to reflect on whether the CMA 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 20 April 2023, the former Chairperson of the CMA circulated a document containing a preliminary list of issues for discussions by the Committee (document [JOB/MA/162](#)). 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 preliminary list of issues was included on the agenda of the CMA formal meeting of 26-27 April 2023.⁵ At that formal meeting, it was agreed that the Committee would hold substantive discussions on how to improve its functioning at its next informal meeting, which subsequently took place on 3 July 2023.

2.4. In preparation for the July 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 of each proposal in order to inform Members' discussions. The draft table was circulated by email to all Members on 29 June 2023 and was used during the informal meeting to record the discussions held and the proposed way forward under each item. The updated table reflecting the outcome of the informal meeting was sent to Members for review and comments on 6 July 2023, and the final version was circulated in document [JOB/MA/165](#) on 18 July 2023.⁵

2.5. In this document, Members' proposals were divided into three groups: 1) proposals that could be implemented without any additional action by the Committee; 2) proposals for adoption by the

¹ Adopted on 16 October 2023.

² See documents [JOB/CTG/29](#) and [JOB/CTG/33](#).

³ See documents [ICN/MA/9](#) and [ICN/MA/9/Add.1](#).

⁴ See document [G/MA/M/78](#), agenda item 10.2.

⁵ See document [ICN/MA/10/Suppl.1](#).

Committee through written procedures; and 3) proposals where no specific follow-up was required. The document also identified proposals whose implementation has budgetary implications and may not be implemented or may face delays due to resource constraints (see paragraph 2.11).

2.6. With regards to three items that Members considered that required adoption by the Committee (see section 3), on 20 July 2023, the proposed written procedures were circulated in document [JOB/MA/166](#), and a corrigendum was circulated on 8 August 2023 ([JOB/MA/166/Corr.1](#)) According to the proposed procedures, the three proposals listed in the annex of document [JOB/MA/166](#) and its corrigendum would be considered to be adopted by the Committee unless the Secretariat received any objection in writing by 15 August 2023. The outcome of these procedures, with the list of adopted proposals, was circulated in document [G/MA/411](#) of 18 September 2023.

2.7. At its informal meeting of 18 September 2023, the Committee was informed about the progress that was made in a number of other items identified in document [JOB/MA/165](#), including on the implementation of several new features to the CMA eAgenda and on the proposals by certain Members for the organization of thematic sessions in the CMA.⁶ At that meeting, the Chairperson proposed to reflect the status of the Committee's work on how to improve its functioning until that date in the report to the CTG, and to continue the discussions based on Members' interests and requests. At the formal meeting of the Committee on 16-17 October 2023, the Chairperson reported about this area of work under a dedicated agenda item.⁷

2.8. Specifically with regard to the proposals, the list of issues for discussions by the CMA identified 30 items (see [JOB/MA/165](#)) based on written inputs received by Members, including two official communications circulated by the CMA:

- Communication from Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay and Uruguay on "Functioning of the CTG and its subsidiary bodies" ([JOB/MA/158/Rev.2](#)); and
- Communication by the United Kingdom on "UK views on the functioning of the CMA" (document [JOB/MA/163](#)).

2.9. Noting that the Committee has already been applying many of the suggestions proposed by Members⁸, discussions in the CMA have focused on the following additional improvements that 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 (which were divided into CMA-specific tools and WTO-wide tools).

2.10. It was also recognized that several of the proposals raised by Members in the CMA did not require any specific action by the Committee or the Secretariat as they were horizontal in nature and were linked to ongoing discussions in other WTO bodies.

2.11. With regards to the improvement that has budgetary implications (i.e., online notification system for quantitative restrictions), at the informal meeting of 3 July, it was suggested that the Chairperson send a communication to the Committee on Budget and Finance Administration (CBFA) and inform the General Council, through the CTG. On 31 July, the Chairperson of the CMA met with the Chairperson of the CBFA who had indicated that delegations interested in obtaining additional resources for the implementation of measures resulting from the "reform by doing" process should attend the CBFA meetings and raise this issue in that committee as the best way to secure the resources that are needed to carry out the projects of interest to the CMA.

⁶ See document [ICN/MA/11/Suppl.1](#).

⁷ See document [WTO/AIR/MA/19](#).

⁸ See annex table in document [G/C/W/824/Rev.1](#).

3 IMPROVEMENTS ON THE FUNCTIONING OF THE COMMITTEE

3.1. As a result of the process and proposals described above, the Committee agreed to implement 12 improvements to the way it is functioning, including three where formal decisions were taken by the Committee and nine where the Secretariat was requested to introduce changes to the way in which it supports the work of the Committee.

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 Market Access
A. Assistance to delegates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Secretariat will schedule its presentation on the functioning of the CMA for delegates at its first informal meeting of the year. The Secretariat started to send reminders for outstanding notifications of quantitative restrictions (QRs) and notifications to the Integrated Databases (IDB) to the email addresses of delegates that have registered on E-Registration as following the CMA in addition to the mission's general email address The Secretariat developed a new section of the WTO website that serves as a manual to explain the work of the CMA and also consolidates in one page all the digital tools used by the Committee⁹. Following the creation of the new CMA webpage, the Secretariat will create a factsheet on QRs to be posted online. Following the creation of the new CMA webpage, the Secretariat will develop a short description of the CMA digital tools to be posted online.
B. Planning and organization of meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Secretariat will circulate a written explanation for the cancellation or postponement of a meeting, as required.
C. Conduct of formal meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Committee adopted a decision to extend the closing of the agenda to at least 15 calendar days prior to the date of the formal meeting, to allow delegations more time to prepare for each meeting (see G/MA/411). The Committee adopted a decision to instruct the Secretariat to include a new subsection in the agenda of formal meetings of the CMA to separate "new" trade concerns and place them before "previously raised" trade concerns (see G/MA/411).
D. Conduct of informal meetings	
E. Digital tools used by the Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To facilitate the work of delegates and improve access to information after a meeting, the Committee adopted a decision to change the default option for statements in the CMA eAgenda to automatically make statements available to all Members after the meeting (see G/MA/411). To facilitate the preparation and follow-up of meetings for delegates, the Secretariat has added a number of new features to the CMA eAgenda (i.e. addition of opening/closing remarks by the Chairperson under each agenda item; the inclusion of all reports by the Secretariat, the Chairperson, and observers as statements; list of all the delegations that take the floor at a meeting). Based on information available on eAgenda, the system can generate a document compiling all the information available under each agenda item that can be downloaded by delegates at the end of the meeting. This document could be used by delegates as a preliminary report of formal meetings and will contribute to facilitate the production of the minutes by the Secretariat. The online notification system for QRs, which the Committee considers to be an important improvement that could help Members submitting notifications, will be developed subject to budgetary constraints.

⁹ https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/markacc_e/markacc_com_e.htm.

General area	Improvements in the functioning of the Committee on Market Access
F. Substantive work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Based on the positive experience with the CMA experience-sharing sessions on trade in COVID-19 related goods, the Committee will continue its practice of organizing thematic sessions based on proposals by Members.
G. Other	