

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

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Council for Trade in Goods

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PROPOSAL FOR A CTG WORK METHOD ON TRADE FACILITATION

Joint Communication from Canada and the United States

1. There are four important objectives for conducting further work in the Council for Trade in Goods, consistent with its Singapore Ministerial mandate to “carry out exploratory and analytical work, taking into account the work of other relevant organizations, on the simplification of trade procedures, in order to assess the scope for WTO rules in this area.” Such work should be undertaken with an aim to:

- exchange experiences linked to real-world problems Members are addressing in varying ways;
- identify various types of measures related to the conduct of trade transactions and describe how such measures incorporate basic WTO principles associated with trade facilitation;
- analyze potential current “gaps” within the parameters of WTO rules – rather than “gaps” in Members’ regimes;
- establish a basis for Members to understand and assess capacity building and technical assistance issues with regard to further WTO work in the area of Trade Facilitation.

2. Meeting these objectives will ensure that the work by CTG for the rest of the year in the area of Trade Facilitation is conducted through a concrete and focused agenda that progresses into a more advanced stage – while also bringing positive involvement by all Members in order to underscore the true “win-win” nature of future WTO work in this area.

3. In order to ensure each of these objectives is met, one method that could be effectively utilized would be to conduct informal CTG discussions based on papers/presentations submitted by Members on “National Experience and Capacity Assessment.”

- Such papers/presentations would be invited for submission on a voluntary basis, with particular emphasis on seeking submission by a mix of Members that are representative of various levels of development.

4. In order to give an important focus to the CTG discussions, such submissions would be developed and presented with a common framework of national experience (including capacity-related issues), reflecting basic WTO principles such as those of transparency and minimizing trade formalities (referred to, for example, in Articles VIII and X of GATT 1994). In this manner such

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submissions would have a consistent shape, while there would still be a wide berth as to the specific nature and content of each paper/presentation.

5. Providing transparency in trade transactions and minimizing trade formalities can be accomplished through means that may vary from Member to Member. Submissions to the CTG that reflect the diversity in such measures based on individual Member situations – along with describing how such measures incorporate basic WTO principles associated with trade facilitation – will provide an educative and positive framework for the CTG discussions to take place.

- It will be important that papers/presentations fully articulate capacity restraints and technical assistance needs (as well as an assessment of the effectiveness of assistance already received). For example, it would be useful to discuss such issues as they relate to ongoing efforts to improve and otherwise modernize measures which are drawn from basic WTO principles (e.g., issues related to publication of regulations via National Gazette versus Internet posting; capacity needs related to minimizing import formalities through development of professional administrative infrastructure to handle determinations post-entry – removing the burden of administrative determinations from inspectors involved in physical checks of merchandise).

6. A wide array of submissions of such papers/presentations to the CTG would result in robust analysis and deeper exploratory work in this area. However, such an approach (i.e., inviting papers/presentations on national experience and capacity assessment reflecting basic WTO principles) would not preclude other types of submissions, proposals, or discussions as part of the overall CTG process.
