

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

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Committee on Market Access

Original: Spanish

NEW PANAMA CANAL TRANSIT TOLLS

Communication from Ecuador

The following communication, dated 11 September 2002, has been received from the Permanent Mission of Ecuador.

As the new Panama Canal transit toll structure will take effect on 1 October 2002 and this decision by the Panama Canal Authority affects the international trade flows of countries that use the Canal, Ecuador considers it timely for this matter to be examined by the WTO Committee on Market Access. Therefore, Ecuador would request that an item be placed on the agenda of the next meeting of the Committee so as to provide an opportunity to discuss the topic.

Ecuador believes that the answers to the following questions could provide a discussion framework and allow a more informed treatment of the matter in the Committee on Market Access:

1. Could Panama provide information on the recent decision of the Panama Canal Authority to raise the Canal tolls?
 2. What is the rationale for charging new, differentiated tolls depending on the vessel's cargo tonnage?
 3. Why will vessels with smaller cargo tonnages pay a higher toll rate?
 4. What services have traditionally been covered by the transit tolls paid?
 5. Which are the services that will not be covered by the toll under the new structure?
 6. Does Panama consider the rates being collected under the new structure to be commensurate with the services provided and consistent with Article V of the GATT 1994?
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