

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

RESTRICTED

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DRAFT RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE ON REGIONAL TRADE AGREEMENTS

The following Draft rules of procedure for meetings of the Committee on Regional Trade Agreements are proposed for consideration and adoption by the Committee on Regional Trade Agreements at its meeting on 21 May 1996. To ensure consistency, they are based, as far as possible, on the rules of procedure for meetings of the General Council and its subsidiary bodies.*

In accordance with Article IV:2 of the WTO Agreement, the rules of procedure for the Committee on Regional Trade Agreements will have to be approved by the General Council.

The Rules of Procedure for Meetings of the General Council, contained shall apply *mutatis mutandis* for meetings of the Committee on Regional Trade Agreements, except as provided below:

- (i) Rule 5 of Chapter II (Agenda) is not applicable.
- (ii) Rules 12 to 14 of Chapter V (Officers) shall be modified to read as follows:

Rule 12

The Committee shall elect a Chairperson *and Vice-Chairpersons as necessary* from among the representatives of Members. The election shall *normally* take place at the first meeting of the year and shall take effect *immediately*. *The duration of the term of the officers shall be determined in the light of work requirements of the Committee.*

Rule 13

If the Chairperson is absent from any meeting or part thereof, one of the Vice-Chairpersons shall perform the functions of the Chairperson.

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*The wording in italics indicates where this document differs from the rules of procedure for meetings of the General Council.

Rule 14

If the Chairperson can no longer perform the functions of the office, the Committee shall designate *one of the Vice-Chairpersons* referred to in Rule 12 to perform those functions pending the election of a new Chairperson. *If a Vice-Chairperson can no longer perform the functions of the office, the Committee shall decide upon the need to elect a new Vice-Chairperson before the end of the term of office.*

Rule 14bis

The assignment of meetings or specific tasks to the officers shall be decided by the Chairperson in consultation with the Vice-Chairpersons and Members.

(iii) Rules 23 and 24 of Chapter VI (Conduct of business) shall be modified to read as follows:

Rule 23

Representatives shall endeavour, to the extent that a situation permits, to keep their oral statements brief. Representatives wishing to develop their position on a particular matter in fuller detail may circulate a written statement for distribution to Members, *which, at the representative's request, may be reflected in the corresponding report or in the summary proceedings, as appropriate.*

Rule 24

In order to expedite the conduct of business, the Chairperson may invite representatives that wish to express their support for a given proposal to show their hands, in order to be duly recorded *in the corresponding report or in the summary proceedings, as appropriate*, as supporting statements; thus, only representatives with dissenting views or wishing to make explicit points or proposals would actually be invited to make a statement. This procedure shall only be applied in order to avoid undue repetition of points already made, and will not preclude any representative who so wishes from taking the floor.

(iv) Rule 33 of Chapter VII (Decision-Making) shall be modified to read as follows:

Rule 33

Where a decision cannot be arrived at by consensus, the matter at issue shall be referred to the relevant WTO body for decision.

(v) Rule 34 of Chapter VII (Decision-Making) is not applicable.

(vi) Rule 36 of Chapter IX (Records) shall be modified to read as follows:

Rule 36

Discussions held in meetings of the Committee on Regional Trade Agreements under item 1(a) of its Terms of Reference shall be reflected in the corresponding reports. Summary proceedings will be prepared for all other matters dealt with in the meetings.

Rule 36bis

At the end of the year, a report to the General Council on the activities of the Committee on Regional Trade Agreements during the year shall be adopted.