

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

RESTRICTED

WT/SPEC/2

14 February 1995

(95-0304)

Original: Spanish

ACCESSION OF PANAMA

Communication from Panama Concerning the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade

The following communication was submitted by the Government of Panama for circulation to members of the Working Party.

AGREEMENT ON TECHNICAL BARRIERS TO TRADE

Statements on the Implementation and Administration of the Agreement

At the request of the Government of the United States, the Government of Panama submits the following *informal communication* concerning the internal regime applicable to industrial standards and technology.

This communication uses the model for statements on the implementation and administration of the Agreement, exclusively for purposes of clarity.

1. The legislation of the Republic of Panama which regulates technical and industrial standards is contained in:

Decree 282 of 13 August 1970.

Decree 63 of 4 May 1971, "to approve the regulations implementing Cabinet Decree 283 of 13 August 1970, which establishes the Comisión Panameña de Normas Industriales y Técnicas (COPANIT) (Panamanian Commission for Industrial and Technical Standards)".

The purpose of Decree 63 is to determine the powers and functions of the Departments of the Panamanian Commission for Industrial and Technical Standards (COPANIT) which is responsible for studying and recommending technical standards and establishing the general system for such studies in the context of universally applied technical standardization practices.

Law 2 of the 11 February 1982, "creating and assigning functions to the Dirección General de Normas y Tecnología Industrial" (the Directorate-General for Industrial Standards and Technology).

2.

- (a) Name of publications used to announce that work is proceeding on draft technical regulations or standards and rules of certification systems.

The procedure for amending existing regulations consists of three phases:

1. Preparation of the draft.
2. Study of the draft.
3. Public discussion: Once the draft has been approved it goes through a preliminary project stage which consists of publishing an announcement in a local newspaper, indicating a time-limit of 60 days for any recommendation or comment on the document.

Once recommendations, if any, have been received, the preliminary draft is submitted to the plenary of the Panamanian Commission for Industrial and Technical Standards (COPANIT) for approval and ratification by the Ministry of Trade and Industry and then the document is published in the Boletín de la Propiedad Industrial (Industrial Property Bulletin) of the Ministry of Trade and Industry.

Once the standard has been approved and published in the Industrial Property Bulletin, the Directorate-General for Industrial Standards and Technology sends a copy to all national entities and international standardization bodies (Article 7 of Executive Decree No. 63 of 4 May 1971).

- (b) The expected length of time allowed for presentation of comments in writing on technical regulations, standards or rules of certification systems

The expected length of time allowed for the presentation of comments is 60 days (Article 6 of Executive Decree No. 63 of 4 May 1971).

If as a result of objections it is necessary to draft a second proposal, this must be published for public inspection for a period of 30 days.

- (c) The name and address of the enquiry point(s) foreseen in Article 10 of the Agreement with an indication as to whether it is/they are fully operational

Dirección General de Normas y Tecnología Industrial
Comisión Panameña de Normas Industriales y Técnicas (COPANIT)
Apartado 9658. Zona 4
Panamá. Rep. of Panamá

The Directorate-General performs all the information and assistance functions described in Article 10.

- (d) The name and address of the agency with which to get in touch if consultations are to be requested under Article 14

Ministry of Foreign Relations
Entrega General, Zona 4
Panamá, Rep. of Panama

- (e) The name and address of any other agencies that have specific functions under the Agreement

Currently, the specific functions under the Agreement are carried out through the Directorate-General for Industrial and Technical Standards (COPANIT). However, the Government of the Republic of Panama is drawing up provisions in this respect, in order to respond more effectively to the requirements of the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade, when Panama becomes a Member of the WTO.

- (f) Measures and arrangements to ensure that national authorities preparing new technical regulations or certification systems, or substantial amendments to existing ones, provide early information on their proposals in order to enable the party in question to fulfil its obligations on notifications under Articles 2.5, 2.6, 7.3 and 7.4 of the Agreement

COPANIT is a member of the Pan-American Standards Commission, an international standardization and certification body which, in turn, is a member of the International Organisation for Standardization (ISO). COPANIT has the bases for study and approval of standards and certification systems applicable to all cases where there are international standards. The system is harmonized with international systems.

COPANIT works in close communication with the Ministry of Trade and Industry, an institution of central government. The Commission has the authority to undertake its activities, including inspections of institutions, at national and local level.

Furthermore, COPANIT has recently been accepted as a member of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

Once Panama is a Member of the GATT/WTO and ultimately a signatory to the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade, it will guarantee to fulfil all its provisions.