



**General Council Meeting  
14 February 2024**

**WTO REFORM**

"REFORM BY DOING"<sup>1</sup>

STATE OF PLAY IN WTO COUNCILS, COMMITTEES, AND NEGOTIATING BODIES

*Revision*

**1 BACKGROUND**

1.1. Following Paragraphs 3 and 4 of the MC12 Outcome Document, the WTO Reform process was launched by the then Chairperson of the General Council (GC), H.E. Mr. Didier Chambovey (Switzerland) through a series of consultations – with more than 100 delegations participating in the discussions. One of the messages that came out of this was the need to improve the daily functioning of WTO Councils, Committees and Negotiating Groups (WTO Bodies). In particular, this work would involve looking at how Members did things in the WTO and finding ways to do better. Several Members noted that such reforms should be organic and undertaken whenever and wherever possible – "reform by doing".

1.2. Given that other WTO Bodies are also responsible for conducting reform, many Members suggested that the General Council should coordinate with them in this regard. The General Council should likewise provide a forum for Members to be updated to have an overview of the entire process. At the same time, several Members suggested that the role of the General Council should not only be limited to keeping an overview of the different reform discussions. It should also engage in horizontal/cross-cutting issues – whether in informal or formal mode. In referring to the relevant discussions at the General Council, some Members cautioned that Members should implement Paragraph 3 in an effective manner.

1.3. Taking into account Members' perspectives and in parallel with the formal and informal conversations on this matter at the General Council, the then GC Chairperson noted that each WTO Body should be tasked to see what had been done and explore ways to improve their daily functioning to better deliver on respective mandates. He likewise encouraged WTO Bodies that had already started such discussions to continue doing so. To keep all Members abreast of the discussions, WTO Bodies were requested to report to the General Council, as appropriate. To facilitate the work, the General Council Chairperson would coordinate with the Director-General and the WTO Body Chairpersons. Since then, work continued both in the General Council and its Subsidiary Bodies. During this period, Members also circulated numerous papers and proposals and put across ideas on "reform by doing".

1.4. In this regard, the current General Council Chairperson, H.E. Dr. Athaliah Lesiba Molokomme (Botswana) convened an Informal Meeting on WTO Reform focused on the deliberative function and institutional matters on 16 June 2023. During these discussions, the General Council Chairperson

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<sup>1</sup> Following Members' request, the General Council Chairperson, H.E. Dr. Athaliah Lesiba Molokomme (Botswana), noted that the General Council would continue to monitor progress and coordinate with WTO Bodies as "reform by doing" work advanced. In this regard, in addition to the reports by respective Chairpersons of WTO Bodies, the Secretariat would continue updating the report in [JOB/GC/359](#) at every regular session of the General Council at least until MC13. In light of the 14 February Special General Council Meeting, this update contains inputs from WTO Councils, Committees and Negotiating Bodies where updates are available since the circulation of [JOB/GC/345](#) and [JOB/GC/345/Add.1](#) and builds on the report circulated in [JOB/GC/359/Rev.2](#). This update is **for information only** and is without prejudice to any Member's position.

noted that, within the "reform by doing" work, the aim of facilitating the participation of Members in WTO Bodies had been raised in a number of WTO Councils, Committees and Negotiating Groups, and in reform proposals. Effective participation of all Members in WTO Bodies had been highlighted as important to advance work in an inclusive manner and to meet Members' objectives. In this regard, a number of participatory challenges and concerns had been raised in Members' proposals or contributions which included:

- a. scheduling conflicts from overlapping meetings;
- b. insufficient information on agenda items including expected actions; the availability sufficiently in advance, of documents and presentations in the three official WTO languages; and timely written records. These have been said to have consequential challenges in effectively preparing and actively participating in meetings;
- c. inadequate support for follow-up work from meetings;
- d. disparity in the use of digital tools;
- e. dispersed databases;
- f. the need to improve the ability to discuss relevant issues in an orderly and direct manner;
- g. the need to improve efficiency, planning, time management; and,
- h. support to delegates, among many others.

1.5. Several ideas to address these challenges and concerns had also been put forward. In this regard, Members referred to the ongoing "reform by doing" efforts that were fuelled by Members' inputs. While in some WTO Bodies, steps were already taken to make improvements prior to MC12, a number of WTO Bodies had since then introduced improvements to their workflows or were in the process of considering them.

1.6. Building on these efforts and in response to the request from several delegations for a mapping out of "reform by doing" work in WTO Bodies, the General Council Chairperson requested the Secretariat to prepare an indicative summary table containing information on practices and measures to facilitate the participation of Members in WTO Councils, Committees and Negotiating Groups. The "Reform by Doing" table is in document [JOB/GC/345](#).

1.7. The GC Chairperson noted that the table mapped out how Members' requests or suggestions as reflected in proposals and/or during reform discussions were being undertaken in WTO Bodies. It classified Members' suggestions into four categories of practices and measures:

- a. those related to planning and organization of meetings;
- b. work procedures including facilitating meeting preparations and follow up;
- c. digital tools, and,
- d. support to delegates.

1.8. From this table, which was based on Members' requests, the General Council Chairperson further noted that some common trends seemed to emerge.

- a. First, Members valued effective time management, avoiding scheduling conflicts and ways to efficiently deal with issues through clustering meetings and joint sessions on crosscutting topics where appropriate.
- b. Second, sufficient information prior to and after meetings in all three WTO languages, efficient agenda setting and effective ways of addressing trade concerns seemed to also be of high importance to Members.

- c. Third, there was a growing acceptance of digital tools as a means to facilitate Members' participation in WTO Bodies and the Secretariat continued to respond to this need.
- d. Fourth, was the demand from the Membership for Secretariat support to delegates and capital-based officials – to better acquaint them about the workings of each WTO Body both on substance and the day-to-day work.

1.9. The GC Chairperson detected that, from Members' proposals, the reports that some Chairpersons had circulated and the "reform by doing" table, Members were not only raising and discussing their participation challenges, but importantly, practical suggestions on measures to address these challenges were being made. She was also encouraged that work was not only underway in WTO Bodies as instructed by Ministers – but that a number of practical improvements had already been implemented or would be implemented in the near future. In addition, Members agreed to advance and implement the "reform by doing" work as appropriate in WTO Bodies.

1.10. Since the 16 June Informal Meeting, WTO Bodies have continued with their "reform by doing" work. An update of this work was subsequently provided in [JOB/GC/345/Add.1](#). Following a request by Members to the General Council Chairperson to distil a list of measures from Members' proposals that could apply horizontally in all WTO Bodies, she requested the Secretaries of WTO Bodies to identify a few non-controversial crosscutting procedural improvements that all WTO Bodies could consider implementing as appropriate or if feasible.

1.11. In this regard, at the General Council meeting on 24-25 July 2023, the General Council Chairperson put forward **ten procedural measures** that she invited all WTO Bodies to consider applying as appropriate or as feasible aimed at facilitating the participation of Members in WTO Bodies and to enhance better preparation for meetings and follow-up work:

- a. Further enhancing support to delegates, including new ones, by the Secretariat.**
- b. Further enhancing support to new Chairpersons by the respective Secretaries of WTO Bodies.**
- c. Modernizing the appearance and format of airgrams, as appropriate and feasible, supplementing it with useful information to help with the preparation of meetings.**
- d. Systematically hyperlinking documents cited in airgrams, reports and any other documents circulated to Members.**
- e. As applicable or if feasible, using annotated agendas ahead of formal meetings describing each agenda item and providing relevant background.**
- f. Consideration of introduction of e-agendas, as appropriate.**
- g. Circulating oral reports by the Chairpersons or the Secretariat, as appropriate.**
- h. Aiming at circulating minutes as quickly as possible after the meetings.**
- i. Improving e-registration of delegates through e-delegate – including indicating the subject areas that a delegate is responsible for. In this regard, the role of delegation coordinators will be critical.**
- j. Continuing to engage in experience and information sharing sessions, as appropriate.**

1.12. Members took note of these measures and the work undertaken at the July General Council meeting. "Reform by doing" efforts continues in the respective WTO Bodies.

1.13. At the Senior Officials Meeting, on 23-24 October 2023, Senior Officials took note of the "reform by doing" work, commended the hard-working Ambassadors, Permanent Representatives

and delegates for their efforts towards this end and encouraged them to continue to "reform by doing" together for the benefit of the Membership.

1.14. During the General Council meeting on 13-15 December 2023, the GC Chairperson reported to Members that the Reform by Doing work had progressed in 2023. In particular, she recognized that the Goods Council had adopted a report in [G/L/1523](#) capturing 127 reforms that had been implemented to improve the functioning of the Goods Council and its 14 subsidiary bodies. These included significant changes to assist delegates, measures to improve the planning and organization of meetings, the procedures for the conduct of formal and informal meetings and, the introduction of digital tools to improve productivity and exchange of information. She also noted that important efforts had been undertaken in other WTO Councils and Committees.

## **2 UPDATES ON THE "REFORM BY DOING" TABLE ([JOB/GC/345](#)) FROM WTO COUNCILS, COMMITTEES AND NEGOTIATING GROUPS<sup>2</sup>**

### **2.1 Councils and Committees**

#### **2.1.1 General Council**

2.1. Since July 2023, annotated draft agenda are circulated to assist delegations prepare for General Council meetings. Additionally, documents that have been referenced in General Council documents, minutes, and agendas are now hyperlinked. An internal pilot version for a General Council e-agenda is being tested by the Secretariat. The General Council ePortal (GCeP) is being updated annually - [WTO | General Council ePortal \(GCeP\)](#). With a view to bringing in efficiencies in the conduct of business, the General Council Chairperson implements time limits for interventions in the General Council.

#### **2.1.1 Trade Policy Review Body**

2.2. On 26 July 2023, Members successfully concluded the Seventh Appraisal of the Trade Policy Review Mechanism (TPRM) ([WT/TPR/500](#)). One of the outcomes refers to the improvement and uniform adoption by all Members of the IT system "at the earliest possible date" to facilitate the TPR question and answer process. Significant progress has been made since then in developing the IT Q&A platform. The design phase of the platform was completed in January 2024 based on consultations with WTO Members. The coding work is now being done to make the site operational and hence ready for further testing. The outcomes of the 7<sup>th</sup> Appraisal are included in document [WT/MIN\(24\)/5](#). Also, the Secretariat started to hyperlink WTO documents referenced in TPR Secretariat and Government reports, and will do so in airgrams from February 2024.

#### **2.1.2 Council for Trade in Goods**

2.3. Under the umbrella of WTO reform, discussions at the Council for Trade in Goods (CTG) have largely focused on how to improve the deliberative function of the WTO regular bodies. This work is significant because the CTG oversees the functioning of 14 subsidiary bodies, which collectively implement all the agreements for trade in goods in Annex 1A of the WTO Agreement, and represent the majority of the WTO's regular bodies. Moreover, the effective functioning of these regular bodies is a necessary condition for a successful future implementation of some of the substantive changes being considered in the broader WTO reform discussions.

2.4. The CTG began its discussions on WTO Reform in July 2022 based on the mandate set out in the MC12 Outcome Document. At these discussions, the CTG Chairperson observed that there were three elements that could have an impact on the CTG's work, and held consultations with Members to inform the way ahead, including improving the deliberative function of the WTO through improved working procedures in the CTG and its subsidiary bodies. Since then, the CTG has held six informal meetings to consider specific proposals by Members to improve the functioning of this body.<sup>3</sup> The

<sup>2</sup> This Section only contains inputs from WTO Councils, Committees and Negotiating Bodies where updates are available since the circulation of the table in [JOB/GC/345](#) on 2 June 2023.

<sup>3</sup> The CTG has held informal meetings on 14 October 2022 ([ICN/CTG/5](#), [ICN/CTG/5/Add.1](#), and [JOB/CTG/17](#)); 31 January 2023 ([ICN/CTG/7](#), [ICN/CTG/7/Add.1](#), and [JOB/CTG/20](#)); 27 February 2023 ([ICN/CTG/8](#), [ICN/CTG/8/Suppl.1](#), and [JOB/CTG/23](#)); 31 March 2023 ([ICN/CTG/9](#), [ICN/CTG/9/Add.1](#),

CTG Chairpersons have consistently ensured transparency in these discussions via reports, which have been circulated under their own responsibility after each of the meetings. At their request, the Secretariat has also prepared tables indicating the status of each of the proposals.<sup>4</sup> At the four formal meetings held during this period, the current and previous Chairpersons of the CTG reported on the work undertaken in this area.<sup>5</sup>

2.5. At its formal meeting of 3-4 April 2023, the CTG adopted decisions to improve four of its working procedures<sup>6</sup>, and took note of additional changes introduced by the Secretariat after receiving feedback from Members. On 2 October 2023, the Council adopted five additional improvements through written procedures.<sup>7</sup> At its formal meeting of 30 November 2023, the CTG adopted, on a trial basis, four additional measures to improve its functioning.<sup>8</sup> Also at this meeting, the Council recalled the importance of complying with paragraphs 4 and 7 of the "Guidelines on the Arrangements for Scheduling of Meetings of WTO Bodies"<sup>9</sup> (document [WT/L/106](#)) concerning the desirability of fixing the dates of formal meetings in advance of the following calendar year, and submitting a written notice explaining to delegations the reasons behind cancellations or postponements of meetings. Overall, the CTG agreed to a total of 27 improvements, including 13 changes that were agreed through formal decisions, and 14 changes where either the Chairperson or the Secretariat had taken action following discussions with Members.

2.6. With a view to capturing all of the progress made in the Goods area, at its formal meeting of 30 November 2023, the CTG adopted a report describing 127 reforms introduced in the functioning of the CTG and its 14 subsidiary bodies (document [G/L/1523](#)), including 67 changes that had been formally adopted by those bodies, and 60 changes where either the Chairperson or the Secretariat had taken action following discussions with Members. As agreed by Members, the report was submitted to the General Council for its consideration.

### 2.1.3 Dispute Settlement Body

2.7. The DSB is now hyperlinking documents on the airgrams, proposed agendas and annual reports. Any further improvements will be communicated accordingly.

#### 2.1.3.1 Committee on Anti-dumping Practices

2.8. The Committee met informally on 3 May, 20 June, and on 2 October 2023. Members agreed via two written processes on four issues described in document [G/ADP/32](#) and on one additional issue described in document [G/ADP/33](#), respectively to improve the functioning of the Committee on Anti-Dumping Practices.

#### 2.1.3.2 Committee on Agriculture

2.9. The Committee on Agriculture at its meeting on 27-28 June 2023 approved the use of an annotated agenda for its meetings along the draft prepared by the Secretariat in document [RD/AG/112](#).

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[ICN/CTG/9/Suppl.1](#), and [JOB/CTG/27](#)); 31 May 2023 ([ICN/CTG/10](#), [ICN/CTG/10/Suppl.1](#) and [JOB/CTG/28](#)); and 19 September 2023 ([ICN/CTG/12](#), [ICN/CTG/12/Suppl.1](#) and [JOB/CTG/37](#)).

<sup>4</sup> As contained in [JOB/CTG/27](#), [JOB/CTG/28](#), [JOB/CTG/32](#), [JOB/CTG/33](#) and [JOB/CTG/37](#).

<sup>5</sup> See CTG Minutes of meetings as contained in [G/C/M/143](#) subsection 49.2, [G/C/M/144](#) subsection 53.2, [G/C/M/145](#) section 7, and [G/C/M/146](#) section 4.

<sup>6</sup> The adopted reforms include: (i) an extension to 15 calendar days for requesting the inclusion of an agenda item; (ii) separating the trade concerns in the agenda as new and previously raised; and (iii) including CTG trade concerns in the Trade Concerns Database. See [G/C/M/145](#) section 7, [JOB/CTG/27](#), and [JOB/CTG/28](#).

<sup>7</sup> The adopted reforms include: (i) the introduction of an annotated agenda on a trial basis; (ii) changing the default options for statements in the eAgenda; (iii) the online availability of all documents in all three WTO languages for consideration during a meeting; (iv) the online availability of presentations in all three WTO languages for consideration during a meeting; and (v) an agreement to hold a WTO Digital Tools Session annually. See [G/L/1490](#).

<sup>8</sup> The adopted reforms include: (i) the circulation of information regarding informal meetings; (ii) the Chairperson's follow-up note on actions following formal meetings; (iii) the CTG information hub; and (iv) the format and content of the convening notice (Airgram). See [G/L/1522](#).

<sup>9</sup> [WT/L/106](#).

2.10. At its meeting on 27-29 November 2023 approved to advance the timelines for the release of the reminder airgram and the closure of agenda respectively to 35 and 15 calendar days prior to the date of the meeting, allowing additional preparatory time for delegations.<sup>10</sup> As part of the ongoing discussions in the Committee to enhance its deliberative functions, the Secretariat has agreed to organize annually an information session targeting new agriculture delegates. The first such information session<sup>11</sup> on the work and functions of the Committee was delivered in the margin of the November 2023 Committee meeting. The session also alluded to the distinction and differing roles of the regular session of the Committee (CoA) and the Committee on Agriculture in Special Session (CoA SS).

### **2.1.3.3 Committee on Import Licensing**

2.11. The Committee met informally on 14 March and on 29 September 2023 and held informal discussions within its formal meeting of 23 May 2023 on its functioning. Views expressed by Members are contained in documents [ICN/LIC/1/Add.1](#) and [ICN/LIC/2/Add.1](#). In addition, Members presented written submissions. The a table summarizing discussions on the improvement of the functioning of the Committee is contained in document [JOB/LIC/4](#). At its meeting on 31 October 2023, the Committee adopted a report on improvements in the functioning of the Committee for consideration by the CTG, which is contained in document [G/L/1511](#) of 7 November 2023. The CTG incorporated the report by the Committee in its report on improvements in the functioning of the Council for Trade in Goods and its subsidiary bodies, contained in document [G/L/1523](#) of 1 December 2023.

### **2.1.3.4 Committee on Information Technology Agreement**

2.12. In response to a request from the CTG Chairperson to the Chairpersons of the CTG's subsidiary bodies concerning their respective Committee's current and future functioning, ITA Participants held dedicated discussions at the ITA Committee's formal meeting held on 29 March. To facilitate further discussions on possible follow up, the Secretariat prepared a consolidated table containing a list of possible improvements to the Committee's future functioning, contained in document [JOB/IT/33](#), which was circulated on 3 July. Based on dedicated discussions at the Committee's informal meeting of 14 July, a communication from the Chairperson summarizing the current status of the Committee's work in this area was circulated in document [JOB/IT/35](#), dated 9 August. In his follow up communication, circulated in document [JOB/IT/36](#), dated 31 August, two measures for action were proposed by the Chairperson for the Committee's adoption through written procedures, which were approved on this basis on 12 September.<sup>12</sup> In this connection, the Chairperson circulated a report, in document [G/IT/W/57](#), which was subsequently approved and adopted by the Committee as its report to the CTG at the Committee's formal meeting of 19 October.<sup>13</sup>

### **2.1.3.5 Committee on Market Access**

2.13. The Committee on Market Access (CMA) has been discussing Members' proposals on how to improve its functioning at its two formal meetings of 26-27 April and 16-17 October 2023 and three informal meetings of 21 February, 3 July and 18 September 2023. Three main documents were prepared under the Chairperson's responsibility to compile Members' submissions and inform the Committee's discussions: (i) the preliminary list of issues for discussions ([JOB/MA/162](#)); (ii) the table with the current status of work by the Committee after its informal meeting of 3 July 2023 ([JOB/MA/165](#)); and (iii) the proposals adopted by the Committee following written procedures ([JOB/MA/166](#), [JOB/MA/166/Corr.1](#), and [G/MA/411](#)). The list of issues for discussions by the CMA contained around 30 items, based on inputs received by Members. As a result of this consultative process, the CMA will implement 12 changes with a view to improving its 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 and its delegates. More details are provided in the CMA report to the CTG circulated in document [G/L/1494](#).

<sup>10</sup> [G/AG/1/Add.1](#).

<sup>11</sup> [RD/AG/125](#).

<sup>12</sup> The formal Committee decision was circulated in document [G/IT/34](#).

<sup>13</sup> [G/L/1498-G/IT/35](#).

#### **2.1.3.6 Committee on Rules of Origin**

2.14. The Committee has engaged in a written process to assess a number of possible improvements for concerning its functioning. The CRO also met on 6 June 2023 and will continue considering other areas for improvement in the next few months. The latest report of the CRO to the Council for Trade in Goods containing the list of items validated for implementation can be found in document [G/RO/98](#) and [G/L/1493](#).

#### **2.1.3.7 Committee on Safeguards**

2.15. The Committee met informally on 1 May, 20 June, and on 2 October 2023. Members agreed via two written processes on four issues described in document [G/SG/284](#) and on one additional issue described in document [G/SG/285](#), respectively to improve the functioning of the Committee on Safeguards. The Committee could not come to an agreement at its 25 October 2023 meeting on the proposal contained in document [RD/SG/66/Rev.2](#).

#### **2.1.3.8 Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures**

2.16. Since June 2022, the SPS Committee has discussed MC12 implementation matters at nine meetings held in November 2022 (formal and informal, [G/SPS/R/108](#) and its Annex B), March 2023 (formal, [G/SPS/R/109](#)), May 2023 (informal, [G/SPS/R/110](#) in its Annex C, and [RD/SPS/227](#)), July 2023 (formal and informal, [G/SPS/R/110](#) and its Annex B), September 2023 ([G/SPS/R/111](#) in its Annex D) and November 2023 (formal and informal, [G/SPS/R/111](#) and its Annex C).

2.17. Since March 2023, the ICN document symbol has been used for communications from the Chairperson to convene informal meetings. Since the July 2023 Committee meeting, the Chairperson has been encouraging a more effective use of time in specific trade concerns (STCs) in formal meetings. As a result, some Members have reduced the length of their oral statements and uploaded further details in eAgenda or circulated GEN documents containing the full interventions. During the November 2023 meeting, several opportunities for informal exchanges were provided to promote bilateral discussions between Members. The Committee has also proactively contacted organizations with outstanding requests for observer status as part of the discussions on contributions from observer organizations.

2.18. As requested by Members, a new practical guide is now available in SPS eAgenda, explaining the main functions of the platform. Additionally, further improvements have been made to the platform, harmonizing with other Committees while preserving the uniqueness of the functioning of each Committee. These include the possibility to choose between three options when uploading statements, where Members can choose whether and when these will be made available to other delegations in addition to the Secretariat and interpreters. A new eAgenda feature allows the Secretariat to immediately add any decision taken by the Committee under any agenda item, facilitating Members' reporting to capital. The linking of related trade concerns across committees currently using the Trade Concerns Database (including the SPS Committee) is ongoing. The Committee continues to implement and hone several longstanding practices, such as: the organization of thematic sessions; the use of thematic/working groups to advance work; the preparation of Chair summaries of informal meetings; and the use of eAgenda, ePing and the Trade Concerns database, to name a few.

2.19. Training sessions for new delegates were held on 13 March (in person) and 18 September 2023 (in hybrid format); and such sessions will periodically be repeated in the future. The dedicated [SPS Committee page](#) has been revamped to ensure uniformity with other bodies. This webpage contains an [introductory presentation on the SPS Committee](#) (with audio), a new leaflet containing [relevant information for new delegates](#), as well as a FAQ section which provides practical information for new SPS delegates. Additionally, building on the successful experience during the MC12 SPS Declaration Work Programme, a dedicated page was created to facilitate tracking of the documents of the [Sixth Review of the Operation and Implementation of the SPS Agreement](#). The Report to the CTG by the Chairperson of the SPS Committee on the improvements in the functioning of the SPS Committee is contained in document [G/L/1508](#); [G/SPS/69](#).

#### **2.1.3.9 Committee on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures**

2.20. The Committee met informally on 2 May, 20 June, and on 2 October 2023. Members agreed via two written process on four issues described in document [G/SCM/165](#) and on one additional issue described in document [G/SCM/166](#), respectively to improve the functioning of the Committee on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures. The Committee could not come to an agreement at its 27 October 2023 meeting on the proposal contained in document [RD/SCM/63/Rev.2](#).

#### **2.1.3.10 Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade**

2.21. During its regular meeting held on 21-23 June 2023, the TBT Committee agreed on three specific actions to improve its functioning, based on a background note prepared by the Secretariat to facilitate discussions on this topic ([JOB/TBT/510](#)). Implementation of these actions is underway and includes (i) the organization of regular briefings for delegates; (ii) the use of eAgenda for all agenda items (not only STCs); and (iii) the use of annotated agendas for informal meetings. The TBT Committee will continue its consideration of possible improvements in the context of the upcoming 10<sup>th</sup> Triennial Review, to be completed in 2024.

#### **2.1.3.11 Committee on Trade Facilitation**

2.22. The Committee met formally on 15-16 June 2023 and had an exchange of views. The Committee met informally on 26 July to advance the discussion and as a result of these discussions, the Committee agreed to implement eight changes with a view to improving its functioning. The discussions are reflected in the Chairperson's Summary Report of the meeting in document [JOB/TF/235](#). Two of the changes 1) circulation of an annotated agenda ahead of formal meetings of the Committee, ten days in advance of the meeting and 2) implementation of an eAgenda on a trial basis, subject to budgetary and resource considerations were adopted through formal written procedures in documents [JOB/TF/237](#) and [G/TFA/7](#). The remaining six changes would be introduced by the Secretariat to the way in which it supports the work of the Committee. Following the process outlined, the Chairperson circulated a draft report in [JOB/TF/239/Rev.1](#) for the Committee's consideration. The report was adopted at the Committee's formal meeting of 3-5 October 2023 ([G/L/1515](#) and [G/TFA/8](#)).

#### **2.1.3.12 Committee on Trade-Related Investment Measures**

2.23. The Committee met formally on 23 February 2023. Views expressed by Members are contained in document [G/TRIMS/M/53](#). Members met informally on 19 July and agreed via a written process on three steps described in document [G/TRIMS/15](#) to improve the functioning of the TRIMS Committee.

#### **2.1.3.13 Committee on Customs Valuation**

2.24. The Committee on Customs Valuation (CCV) has held discussions on the functioning of the Committee following a request from the Chairperson of the CTG. Following this request, the former Chairperson of the CCV circulated a communication containing an indicative list of issues to guide Members' discussions on the improvements they would like to see in the functioning of the CCV. The CCV has subsequently held an exchange with Members at its formal meeting on 24 May 2023, and at informal meetings held on 30 January and 20 September 2023. In addition, the former CCV Chairperson prepared a report on the functioning of the Committee prior to these discussions ([G/L/1472 G/VAL/W/385](#)). The current Chairperson prepared a table to list possible improvements ([JOB/VAL/1](#)) and then an updated table reflecting the state of discussions ([ICN/VAL/2/Suppl.1](#)).

2.25. As a result of these discussions, the Committee agreed at its meeting of 15 November to adopt its Report on Improvements in the Functioning of the Committee on Customs Valuation ([G/L/1513 G/VAL/W/389](#)) implementing six changes with a view to improving its functioning: regular introductory sessions for delegates; information on the website describing the main aspects of the Committee's work; the circulation of a draft agenda one month before formal Committee meetings; the closing of the final agenda 15 days before such meetings; the circulation of an annotated agenda ahead of formal Committee meetings; the adoption of the eAgenda platform on a permanent basis; and, in principle, and subject to the wishes of Members, thematic sessions in an informal setting to share experiences.

#### 2.1.3.14 Working Party on State Trading Enterprises

2.26. The Working Party met twice informally, on 28 April and on 9 June 2023, to discuss improvements to its functioning. Members agreed via a written process on five steps described in document [G/STR/33](#) to improve the functioning of the Working Party. Three more steps remain under consideration as reflected in document [RD/STR/52](#).

#### 2.1.4 Council for Trade in Services

2.27. WTO reform was discussed at every regular meeting the CTS has held since MC12. At the December 2022 meeting, the Council addressed the ideas Members had put forward on this issue.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, in response to specific appeals put forward by some delegations, the Chairperson said that the Secretariat would do its utmost to schedule the meetings of the CTS and its subsidiary bodies back-to-back, in order to facilitate capital-based participation, and that, starting from 2023 the Chairperson would be issuing annotated agendas in advance of the meetings of the CTS.

2.28. Following consultations organised by the Chairperson in February<sup>15</sup>, in March 2023, the Council agreed to task the Secretariat with mapping the practices of the CTS and its most active subsidiary body (i.e. the Committee on Specific Commitments). The mapping in [S/C/W/433](#) was considered at the June meeting, when delegations also put forward a number of suggestions to improve the functioning of the Council. It was agreed that the Secretariat would compile and circulate a list of these suggestions and outline implementation options, for Members' further consideration. Delegations also appreciated the announcement that the Secretariat would resume its practice of organising training sessions for new delegates.

2.29. At the October meeting, Members addressed the Secretariat compilation<sup>16</sup> and considered a communication from the United Kingdom<sup>17</sup> outlining proposals to improve the functioning of the CTS and its subsidiary bodies. Delegations also shared additional suggestions for possible improvements. It was agreed that the Chairperson would prepare, under her own responsibility, a report summarising the reactions to the various proposals Members had put forward.

2.30. The Chairperson's report<sup>18</sup> was considered at an informal CTS meeting on 17 November, when the Secretariat also delivered a presentation on the use of eAgenda in the TBT Committee. While a handful of reform elements saw general convergence among delegations, there was acknowledgement that further discussion was needed concerning other reform proposals. Members supported the proposal that the CTS produce a report to the General Council on its reform efforts.

2.31. Accordingly, the draft CTS report to the General Council<sup>19</sup> was considered at the formal CTS meeting on 7 December. The final report adopted by the Council for Trade in Services is contained in document [S/C/65](#). The report provides information on the ongoing efforts to improve the functioning of the CTS by highlighting the improvements realised since the conclusion of MC12.

#### 2.1.5 Council for Trade-related Intellectual Property Rights

2.32. There have been no formal requests by Members to discuss "Reform by Doing" in the Council for TRIPS. At an informal meeting of the Council in October 2023, the Chair highlighted that many of the items considered in this context were already part of standard operating practise of the Council. For instance, the Council Secretariat regularly organizes TRIPS Council Briefings (since 2019) for new delegates and issues annotated agendas ahead of formal Council meetings<sup>20</sup> (since February 2020), routinely hyperlinking document references. Workshops, such as the annual Workshop on the implementation of Article 66.2 and the 2023 Article 67 Workshop, are routinely organized back-to-back with formal Council meetings to reduce scheduling conflicts. In an effort to

<sup>14</sup> As reflected in [JOB/SERV/CTS/6](#) and [Addendum 1](#). These documents provide an account of Members' views on all MC12 mandates of relevance to the CTS.

<sup>15</sup> An account of the consultations is reflected in [JOB/SERV/CTS/9](#).

<sup>16</sup> [JOB/SERV/CTS/14/Rev.1](#).

<sup>17</sup> [S/C/W/452](#).

<sup>18</sup> [JOB/SERV/CTS/19](#).

<sup>19</sup> [JOB/SERV/CTS/22](#).

<sup>20</sup> See document [JOB/IP/71](#) for the most recent annotated agenda for the formal Council meeting on 30-31 October 2023.

avoid scheduling conflicts, the annual calendar of formal meetings of the Council for TRIPS is regularly communicated to WIPO before its adoption at the end of each year.

2.33. Already since 2019, Members can submit all notifications and reports required under the TRIPS Agreement electronically through the e-TRIPS Submission System<sup>21</sup>, an easy-to-use online platform that allows Members to draft and submit documents online, both in capital and in Geneva.

2.34. Against that background, at the informal meeting in October, Members agreed that there was no need to add "reform by doing" as an agenda item to the formal meeting of the Council. The Chair emphasized that Members should nevertheless feel free to raise any requests or issues in this context at their convenience.

2.35. At the formal Council meeting on 30-31 October 2023, the TRIPS Council Secretariat encouraged delegates to use the new e-delegate system to indicate their communication preferences, since the Council's informal communication through email will soon rely entirely on the preferences indicated through that new platform.

#### **2.1.6 Committee on Trade and Development**

2.36. At the formal CTD meeting on 11 July 2023, the Chairperson made a statement on the informal discussions held on the developmental aspects of WTO reform. As part of these discussions, Members addressed the question of what measures could be taken to improve the functioning of the CTD. The Chairperson's statement was circulated in document [JOB/COMTD/2](#). The Committee also considered a submission by the United Kingdom on improving the functioning of the CTD ([WT/COMTD/W/276](#)).

2.37. At the formal CTD meeting on 17 November 2023, the Committee took note of a number of measures that have been put in place to improve the functioning of the CTD. These measures were described by the CTD Chairman in the statement he delivered on the developmental aspects of WTO reform ([JOB/COMTD/7](#)). They include, inter alia, the use of annotated draft agendas, hyperlinking to the WTO's Documents Online, and the preparation of a calendar of CTD meetings for 2024. An e-agenda will be introduced on a trial basis for the CTD's Regular Session, starting from the first meeting of the Regular Session in 2024. In addition, the CTD webpage on the WTO website has been updated and now contains more information on the work of the Committee, as well as training material.

#### **2.1.7 Committee on Regional Trade Agreements**

2.38. Following a communication by the United States raising questions about the functioning of the Committee ([WT/REG/W/174](#)) and responses from some members ([JOB/REG/6/Rev.1](#)), the Chairperson held informal one-to-one consultations on 2 and 4 June 2023, followed by an informal meeting of the Committee on 22 June 2023. Her report on the informal consultations is in document [JOB/REG/7](#). China also circulated a communication on the subject ([WT/REG/W/180](#)). Further discussions were held in the formal meeting of the CRTA on 5 July. A summary of the discussions is in [JOB/REG/8](#). Discussions continued at the last meeting of the year on 20 and 21 November 2023. The Chair's summary of these discussions is in [JOB/REG/9](#).

2.39. The Secretariat has also made a number of procedural changes including hyperlinking all documentation in the airgram, and making a calendar as well as an interactive work programme of the CRTA available online to Members through the RTA Webpage. A survey on the RTA Database to help to improve it has also been conducted. A draft summary of a factual presentation, requested by Members, was also circulated for comment; artificial intelligence tools were used to prepare a first draft, which was then checked and amended by the Secretariat. The Secretariat also made presentations on 20 and 21 September to Members introducing them to the transparency process under the Transparency Mechanism for RTAs, with the intention of providing such briefings on a regular basis. The presentation is also available for consultation on the RTA Webpage.

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<sup>21</sup> [WTO | Intellectual property \(TRIPS\) - e-Trips](#).

### **2.1.8 Working Group on Trade and Transfer of Technology**

2.40. The Secretariat has made procedural changes including circulating draft agenda two weeks prior to issuing airgrams, hyperlinking all documentation in the airgrams, proposed agendas and annual reports.

## **2.2 Trade Negotiations Committee and Negotiating Groups**

### **2.2.1 Trade Negotiations Committee**

2.41. Following Members' submissions, the convening notice for the Formal TNC and Informal HODs on 20 July 2023 provides more details on each of the matters to be taken up as well as guide questions to facilitate meaningful engagement during the meeting. To address Members' suggestion of having specific and separate agenda items to help facilitate more direct engagement among Members, and between Members and the Director-General on Secretariat and institutional matters, the Informal HoDs on 20 July 2023 will be extended to have more detailed exchanges on the WTO Budget, the Secretariat Transformation process and Strategic Vision and Focus Pillars exercises, and the Business and Civil Society Advisory Groups to the Secretariat.

#### **2.2.1.1 Committee on Agriculture in Special Session**

2.42. The Committee on Agriculture in Special Session has since been ensuring that all references to documents – document symbols – include a hyperlink to docs online and that the Secretariat would continue to provide introductory sessions for new delegates, upon request.

## **2.3 Plurilateral Committees**

### **2.3.1 Committee on Government Procurement**

2.43. In October 2023, the Secretariat organized a virtual briefing for Geneva- and capital-based delegates concentrating mainly on the work of the CGP, recently developed e-tools, types of documents, current agenda items, etc. At the Committee's meetings held on 7 June 2023, the Committee agreed to test the e-Agenda at its November 2023 meetings on a non-committal trial basis. The Secretariat organized a dedicated training to support the delegates. In November 2023, the Committee decided to continue using the e-Agenda for its March 2024 meetings on a non-committal trial basis.

2.44. The Chair, under his own responsibility, held bilateral consultations in July and informal open-ended consultations in October and November 2023 on "reforming by doing". In November 2023, the Chair reported back to the Committee about his consultations. One of the main take-aways of the consultations was that delegations consider the Committee to be a well-functioning WTO body that has already optimized its functioning across a wide spectrum of aspects. Related actual or pending achievements by the Committee in the area of reforming by doing are summarized in the Appendix to the recently adopted Annual Report ([GPA/AR/6](#)).

### **2.3.2 Committee on Trade in Civil Aircraft**

2.45. The Committee took up the issue of the functioning of the Committee at its regular meeting held on 17 November 2023. No Member had any proposals or comments on this issue.

### 3 "REFORM BY DOING" PAPERS FROM MEMBERS<sup>22</sup>

#### 3.1 Post-MC11 and Pre-MC12 Papers

Co-Sponsors	Title	Document Symbols	Date
Canada	Strengthening the Deliberative Function of the WTO	<a href="#">JOB/GC/211</a>	14.12.2018
Hong Kong, China	Better Functioning of CTG and Subsidiary Committees	<a href="#">RD/CTG/9</a>	27.06.2019
Hong Kong, China	Better Functioning of CTG and Subsidiary Committees	<a href="#">RD/CTG/10</a>	11.11.2019
Albania; Australia; Canada; China; European Union; Hong Kong, China; Iceland; Republic of Korea; Republic of Moldova; New Zealand; North Macedonia; Norway; Panama; Qatar; Singapore; Switzerland; Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu; Thailand; Türkiye and Ukraine	Procedural Guidelines for WTO Councils and Committees addressing Trade Concerns	<a href="#">WT/GC/W/777</a> and <a href="#">Rev.1</a> , <a href="#">Rev.2</a> , <a href="#">Rev.3</a> , <a href="#">Rev.4</a> , <a href="#">Rev.5</a> and <a href="#">Rev.6</a>	05.07.2019 for the first communication
African Group; Plurinational State of Bolivia; Cuba; Ecuador; India and Oman	Strengthening the WTO to Promote Development and Inclusivity	<a href="#">WT/GC/W/778</a> and <a href="#">Rev.1</a> , <a href="#">Rev.2</a> , <a href="#">Rev.3</a> and <a href="#">Rev.4</a>	11.07.2019 for the first communication
LDC Group	LDC Views on WTO Reform Discussions and Proposals	<a href="#">JOB/GC/223</a> , <a href="#">Corr.1</a> and <a href="#">Rev.1</a>	06.12.2019 for the first communication

<sup>22</sup> This is a non-exhaustive list of Members' "reform by doing" papers – and does not include Members' inputs provided during reform discussions in the respective WTO Bodies. This is for illustrative purposes only. It does not intend to make any characterization, nor have any bearing on the debate among Members on WTO Reform in WTO Bodies and other fora.

Co-Sponsors	Title	Document Symbols	Date
Australia; Brazil; Canada; China; Israel; Japan; Mexico; Republic of Moldova; New Zealand; Norway; Singapore; Switzerland; United Kingdom; United States; Austria; Belgium; Bulgaria; Croatia; Cyprus; Czechia; Denmark; Estonia; Finland; France; Germany; Greece; Hungary; Ireland; Italy; Latvia; Lithuania; Luxembourg; Malta; The Netherlands; Poland; Portugal; Romania; Slovakia; Slovenia; Spain; Sweden; European Union	Procedural Improvements for the Committee on Budget, Finance and Administration	<a href="#">WT/BFA/W/538, Rev.1</a> and <a href="#">Rev.2</a>	15.02.2021 for the first communication
Brazil	Twelfth WTO Ministerial Conference	<a href="#">JOB/GC/310</a>	25.05.2022

### 3.2 Post MC12 Papers

Co-Sponsors	Title	Document Symbols	Date
African Group; Cuba; India and Pakistan	Strengthening the WTO to Promote Development and Inclusivity	<a href="#">WT/GC/W/778/Rev.5</a>	18.07.2022
United States	Consideration of Improvements to the Functioning of the CRTA to better serve Members	<a href="#">WT/REG/W/174</a> <a href="#">JOB/REG/6</a> and <a href="#">Rev.1</a>	18.01.2023 for the first communication
Argentina; Brazil; Colombia; Ecuador; Paraguay; Peru and Uruguay	Functioning of the CTG and its Subsidiary Bodies	<a href="#">JOB/CTG/21</a> , <a href="#">JOB/TBT/498</a> <a href="#">JOB/SPS/25</a> , <a href="#">JOB/MA/158</a> <a href="#">JOB/AG/238</a> , <a href="#">JOB/TF/232</a> and <a href="#">Rev. 1</a> , <a href="#">Rev.2</a> and <a href="#">Rev.3</a>	22.02.2023 for the first communication
United Kingdom	Compilation of Input on the Functioning of Goods Bodies	<a href="#">JOB/CTG/26</a> and <a href="#">Rev.1</a>	30.03.2023 for the first communication
Argentina	List of Issues where there appears to be a consensus that they should be addressed in all CTG Subsidiary Bodies	<a href="#">RD/CTG/19</a>	04.04.2023
United Kingdom	UK Views on the Functioning of the CMA	<a href="#">JOB/MA/163</a>	25.04.2023

Co-Sponsors	Title	Document Symbols	Date
Colombia; Guatemala; Israel; New Zealand; Peru; Philippines; Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu; Thailand and United States	Improving Inclusiveness by Reviewing and Evaluating External Engagement	<a href="#">WT/GC/W/871</a> and <a href="#">Rev.1</a> , <a href="#">Rev.2</a> and <a href="#">Rev.3</a>	26.04.2023 for the first communication
Thailand and United States	Improving the Operation of the General Council and Heads of Delegation/Trade Negotiations Committee	<a href="#">WT/GC/W/872</a> and <a href="#">Rev.1</a>	26.04.2023 for the first communication
Australia; Canada; China; Hong Kong, China; Japan; New Zealand; Norway; Thailand and Türkiye	Maximising the Value of WTO Ministerial Conferences	<a href="#">WT/GC/W/873</a> and <a href="#">Rev.1</a> , <a href="#">Rev.2</a> and <a href="#">Rev.3</a>	27.04.2023 for the first communication
India	WTO Reform: Incremental Changes to Improve the Functioning of the Various WTO Bodies	<a href="#">WT/GC/W/874</a>	01.05.2023
Australia; Brunei Darussalam; Canada; Chile; Costa Rica; European Union; Guatemala; Iceland; Israel; Japan; Republic of Korea; Republic of Moldova; Montenegro; New Zealand; North Macedonia; Norway; Peru; Philippines; Singapore; Switzerland; Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu; Thailand; Ukraine; and United Kingdom	Improving the Operation of WTO Bodies to Revitalise the WTO's Monitoring and Deliberative Function	<a href="#">WT/GC/W/877</a> and <a href="#">Rev.1</a>	03.05.2023 for the first communication
Australia; China and Thailand	Small Steps to Make a Difference	<a href="#">WT/GC/W/879</a> and <a href="#">Rev.1</a> and <a href="#">Rev.2</a>	18.05.2023 for the first communication
Argentina; Brazil; Colombia; Ecuador; Paraguay and Uruguay	Functioning of the General Council and its Subsidiary Bodies	<a href="#">WT/GC/W/881</a>	12.06.2023
Brazil	WTO Ministerial Conferences	<a href="#">WT/GC/W/882</a>	14.06.2023
China	Fulfilling the Mandate and Strengthening the Function of the CRTA	<a href="#">WT/REG/W/180</a>	21.06.2023

Co-Sponsors	Title	Document Symbols	Date
African Group (Angola; Benin; Botswana; Burkina Faso; Burundi; Cabo Verde; Cameroon; Central African Republic; Chad; Congo; Côte D'Ivoire; Democratic Republic of Congo; Djibouti; Egypt; Eswatini; Gabon; The Gambia; Ghana; Guinea; Guinea-Bissau; Kenya; Lesotho; Liberia; Madagascar; Malawi; Mali; Mauritania; Mauritius; Morocco; Mozambique; Namibia; Niger; Nigeria; Rwanda; Senegal; Seychelles; Sierra Leone; South Africa; Tanzania; Togo; Tunisia; Uganda; Zambia and Zimbabwe)	A Development Perspective on Institutional Reforms of the World Trade Organization	<a href="#">WT/GC/W/895</a>	13.07.2023
Australia; Brazil; Canada; Colombia; Costa Rica; European Union; New Zealand; Norway; Switzerland; Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu; United Kingdom and the United States	Proposed Revisions to <a href="#">WT/L/452</a> "Procedures for the Circulation and Derestriction of WTO Documents"	<a href="#">WT/GC/W/897</a> and <a href="#">Rev.1</a>	13.07.2023 for the first communication
United Kingdom	Improving the Functioning of the Council for Trade in Services and its Subsidiary Bodies	<a href="#">S/C/W/452</a>	21.07.2023
Colombia; Paraguay; the United Kingdom and Uruguay	Functioning of the CTG: Enhancing Clarity and Accessibility of Information	<a href="#">JOB/CTG/43</a> and <a href="#">Rev.1</a>	16.11.2023 for the first communication
China	Options to Acknowledge Progress and Provide Further Instructions for the "Reform by Doing" Work at MC13	<a href="#">JOB/GC/372</a>	20.11.2023