

**REPORT (2005) OF THE
COMMITTEE ON REGIONAL TRADE AGREEMENTS
TO THE GENERAL COUNCIL**

Chairman: Mr. R. Saborío Soto (Costa Rica)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. At the first meeting on 17-18 February 2005, the Committee on Regional Trade Agreements (hereinafter, the Committee or CRTA) re-elected Mr. Ronaldo Saborío Soto (Costa Rica) as Chairman of the Committee. At its meeting on 26 July, the CRTA elected Mr. Anton Egger (Switzerland) as Vice-Chairman.

2. During 2005, the Committee held two sessions (in February and July). The minutes of those meetings are listed in Attachment 1. Due to the heavy schedule of meetings of the Negotiating Groups in advance of the Hong Kong Ministerial Meeting, the 41st Session of the Committee scheduled for 6-7 October was postponed to 23-24 January 2006. The Committee plans to hold three other meetings in 2006.

II. OBSERVER STATUS

3. The Committee agreed to continue the granting of observer status in the CRTA to the Latin American Integration Association (LAIA), on an *ad hoc* basis. No decision was taken with respect to the requests for observer status listed in document WT/REG/W/11/Add.3, pending the definition of guidelines by the General Council.

III. EXAMINATION OF REGIONAL TRADE AGREEMENTS

4. As of 30 September 2005, 334 RTAs have been notified to the GATT/WTO.¹ Of these, 273 agreements were notified under GATT Article XXIV; 22 under the Enabling Clause;² and 39 under GATS Article V. Of the notified agreements, 183 are currently in force. Of these RTAs, 130 are GATT Article XXIV agreements; 22 are Enabling Clause agreements; and 31 are GATS Article V agreements.

5. The Committee has currently under examination a total of 141 agreements, of which 110 in the area of trade in goods and 31 in trade in services. Forty four RTAs are currently undergoing factual examination, while for 48 RTAs, the Committee has not yet started the factual examination. For the remaining 49 RTAs the factual examination has concluded (see Attachment 2); no progress was made, however, on the completion of the corresponding examination reports.

¹ This figure corresponds to notifications of new RTAs, as well as accessions to existing RTAs.

² *Differential and More Favourable Treatment, Reciprocity and Fuller Participation of Developing Countries*, Decision of the GATT CONTRACTING PARTIES of 28 November 1979.

6. During its 40th Session, in accordance with the modified Chairman's Guidelines on Procedures to Improve and Facilitate the Examination Process³, the Committee for the first time made use of a factual presentation prepared by the Secretariat as the basis for the examination of an RTA. On 4 October at the invitation of the Chairman of the Negotiating Group on Rules, the Chairman of the CRTA presented an assessment of the exercise to the Group. He indicated that the factual presentation, which had been well received by delegations, had significantly helped them in their review exercise and had made a positive contribution to the process of transparency.

IV. REPORTING ON THE OPERATION OF AGREEMENTS

7. In the course of 2005, three reports were received on the operation of agreements, in accordance with the 2004 Schedule for Submission of Reports, circulated as WT/REG/W/48. These reports will be considered at the Committee's 41st Session. Nine biennial reports due in 2004 are still outstanding (see Attachment 3).

V. PROCEDURES TO IMPROVE AND FACILITATE THE EXAMINATION PROCESS

8. No discussion took place on this item.

VI. SYSTEMIC IMPLICATIONS OF REGIONAL TRADE AGREEMENTS AND INITIATIVES FOR THE MULTILATERAL TRADING SYSTEM AND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEM

9. No discussion took place on this item.

VII. OTHER

10. No discussion took place on this item.

VIII. FINAL REMARKS

11. The Committee has pursued its factual examination work and welcomed the introduction of the factual presentation as a positive step in improving transparency.

³ Document WT/REG/W/15/Add.1, dated 16 November 2004.

ATTACHMENT 1

Minutes of the Meetings held in 2005

Thirty-Ninth Session – 17-18 February 2005

WT/REG/M/39

WT/REG142/M/2	European Communities – Croatia
WT/REG129/M/2	European Communities – FYROM
WT/REG112/M/3	European Communities – Morocco
WT/REG165/M/1	Chile – El Salvador, Goods and Services
WT/REG160/M/1	United States – Chile, Goods and Services
WT/REG161/M/1	United States – Singapore, Goods and Services
WT/REG162/M/1	China – Hong Kong, China, Goods and Services
WT/REG163/M/1	China – Macao, China, Goods and Services

Fortieth Session – 26 and 28 July 2005

WT/REG/M/40

WT/REG170/M/1	Enlargement of the European Union
WT/REG132/M/3	EFTA States – Croatia
WT/REG133/M/3	EFTA States – Jordan
WT/REG148/M/2	EFTA States – Singapore, Goods and Services
WT/REG169/M/1	Korea – Chile, Goods and Services
WT/REG164/M/1	European Communities – Chile
WT/REG141/M/2	European Communities – Jordan
WT/REG109/M/4	European Communities – Mexico
WT/REG140/M/3	Japan – Singapore, Goods and Services
WT/REG158/M/2	Singapore – Australia, Goods and Services
WT/REG147/M/2	Canada – Costa Rica

ATTACHMENT 2**List of RTAs Under Examination****A. RTAs for which factual examination has been completed (49):**

ANZCERTA (S)	EC-Mexico (G)	Japan-Singapore (G&S)
Canada-Chile (G&S)	EC-Morocco (G)	Kyrgyz Rep.-Moldova (G)
Canada-Costa Rica (G)	EC-Romania (G)	Mexico-Israel (G)
Canada-Israel (G)	EC-Tunisia (G)	NAFTA (G&S)
CEFTA – Accession of Bulgaria (G)	EFTA (S)	New Zealand-Singapore (G&S)
CEFTA – Accession of Romania (G)	EFTA-Bulgaria (G)	Norway-Faroe Isl. (G)
Chile-Mexico (G&S)	EFTA-Croatia (G)	Singapore-Australia (G&S)
Chile-Costa Rica (G&S)	EFTA-FYROM (G)	Switzerland-Faroe Isl. (G)
EC-P. of Andorra (G)	EFTA-Israel (G)	Turkey-FYROM (G)
EC-Bulgaria (G)	EFTA-Jordan (G)	Turkey-Israel (G)
EC-Croatia (G)	EFTA-Mexico (G)	Turkey-Romania (G)
EC Enlargement (15) (G&S)	EFTA-Morocco (G)	
EC-FYROM (G)	EFTA-Romania (G)	
EC-Israel (G)	European Economic Area (S)	
EC-Jordan (G)	Iceland-Faroe Isl. (G)	

B. RTAs under factual examination (44):

CARICOM (S)	EC (Treaty of Rome) (S)	Kyrgyz Rep.-Kazakhstan (G)
Chile-El Salvador (G&S)	EFTA-Mexico (S)	Kyrgyz Rep.-Russian Fed. (G)
Chile-Korea (G&S)	EFTA-Singapore (G&S)	Kyrgyz Rep.-Ukraine (G)
China-Hong Kong, China (G&S)	EU Enlargement (25) (G)	Kyrgyz Rep.-Armenia (G)
China-Macao, China (G&S)	Georgia-Armenia (G)	Kyrgyz Rep.-Uzbekistan (G)
EC-Bulgaria (S)	Georgia-Azerbaijan (G)	EAEC (G)
EC-Chile (G)	Georgia-Kazakhstan (G)	MERCOSUR (G)
EC-Faroe Isl. (G)	Georgia-Russian Fed. (G)	Turkey-Croatia (G)
EC-Mexico (S)	Georgia-Turkmenistan (G)	United States-Chile (G&S)
EC-Romania (S)	Georgia-Ukraine (G)	United States-Jordan (G&S)
EC-Turkey (G)	CIS (G)	United States-Singapore (G&S)
Bulgaria-FYROM (G)	Romania-Moldova (G)	Turkey-Bulgaria (G)

C. RTAs for which factual examination has not yet commenced (48):

Albania-Bosnia & Herzegovina (G)	CEFTA-Accession Croatia (G)	Moldova-Bosnia & Herzegovina (G)
Albania-Bulgaria (G)	Croatia-Albania (G)	Moldova-Bulgaria (G)
Albania-Moldova (G)	Croatia-Bosnia & Herzegovina (G)	Moldova-Croatia (G)
Albania-Romania (G)	Croatia-FYROM (G)	Moldova-FYROM (G)
Albania-FYROM (G)	EC-Egypt (G)	Moldova-Servia & Montenegro (G)
Albania-Serbia & Montenegro (G)	EC-Lebanon (G)	Panama-El Salvador (G&S)
Albania-UNMIK (G)	EC-Palestinian Authority (G)	Romania-Bosnia & Herzegovina (G)
Armenia-Kazakhstan (G)	EC-South Africa (G)	Romania-Israel (G)
Armenia-Moldova (G)	EFTA-Chile (G&S)	Romania-FYROM (G)
Armenia-Russian Federation (G)	EFTA-Palestinian Authority (G)	Romania-Serbia & Montenegro (G)
Armenia-Turkmenistan (G)	EFTA-Tunisia (G)	SADC (G)
Armenia-Ukraine (G)	EU Enlargement (25) (S)	Thailand-Australia (G&S)
Bulgaria-Israel (G)	FYROM-Bosnia & Herzegovina (G)	Turkey-Bosnia and Herzegovina (G)
Bulgaria-Bosnia & Herzegovina (G)	Japan-Mexico (G&S)	United States-Australia (G&S)
Bulgaria-Serbia & Montenegro (G)		

ATTACHMENT 3

Schedule for the Submission of Biennial Reports on RTAs

A. Reports submitted in 2005 yet to be considered by the CRTA (3)

EC - Cyprus
EC - Malta
United States - Israel

B. Reports not submitted under the 2004 schedule (9)

Australia-New Zealand Closer Economic Relations Trade Agreement (ANZCERTA)
Australia-Papua New Guinea Agreement (PATCRA)
Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM)
Czech/Slovak Customs Union
European Communities (EC) - Algeria
EC - Egypt
EC - Syria
EFTA - Czech Republic
EFTA - Slovak Republic

C. Reports not submitted under the 2001 schedule (2)

Australia-Papua New Guinea Agreement (PATCRA)
Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM)
