

**REPORT (2003) OF THE  
COMMITTEE ON REGIONAL TRADE AGREEMENTS  
TO THE GENERAL COUNCIL**

Chairman: Mr. Jaynarain Meetoo (Mauritius)

**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. At the first meeting on 3-4 April 2003, the Committee on Regional Trade Agreements (CRTA) elected Mr. Jaynarain Meetoo (Mauritius) as Chairman of the Committee. Dr. Vassili Notis (Greece) retained his position as Vice-Chairman; Mr. B. Weston (Trinidad and Tobago) and Mr. S. Dalela (India) were elected as Vice-Chairmen.

2. During 2003, the Committee held two sessions (in April and December). The minutes of those meetings are listed in Attachment 1. The Committee plans to hold two meetings in 2004.

**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 guidelines to be defined by the General Council.

**III. EXAMINATION OF REGIONAL TRADE AGREEMENTS**

4. As of 5 December 2003, 273 RTAs have been notified to the GATT/WTO.<sup>1</sup> Of these, 227 agreements were notified under GATT Article XXIV, of which 143 are still in force today; 19 agreements were notified under the Enabling Clause;<sup>2</sup> and 27 under GATS Article V.

5. The Committee has currently under examination a total of 147 agreements. The examination of 119 of these agreements has been referred to the Committee by the Council for Trade in Goods, 27 by the Council for Trade in Services and one by the Committee on Trade and Development. For 22 RTAs, the Committee has not yet started the factual examination. 43 RTAs are currently undergoing factual examination. For the remaining 82 RTAs the factual examination is already complete (see Attachment 2). No progress was made, however, on the completion of the examination reports.

6. At its Thirty-Fifth Session, the Chairman made a status report on the examination work under the Committee's purview. He expressed concern with respect to repeated delays in the submission of documents required for the examination of individual agreements. He also indicated that informal

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<sup>1</sup> This figure corresponds to notifications of new RTAs, as well as accessions to existing RTAs.

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

consultations would be held on a few procedural issues impairing the examination work of the Committee (see paragraph 12 below).

#### **IV. REPORTING ON THE OPERATION OF AGREEMENTS**

7. Six biennial reports due in 2001 are still outstanding (see Attachment 3).

8. At its Thirty-Fifth Session, the Committee was presented with the 2004 Schedule for Submission of Reports, circulated as WT/REG/W/48. The Chairman invited delegations to respect the deadline for the submission of such reports and to consolidate those biennial reports still outstanding from earlier reporting cycles into a detailed report in 2004.

#### **V. PROCEDURES TO IMPROVE AND FACILITATE THE EXAMINATION PROCESS**

9. 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**

10. No discussion took place on this item.

#### **VII. OTHER**

11. At its Thirty-Fifth Session, the Committee had a preliminary debate on issues related to the forthcoming Enlargement of the European Communities to 25 member states, introduced by one delegation under "Other Business". Several delegations echoed calls for a rigorous compliance with WTO procedural provisions governing the Enlargement, in particular its timely notification.

12. At that same Session, the Chairman reported on his informal consultations on three issues related to problems encountered in the course of examination of (a) services agreements in which specific commitments had not yet been negotiated; (b) agreements that would cease to exist once the Enlargement of the EC to 10 new member states took place; and (c) RTAs concluded by WTO Members with non-Members. Some of those issues required further reflection and exchange views; a second round of informal consultations will take place in early 2004.

13. Also, as agreed at the Committee's Thirty-Second Session, the Secretariat provided the Committee with information regarding RTA-related technical assistance implemented from June 2002 to December 2003 and those scheduled for 2004, and with a summary of the proceedings of the WTO Seminar on *Regional Trade Agreements and the WTO* held on 14 November (see programme in Attachment 4).

#### **VIII. FINAL REMARKS**

14. The Committee has pursued its examination work, but has been unable to finalize reports on any of the examinations before it.

## ATTACHMENT 1

### Minutes of the Meetings held in 2003

#### Thirty-Fourth Session – 3-4 April 2003

WT/REG/M/34	
WT/REG109/M/3	EC and Mexico, Services
WT/REG126/M/1	EFTA and Mexico, Goods and Services
WT/REG125/M/1	Chile and Mexico, Goods and Services
	( Kyrgyz Republic, Russian Federation, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan
	( Kyrgyz Republic and Russian Federation
WT/REG/GEN/M/9	( Kyrgyz Republic and Ukraine
	( Kyrgyz Republic and Uzbekistan
	( Kyrgyz Republic and Kazakhstan
	( Kyrgyz Republic and Armenia
	( Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyz Republic
	( Georgia and Russian Federation
	( Georgia and Armenia
WT/REG/GEN/M/10	( Georgia and Azerbaijan
	( Georgia and Ukraine
	( Georgia and Turkmenistan
	( Georgia and Kazakhstan
WT/REG124/M/1	Israel and Mexico
WT/REG135/M/1	Turkey and Slovenia
WT/REG128/M/1	Hungary and Estonia
WT/REG143/M/1	EC and Latvia, Services
WT/REG144/M/1	EC and Estonia, Services
WT/REG145/M/1	EC and Lithuania, Services
WT/REG146/M/1	EC and Slovenia, Services

#### Thirty-Fifth Session – 2-3 December 2003

WT/REG/M/35	
WT/REG154/M/1	EFTA, Services
WT/REG138/M/2	European Economic Area (EEA), Services
WT/REG127/M/2	New Zealand and Singapore, Goods and Services
WT/REG140/M/1	Japan and Singapore, Goods and Services
WT/REG135/M/2	Turkey and Slovenia
WT/REG132/M/1	EFTA and Croatia
WT/REG133/M/1	EFTA and Jordan
WT/REG38/M/5	Canada and Chile, Services
WT/REG136/M/1	Chile and Costa Rica, Goods and Services

## ATTACHMENT 2

List of RTAs Under Examination<sup>3</sup>**A. RTAs for which factual examinations have been completed and the draft examination reports are in various stages of consultation and finalization (82):**

ANZCERTA (S)	EC-Israel	EFTA-Morocco	Kyrgyz Rep.-Moldova	Slovenia-Latvia
Bulgaria-FYROM	EC-Latvia	EFTA-Poland	NAFTA (G&S)	Slovenia-Lithuania
Canada-Chile (G&S)	EC- Lithuania	EFTA-Romania	New Zealand-Singapore	Switzerland-Faroe Isl.
Canada-Israel	EC-Poland (G&S)	EFTA-Slovenia	Norway-Faroe Isl.	Turkey-Bulgaria
CEFTA <sup>4</sup>	EC-Romania	Estonia-Faroe Isl.	Poland-Faroe Isl.	Turkey-Estonia
Czech Rep.-Estonia	EC-Slovak Rep. (G&S)	Estonia-Latvia-Lithuania	Poland-Latvia	Turkey-FYROM
Czech Rep.-Latvia	EC-Slovenia	Estonia-Ukraine	Poland-Lithuania	Turkey-Hungary
Czech Rep.-Lithuania	EC-Tunisia	Hungary-Latvia	Romania-Moldova	Turkey-Israel
Czech Rep.-Turkey	EFTA-Bulgaria	Hungary-Lithuania	Slovak Rep.-Estonia	Turkey-Latvia
EC-P. of Andorra	EFTA-Estonia	Iceland-Faroe Isl.	Slovak Rep.-Latvia	Turkey-Lithuania
EC-Bulgaria	EFTA-FYROM	Israel-Czech Rep.	Slovak Rep.-Lithuania	Turkey-Poland
EC-Czech Rep.	EFTA-Hungary	Israel-Hungary	Slovak Rep.-Turkey	Turkey-Romania
EC-Enlargement (G&S)	EFTA-Israel	Israel-Poland	Slovenia-Croatia	Turkey-Slovenia
EC-Estonia	EFTA-Latvia	Israel-Slovak Rep.	Slovenia-Estonia	
EC-Hungary (G&S)	EFTA-Lithuania	Israel-Slovenia	Slovenia-FYROM	

**B. RTAs under factual examination (43):**

Chile-Mexico (G&S)	EC-Mexico (G&S)	European Economic Area (S)	Kyrgyz Rep.-Russian Fed.
Chile-Costa Rica (G&S)	EC-Morocco	Georgia-Armenia	Kyrgyz Rep.-Russian Fed., Belarus, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan
Commonwealth of Independent States	EC-Romania (S)	Georgia-Azerbaijan	Kyrgyz Rep.-Ukraine
EC-Bulgaria (S)	EC-Slovenia (S)	Georgia-Kazakhstan	Kyrgyz Rep.-Armenia
EC-Czech Rep. (S)	EC-Turkey	Georgia-Russian Fed.	Kyrgyz Rep.-Uzbekistan
EC-Estonia (S)	EFTA (S)	Georgia-Turkmenistan	MERCOSUR
EC-Faroe Islands	EFTA-Croatia	Georgia-Ukraine	Mexico-Israel
EC-FYROM	EFTA-Jordan	Hungary-Estonia	New Zealand-Singapore (S)
EC-Latvia (S)	EFTA-Mexico (G&S)	Japan-Singapore (G&S)	
EC-Lithuania (S)	European Union (S)	Kyrgyz Rep.-Kazakhstan	

**C. RTAs for which factual examination has not yet commenced (22):**

Bulgaria-Estonia	EC-Croatia	Singapore-Australia (G&S)
Bulgaria-Israel	EC-Lebanon	Turkey-Croatia
Bulgaria-Latvia	EC-Jordan	Slovenia-Bosnia and Herzegovina
Bulgaria-Lithuania	EC-Palestinian Authority	Turkey- Bosnia and Herzegovina
Canada-Costa Rica	EC-South Africa	United States-Jordan (G&S)
CARICOM (S)	EFTA-Palestinian Authority	
Croatia-Bosnia and Herzegovina	EFTA-Singapore (G&S)	

<sup>3</sup> Examinations of RTAs refer to trade in goods only, unless indicated otherwise: trade in services only (S), or trade in both goods and services (G&S)

<sup>4</sup> Including accessions of Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovenia.

### ATTACHMENT 3

#### Schedule for the Submission of Biennial Reports on RTAs

**A. Reports not submitted to the WTO under the 2001 schedule for the submission of biennial reports on RTAs (6)**

Australia-Papua New Guinea Agreement (PATCRA)  
Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM)  
Central American Common Market (CACM)  
EC-Cyprus  
EC-Malta Association Agreement  
United States/Israel

**B. Reports due on 31 July 2004 (19)**

Australia-New Zealand Closer Economic Relations Trade Agreement (ANZCERTA)  
Australia-Papua New Guinea Agreement (PATCRA)  
Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM)  
Central American Common Market (CACM)  
Czech/Slovak Customs Union  
European Communities (EC)/Algeria  
EC/Cyprus  
EC/Egypt  
EC/Iceland  
EC/Malta  
EC/Norway  
EC/Certain Non-European Countries and Territories II  
EC/Syria  
EC/Switzerland and Liechtenstein  
European Free Trade Association (EFTA)  
EFTA/Czech Rep.  
EFTA/Slovak Rep.  
EFTA/Turkey  
United States/Israel

## ATTACHMENT 4

### PROGRAMME OF THE WTO SEMINAR ON RTAS (14 November 2003)

- 09:00-09:15 WELCOMING WORDS
- 09:15-09:45 SESSION 1 - RTAS, THE MULTILATERAL TRADING SYSTEM AND THE DOHA DEVELOPMENT AGENDA: CURRENT TRENDS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS
- RTAs and the multilateral trading system: recent developments in the global and regional trade agendas
- 09:45-10:45 SESSION 2 - RTAS AND MFN IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY: DIVERGENT OR CONVERGENT PATHS?
- The case for free trade and the role of RTAs
  - Competitive liberalization and the role of RTAs
- 10:45-11:00 *COFFEE BREAK*
- 11:00-12:00 SESSION 3 - RTAS AS A DEVELOPMENT TOOL: TO WHAT EXTENT AND UNDER WHICH CONDITIONS?
- Lessons from South-South Agreements: the case of Latin America
  - North-South Agreements: Integrating developing countries into the World Trading System?
- 12:00-13:00 SESSION 4 - REGULATORY PROVISIONS IN RTAS: CAN AND SHOULD THEY BE SYMMETRICAL?
- A legal overview of RTAs' regulatory provisions: crossing the boundaries of GATT Article XXIV?
  - Facilitating or hindering trade: the role of rules of origin in RTAs
- 13:00-14:30 *LUNCH BREAK*
- 14:30-16:00 SESSION 4: cont.
- Standards, technical regulations and SPS provisions in RTAs
  - Safeguards in RTAs
  - Trade and competition policy: anti-dumping and anti-trust policies in RTAs
- 16:00-16:15 *COFFEE BREAK*
- 16:15-17:45 SESSION 5 - EXTENDING RTAS BEYOND GOODS TRADE: TRADE IN SERVICES, INVESTMENT AGREEMENTS AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY
- Economic integration in trade in services
  - Investment provisions in RTAs
  - Intellectual Property provisions in RTAs and TRIPS
- 17:45-18:00 WRAP-UP SESSION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS
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