RESTRICTED

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Committee on Government Procurement

MINUTES OF THE FORMAL MEETING OF 29 MAY 2013

CHAIRMAN: MR BRUCE CHRISTIE (CANADA)

The Chairman said that, in preparation for the meeting, delegations had received an Airgram.[1]

As set out in the Airgram, and following the usual procedures, it was proposed that the meeting address the following items:

1. Request for observer status: the Russian Federation;

2. Other business.

No items had been proposed by delegations under the heading of "Other business".

The Committee adopted the agenda, as proposed.

1 APPROVAL OF THE REQUEST FOR OBSERVER STATUS FROM THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

1.1. The Chairman said that the Russian Federation's request for observer status had been circulated on 16 May 2013.[2]

1.2. The Committee accepted the request for observer status from the Russian Federation.

1.3. The Chairman extended a warm welcome to the Russian Federation in its new capacity as an Observer to the GPA.

1.4. The representative of the Russian Federation thanked all GPA Members for the opportunity to participate in the work of the Committee as an Observer. She also thanked the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and the WTO Secretariat for the technical assistance that they had provided to the Russian Federation in April 2013. The seminar had helped the Russian Federation better understand the outcomes of the re-negotiation of the Agreement on Government Procurement (GPA) which had been finalized last year.

1.5. Continuing, she said that the government procurement system in the Russian Federation was currently undergoing reform. A new Law on Government Procurement had been adopted at the beginning of April 2013 and would come into effect on 1 January 2014. The main difference between the new law and the present law was the former's wider scope. While the present law regulated the conduct of procurement from the publishing of notices of intended procurements to the signing of contracts, the new law would cover the conduct of procurement from the initial stage of planning to the full execution of contracts and would thus provide control over all stages of procurement. The law was based on fundamental principles of government procurement such as transparency, fair competition and best value for money. Russia was open to cooperation with the GPA Parties and was looking forward to participating in the future meetings of the Committee.

[1] WTO/AIR/4127 of 16 May 2013.
[2] GPA/W/322 of 16 May 2013.

1.6. The representative of the United States commended the Russian Federation for its decision to become an official Observer to the Committee on Government Procurement, in line with its WTO accession obligations. The United States hoped that Russia would take advantage of its Observer status to learn about the GPA, particularly in light of the Russian Federation's commitment to initiate its GPA accession process within four years of its WTO accession. The United States was willing to help in that learning process in every way it could.

1.7. The representative of Japan welcomed the Russian Federation to the Committee as an Observer. This represented a first step towards the Russian Federation's accession to the GPA. Japan hoped that the Russian Federation would study the systems and practices of government procurement of current GPA Parties during its observership and that it would initiate its accession process in the near future.

1.8. The representative of the European Union joined the United States and Japan in welcoming the Russian Federation's decision to apply for observership. The European Union hoped that the Russian Federation would move rapidly towards GPA accession by 2016. The Russian Federation's readiness to cooperate with the GPA Parties was appreciated, and the European Union was ready to provide any assistance needed to the Russian Federation.

1.9. The representative of Canada expressed Canada's warm welcome to the Russian Federation as an Observer to the Committee. His delegation looked forward to cooperating with the Russian Federation to better understand each other's respective government procurement regimes. His delegation had had a very good initial conversation with the Russian delegation, which had been helpful in this regard, on the occasion of the present meetings. Canada offered its assistance to the Russian Federation in preparing for accession to the GPA and also extended its full support for further technical cooperation to be provided by the Secretariat.

1.10. The representative of Hong Kong, China welcomed the delegation of the Russian Federation to the Committee as an Observer. Hong Kong, China hoped that this first step would be followed by further action leading to the Russian Federation's eventual accession to the GPA as a full Party to the Agreement.

1.11. The representative of Israel extended warm congratulations to the Russian Federation for its having joined the Committee as an Observer. Israel looked forward to working closely with the Russian Federation to assist the Federation in promptly becoming a full Party to the GPA.

1.12. The representative of Switzerland joined other Parties in welcoming the Russian Federation to the Committee. Switzerland stood ready to offer the Russian Federation any co-operation and support it could provide by sharing its experience. Switzerland considered that the Russian Federation as well as other members of the customs union of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan (RuBeKa) already had procurement systems in the frontline of e-procurement. These countries were at the forefront of countries running electronic auctions and combating bid-rigging, so that GPA parties could learn very much in that regard from the Russian Federation as well as from other members of the custom union.

1.13. The representative of Norway said that, like other GPA Parties, Norway extended its warm welcome to the Russian Federation as an Observer to the Committee which represented a first step in the direction of the Federation's eventual accession to the GPA. Norway appreciated the Secretariat's and EFTA's technical assistance provided to the Russian Federation.

1.14. The representative of Singapore welcomed Russia's decision to participate in the Committee as an Observer following its formal accession to the WTO. Singapore was glad to see the Russian Federation becoming an active member of the global trading system and looked forward to working with it, in particular on the Russian Federation's future accession to the Agreement.

1.15. The representative of Chinese Taipei extended Chinese Taipei's warm welcome to the Russian Federation as an Observer to the Committee. Chinese Taipei hoped that the Russian Federation would initiate its GPA accession as soon as possible.

1.16. The representative of Korea joined others in welcoming the Russian Federation as an Observer. Korea would provide its best co-operation to the Russian Federation in its becoming a Party to the GPA.

1.17. In concluding, the Chairman reiterated, on behalf of the entire Committee, how delighted the Parties were to welcome the Russian Federation as an Observer. Parties as well as the WTO Secretariat would provide all possible assistance to facilitate the Russian Federation's early accession to the Agreement. The Committee looked forward to working with the Russian Federation in the coming months.

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