

**REPORT (2012) OF THE
COMMITTEE ON REGIONAL TRADE AGREEMENTS
TO THE GENERAL COUNCIL**

Chairman: Mr. François Riegert (France)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its first meeting in March 2012, the Committee on Regional Trade Agreements (CRTA) re-elected Mr. François Riegert (France) as Chairman of the CRTA.
2. During 2012, the Committee held four sessions (in March, June, September and November). The minutes of those meetings are listed in the Attachment. Four sessions are foreseen in 2013.

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.

III. CONSIDERATION OF REGIONAL TRADE AGREEMENTS

4. In the period 1 January to 15 October 2012, the CRTA received 31 notifications of RTAs, 18 in goods, notified under Article XXIV of GATT 1994, and 13 in services, notified under Article V of GATS.¹
5. During 2012, 13 factual presentations were distributed reflecting 20 notifications, counting goods and services separately, all of which were used as the basis for consideration of RTAs in the CRTA.²
6. Under paragraph 22(b) of the Transparency Mechanism (TM)³, in 2012, three factual abstracts of RTAs for which the CRTA has concluded its factual examinations under Article XXIV of GATT 1994 were posted on the RTA Database.⁴

¹ Dominican Republic-Central America (G&S); New Zealand-Malaysia (G&S); European Union-Eastern and Southern Africa States Interim EPA (G); Peru-Mexico (G&S); Japan-Peru (G&S); China-Costa Rica (G&S); United States-Republic of Korea (G&S); Chile-Guatemala (G&S); Peru-Panama (G&S); United States-Colombia (G&S); EFTA-Ukraine (G&S); Colombia-Northern Triangle (G&S); Russian Federation-Azerbaijan (G); Russian Federation-Belarus (G); Russian Federation-Kazakhstan (G); Russian Federation-Moldova (G); Russian Federation-Tajikistan (G); EFTA-Hong Kong, China (G&S); East African Community (S).

² Turkey-Chile (G); Hong Kong, China-New Zealand (G&S); Colombia-Mexico (G&S); European Union-Republic of Korea (G&S); Peru-Republic of Korea (G&S); Canada-Colombia (G&S); EFTA States-Albania (G); EFTA States-Serbia (G); European Union-Egypt (G); European Union-South Africa (G); Turkey-Jordan (G); Peru-Chile (G&S); New Zealand-Malaysia (G&S).

IV. EARLY ANNOUNCEMENTS

7. Paragraph 1 of the TM provides for Members participating in new negotiations and parties to a newly signed RTA to provide information to the Secretariat, to be posted on the WTO website. In 2012, a total of 3 early announcements were received from Members, 2 for RTAs under negotiation and 1 for newly signed RTAs.⁵

V. SUBSEQUENT NOTIFICATION AND REPORTING

8. Paragraph 14 of the TM provides for changes affecting the implementation of an RTA, or the operation of an already implemented RTA to be notified as soon as possible after such changes occur. Such communications are to be made available on the WTO website. In the period 1 January to 15 October 2012, notifications of changes for four RTAs had been received and posted on the RTA Database.⁶

9. Paragraph 15 of the TM provides for parties to an RTA to submit a short written report on the realization of the liberalization commitments in the RTA as originally notified at the end of the RTA's implementation period. No such reports were submitted during 2012.

10. In order to assist Members in their discussion of implementation reports, the Secretariat prepared an informal background note (JOB/REG/1) that was discussed by Members in informal consultations and during the Committee's 65th-67th Sessions. A follow-up note, issued in JOB/REG/3, summarizes Members' observations on the issue. The Chairman has indicated his intention to continue informal discussions.

VI. DATABASE ON RTAS

11. Paragraph 21 of the TM provides for the Secretariat to establish and maintain an updated electronic database on individual RTAs. The database was launched in January 2009 and is available on the WTO public website. The database provides information on all notified RTAs, including the status of the consideration process.

VII. PROCEDURES TO IMPROVE AND FACILITATE THE EXAMINATION PROCESS

12. In an effort to address the issue of the reduction of documentation costs of the CRTA, the Secretariat issued a note (JOB/REG/2) that was used as the basis for discussion. At its 66th Session, Members were in agreement that the distribution of all documents in paper form for the CRTA be discontinued, provided that paper copies could be supplied to delegations in the room upon request.

³ The General Council Decision of 14 December establishing the Transparency Mechanism for Regional Trade Agreements (WT/L/671) is being implemented on a provision basis. Members will review, and if necessary modify, this decision, in light of the experience gained from its provisional operation, and replace it by a permanent mechanism as part of the overall results of the Doha Round, in accordance with paragraph 47 of the Doha Declaration (paragraph 23 of the General Council's Decision).

⁴ EU (25) Enlargement (G), EFTA-Morocco (G) and EFTA-FYROM (G); all of these are notified under Article XXIV of the GATT 1994.

⁵ Under negotiation: EFTA - Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras and Panama; Russian Federation-New Zealand. Newly signed: EFTA-Montenegro.

⁶ China-Hong Kong, China; China-Macao, China; EFTA-Republic of Korea; EFTA-Singapore.

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

13. At the CRTA's 64th, 66th and 67th Sessions, Members exchanged views on issues of relevance for the CRTA that were raised at the 8th Ministerial Conference.

IX. FINAL REMARKS

14. In an effort to encourage the notification of non-notified RTAs, the Chairman with the help of the Secretariat, continued to draw up and circulate in advance of CRTA meetings a list of non-notified RTAs which have been verified by their parties as being in force and appeared in factual presentations circulated between September 2009 and October 2012.

15. Although considerable progress has been made in the preparation of factual presentations, the Committee continues to experience some difficulties in adhering to its work programme. This is due to a number of factors: delays in the receipt of statistical data from parties, data discrepancies in Members' submissions, and delays in the receipt of comments from parties.

ATTACHMENT

Minutes of the Meetings held in 2012

Sixty-fourth Session – 20 March 2012

WT/REG/M/64

WT/REG293/M/1 Turkey - Chile, goods
WT/REG291/M/1 Hong Kong, China - New Zealand, goods and services
WT/REG289/M/1 Colombia - Mexico, goods and services

Sixty-fifth Session – 19 June 2012

WT/REG/M/65

WT/REG296/M/1 European Union - Republic of Korea, goods and services

Sixty-sixth Session – 18-19 September 2012

WT/REG/M/66
WT/REG/M/66/Corr.1 (in English only)

WT/REG298/M/1 Peru - Republic of Korea, goods and services
WT/REG301/M/1 Canada - Colombia, goods and services
WT/REG292/M/1 EFTA States - Albania, goods
WT/REG290/M/1 EFTA States - Serbia, goods [non-Member]

Sixty-seventh Session – 20-21 November 2012 (to be issued)

WT/REG/M/67

WT/REG/W/71 Draft Report (2012) of the CRTA to the General Council

WT/REG177/M/1 European Union - Egypt, goods
WT/REG113/M/1 European Union - South Africa, goods
WT/REG294/M/1 Turkey - Jordan, goods
WT/REG304/M/1 Peru - Chile, goods and services
WT/REG306/M/1 New Zealand - Malaysia, goods and services
