

Negotiating Group on Trade Facilitation

TNC MEETING OF 22 MARCH 2010

Report by the Chairman, Ambassador Sperisen-Yurt, to the Trade Negotiations
Committee for the TNC stocktaking exercise

1. Work on Trade Facilitation made a significant step forward last December when Members agreed on circulating a draft consolidated text (TN/TF/W/165). Doing so marked progress in several respects. For the first time, we were able to base our remaining negotiations on a single text-based document. Having a consolidated draft text also gave fresh impetus to Members' participation and added a layer of intensity to the negotiation. It allowed delegations to focus on textual modifications as opposed to input in more general form. We now have a fairly good idea of what the Trade Facilitation Agreement is likely to contain.
 2. A significant amount of work remains to be done. Our text is still a draft and requires further negotiation. The time constraints surrounding its presentation led to several aspects being only partially addressed, resulting in a perhaps unnecessarily large number of square brackets. The trade facilitation text remains a work in progress and needs to be cleaned up. Areas with competing textual options have to be streamlined. And we need to have matching levels of progress on all elements of the text. Advancements on the S&D pillar have to catch up with the rest.
 3. Work to this end has already begun. Members initiated a first review of the entire text at the February meetings and concluded it earlier this month. This first review proved to be very valuable in familiarizing delegations with the exercise of negotiating legal text. It led to progress with respect to streamlining and consolidating the draft. The revised version of the Draft Consolidated Negotiating Text (TN/TF/W/165/Rev.1) represents the outcome of these efforts. It will be updated shortly to incorporate the results of the March session.
 4. Our negotiating schedule for the time up to July reflects the amount of work still to be done. Over the course of the meeting weeks ahead, Members will be asked to revisit all provisions with a view to cleaning up the text. Opportunity for such in-depth reviews will be provided in the context of negotiating sessions in May/June and July. We will take a close look at all relevant areas with a focus on the elements with the greatest degree of convergence, such as the GATT Article X domain. The target is to develop a much cleaner text by the time of the summer break.
 5. To make this happen, we need to advance on several fronts. Work has to become even more efficient by increasing the concrete results. Technical discussions have to translate into a greater amount of actual modifications of the negotiating text. Members will also have to intensify their work amongst themselves, making good use of the time between NGTF sessions.
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