

Brief on the WTO Negotiating Group meeting on Trade Facilitation
on 2 and 3 May 2005

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The WTO Trade Facilitation Negotiating Group meeting was held in Geneva from 2 to 3 May 2005. The Secretariat was invited to attend the meeting together with the Secretariats of IMF, OECD, UNCTAD and World Bank. There were over 200 delegates; some Customs attachés stationed in Brussels attended the meeting.

Twelve proposals were tabled in addition to eighteen having been submitted to the previous meeting. They covered GATT Article V (Freedom of transit), Article X (transparency; impartiality; and appeals) and Article VIII (fees and formalities) as well as identification of trade facilitation needs and priorities, technical assistance and capacity building (TA/CB) and special and differential treatment (S&D). New proposals were made by: Bolivia, Mongolia and Paraguay (transit); China and Pakistan (identification of trade facilitation needs and priorities); Peru (covering many issues related to the three articles); Hong Kong, China (least trade restrictive formalities and requirements, fees, publication of information, prior consultation); African Group (trade facilitation needs and priorities, TA/CB, S&D); Korea (transit); NZ, Norway and Switzerland (transparency, standardized format); EC (TA/CB); Singapore (advance rulings); and Switzerland, Paraguay and Rwanda (transit) .

It was followed by the comments and Q&As on these proposals. Some delegations asked clarification on the words used in the proposals and questioned the linkage between the proposed issues and the negotiation mandates. In addition, many developing countries stressed the importance of S&D, implementation capacity linked to the commitments, and support to the capacity building.

Thirty proposals were on the negotiating table which remained open. The Chairperson requested the WTO Secretariat to start drawing up a list of issues tabled for the next meeting.

The World Bank briefed its project to support the negotiations and the positive outcome of the recent workshop carried out with the support of the WCO in Jamaica. Jamaican Ambassador also made a positive observation on this particular project.

The Secretariat refreshed delegates on the Customs Data Model and explained that version 3.0 scheduled for 2008 would include comprehensive provisions on other government agencies requirements and provided an update on the revised Kyoto Convention.

The next meeting would be held on 13-14 June; the WCO was invited together with the other international organizations.