



HARMONIZED SYSTEM  
COMMITTEE

-  
25<sup>th</sup> Session  
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NC0201E1

O. Eng.

Brussels, 8 March 2000.

## FORMAT OF THE HS COMMITTEE DOCUMENTS

(Item II.11 on Agenda)

### Reference documents :

38.811 (HSC/14)  
38.960 Annex C/3 (HSC/14 – Report)  
41.600 Annexes C/6 and O (HSC/20 – Report)

### I. BACKGROUND

1. The Committee at its 14<sup>th</sup> Session discussed a Secretariat document concerning the preparation of HS Committee documents and reports.
2. Among the items discussed was the question of whether the text annexes to working documents and Committee reports should be monolingual in the future or whether they should remain bilingual. The main reasons behind this question were the Secretariat's intention to (1) simplify the production of working documents to make them available to administrations in a more timely manner; (2) facilitate the updating and use of the WCO Electronic Bulletin Board; and (3) reduce overall printing costs.
3. However, at the 14<sup>th</sup> Session, one delegate, supported by several other delegates who had to translate the texts into a third language, advocated that the annexes should continue to be bilingual, since this made it possible to detect (and avoid) problems of interpretation and in view of the fact that a one language version would probably force delegations to request copies in both languages.

### II. SECRETARIAT COMMENTS

4. The last paragraph of Rule 10 of the Rules of Procedure of the Harmonized System Committee states that, in principle, all basic documents should be dispatched to the Members of the Committee at least 30 days before the opening date of the session.

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5. At its 20<sup>th</sup> Session, the Committee also amended Rule 4 of the Rules of Procedures of the Harmonized System Review Sub-Committee. According to this amendment, in principle, all basic working documents on new proposals placed on the Agenda should be dispatched or made available to Members for examination at least 30 days in advance of the opening date of the session (see Annexes C/6 and O to Doc. 41.600, HSC/20 - Report).
6. The expressions "dispatching" and "making available" covers both mailing of documents and placing them on the WCO Web Site.
7. Under the current practice (i.e., the preparation of working documents with bilingual annexes), however, the translation of annexes results in substantial delays in the mailing of the "original versions" of documents and placing them on the WCO Web Site.
8. Bilingual annexes are also much more complex to set up editorially and to manage by the Secretariat's typing pool, resulting in further delays in this production.
9. Finally, the cost of preparing documents with bilingual annexes is significantly higher than preparing them with monolingual annexes.
10. For the reasons summarized above, starting after the 25<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee, the Secretariat will prepare the HS working documents and reports with monolingual annexes for an unspecified period of time as a trial. Depending upon the results of this experience, it would be possible to return to the past practice or continue with the new practice.
11. It should be noted that the Secretariat fully understands the concerns expressed at the 14<sup>th</sup> Session (see paragraph 3). However, the Secretariat is ready to supply administrations, upon their request, with both French and English versions of working documents and reports if they deem it necessary.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

12. The Committee is invited to take note of the Secretariat's proposal.
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