

ROOM DOCUMENT

27-29 November 2012 WTO TBT Committee Meeting,

Geneva, Switzerland
28 November 2012

Submission by Brazil, Canada, and the United States

In the report of the Fifth Triennial Review (G/TBT/26), the Committee stressed the importance of transparency in the processes and procedures used in the development and application of technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures. In particular, the Committee noted that participation of interested parties helps ensure the legitimacy of what the government does, and enhances the quality of the regulatory outcomes. In this regard, the Committee stressed the importance of the operational capacity of Enquiry Points, and recommended that developing countries work to identify challenges they face with respect to the establishment and operation of their Enquiry Points. Lastly, the Committee encouraged Members to review capacity building needs related to the operation of the Enquiry Points.

With a view to facilitating the implementation of the recommendations on technical assistance as set forth by Article 15.B(a)(11)(b)(i) in the *Decisions and Recommendations Adopted by the WTO Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade Since 1 January 1995 (G/TBT/1/Rev.10, 9 June 2011)*, Brazil, Canada, and the United States collaborated to address these issues among the WTO Members in the Americas to exchange experiences in order to strengthen their understandings of the roles and responsibilities of Enquiry Points and to identify good practices in the operations of Enquiry Points.¹

Specifically, Brazil, Canada, and the United States planned, hosted, and convened a “First Meeting of the WTO TBT Enquiry Points of the Americas” with the purpose of strengthening mutual ties to promote business and facilitate trade in the region. The meeting was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil during 30 October - 1 November 2012. The meeting was attended by WTO TBT Enquiry Point and Notification Authority representatives and other interested stakeholders from 32 countries in the Western Hemisphere; additional representatives attended from the CARICOM Regional Organization for Standards and Quality (CROSQ) Secretariat and from the WTO². Discussion highlights of the meeting include: impacts of technical barriers to trade in a global economy; good practices for national internal coordination in implementation of the WTO TBT Agreement; good practices for the management and operation of Enquiry Points; and good practices in the provision of Enquiry Point services to national industries. In addition, Canada hosted meetings on 29 October and 1 November 2012 that included a

¹ A study conducted under the Brazil-United States cooperation demonstrated that the Enquiry Points provide significant economic benefits to their national economies and national industries in the form of direct cost savings, reduced exporting risks, and avoidance of exporting mistakes by providing to up-to-date and authoritative information about product technical requirements.

² Complete information on the meeting, including agendas, presentations, and the economic benefit study can be found online at: <http://gsi.nist.gov/global/index.cfm/L1-7/L2-35/A-661>

capacity building workshop under the Canada-Americas Trade-Related Technical Assistance (CATRTA) program³. These capacity building projects were demand-driven and emphasized the importance of transparency and the value of achieving effective and efficient processes and procedures in Enquiry Points (and notification authorities) at the regional and national level.

Specifically, the participants in the "First Meeting of the WTO TBT Enquiry Points of the Americas" would like to share the following outcomes with the Committee:

- The need to complement the important work of the Committee and the WTO Secretariat on strengthening implementation of the obligations under Article 10 through peer-to-peer exchanges among WTO Members. In this regard, regional initiatives among Members, such as this one among the Enquiry Points of the Americas, can play an important role.
- The plans for the establishment of a regional communications network among the Enquiry Points of the Americas to follow-up on the agreed upon outcomes and other topics as needed. Co-moderators would be selected to manage the network and subgroups could be established for discussions and implementation of specific projects of mutual interest in the future. Preliminary discussions at the meeting proposed the use of easily available, free web tools to facilitate the network. It was discussed that each country could communicate in its national language and use internet translation services as needed.
- The plans for the development of additional "Industry Guides" (a project first initiated between Brazil and the United States involving the exchange of technical and regulatory information to facilitate trade in specific industry sectors).⁴ Meeting participants agreed to consider the development of industry guides between and among countries on both a bilateral basis (similar to the Brazil-United States effort), or among a group of countries on sectors or products of mutual interest. Further discussion via the communications network will consider how to move forward with this initiative.
- Developing ideas for continued focus in the region on educational and technical assistance projects. Potential joint training and educational efforts were discussed and noted with interest by the participants. The importance of participation in WTO training courses was emphasized. Development of some form of regional exchange of training opportunities via the communications network or by use of a website/webinar was also considered. Participants expressed interest in exchanging information on ongoing efforts to promote education about standardization at the university level in their own countries.

³ The programme of the CATRTA Workshop can be found online at:
http://gsi.nist.gov/global/docs/workshops/CATRTA_Agenda.pdf

⁴ More information on the industry guides can be found at:
<http://gsi.nist.gov/global/index.cfm/L1-7/L2-35/A-630/> or
<http://www.inmetro.gov.br/barreirastecnicas/estudo-setorial.asp>

- A plan to develop a best practices guide for Enquiry Points. The guide will include data gathered from a pre-event survey of Enquiry Points and outcomes from discussions and focus groups convened during the meeting. Brazil will take the lead on this project.