

MARKET ACCESS FOR NON-AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS

Negotiating Text on Textiles, Apparel, Footwear and
Travel Goods Labeling Requirements

Communication from the United States

Addendum

The following communication, dated 15 May 2006, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of the United States.

As affirmed in Annex B, Paragraph 26, of the Hong Kong Ministerial Text, non-tariff barriers (NTBs) are an integral and important part of the non-agricultural market access (NAMA) negotiations. Consistent with paragraph 22 of the Ministerial Declaration, the United States now respectfully submits to WTO Members this draft negotiating text on reducing barriers to trade in textiles, apparel, footwear, and travel goods.

The United States first indicated its interest in negotiating NTBs affecting textiles, apparel, footwear, and travel goods in its revised indicative list, tabled in November 2004 (TN/MA/W46/Add.8/Rev.1). On 1 December, 2005, the United States circulated a concept paper to Members advocating more common approaches to labeling as a way to benefit exporters and consumers of textiles, apparel, and footwear across the globe (TN/MA/W/18/Add.12). In March of 2006, the United States also circulated an industry-drafted non-paper describing specific labeling problems and proposed targeted solutions. The United States has expanded coverage to include travel goods, based on subsequent conversations with industry and trading partners.

Textiles, apparel, footwear, and travel goods are products of importance to a range of countries, both developed and developing. The United States sees this text as a positive way for Members to reduce the diversity of labeling approaches in these areas, in order to save manufacturers time (*i.e.*, to avoid delays to market) and money (*i.e.*, to minimize costs of varying labeling schemes). The aim is to preserve the ability of regulators to require certain information to be provided on such goods in order to inform and protect consumers, while minimizing the costs of providing this information; such savings would then be passed on to consumers.

The United States looks forward to continued discussions with Members on this draft negotiating text and on eliminating non-tariff barriers to trade in textiles, apparel, footwear, and travel goods. The United States is committed to an open and transparent process and is open to suggestions for improvement or additions to the draft negotiating text.

**Agreement on Reducing Non-Tariff Barriers to Trade Related
to Labeling of Textiles, Apparel, Footwear and Travel Goods**

Members,

Recalling that pursuant to paragraph 16 of the Doha Ministerial Declaration, Members agreed to negotiations aimed at reducing or as appropriate eliminating tariffs and non-tariff barriers on non-agricultural products;

Recognizing the important contribution of the textile, apparel, footwear, and travel goods sectors to global economic growth and development;

Noting that textiles, apparel, footwear, and travel goods suppliers and producers in exporting Members may require regulatory flexibility to adjust to new labeling requirements and the subsequent commercial conditions, especially in the event that entry into force of such requirements is sudden;

Reaffirming that under the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade, Members shall ensure that technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures are not prepared, adopted or applied with a view to or with the effect of creating unnecessary obstacles to international trade, and allow a reasonable interval between the publication of technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures and their entry into force, among other obligations;

Desiring to promote cooperative and effective approaches to enhance trade in textiles, apparel, footwear, and travel goods;

Agree as follows:

1. a. Members shall not require information on permanent labels or marking beyond:
 - i. country of origin, fiber content, care instructions, and information necessary for consumer safety, with respect to textile and apparel goods; and
 - ii. country of origin with respect to footwear and travel goods.
 - b. Members shall ensure that, at their discretion, manufacturers may provide additional information on permanent labels or markings with respect to all such goods.
 - c. Members remain free to require that reasonable additional information of use to consumers be provided on goods or packaging through non-permanent means, including, for example, information regarding [their] material content [for footwear and travel goods].
2. Upon entry into force of technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures, Members should afford sympathetic consideration to requests for flexibility to adapt to modifications of labelling requirements, allowing for both old labels and new labels to be accepted during the transition period.
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