

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

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Negotiating Group on Trade Facilitation

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COMMUNICATION FROM THE UNITED STATES

The following communication, dated 4 February 2005, is being circulated at the request of the United States.

INTRODUCTION TO PROPOSALS BY THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

1. The United States continues to hold the view that successful negotiations on Trade Facilitation should be straightforward and simple. The WTO does its best work when it takes a practical workmanlike approach in a problem-solving mode, and this approach will serve well in the negotiations on Trade Facilitation. Given the shared objective of a rules-based transparent, and efficient approach to goods crossing the border, our view of the negotiations is not one of trading concessions, but one of identifying individual problems and developing targeted solutions – both in developing new and strengthened commitments and on establishing a path toward their full implementation.
2. Whether concerned about regional neighbours or more distant key markets, every Member – as both an importer and an exporter – has a very real stake in the results of these negotiations. The proposals submitted by the United States for improvements and clarifications of GATT Articles V, VIII, and X will aim to improve the global trading system – ensuring that Members' regulatory infrastructure keeps pace with advancements in commercial logistical practices. The results of the negotiations will also enhance individual Members' administrative capabilities to achieve compliance with applicable requirements pertaining to duty collection, health, safety, and the environment.
3. No other work in the Doha Development Agenda is likely to have as much potential to assist small- and medium-sized enterprises around the globe, particularly in developing countries. These negotiations can result in a portal to the exploration of new market opportunities and ensure that potential economic gains are not diminished by a lack of transparency, or undue delays in procedures.
4. Since the August decision to launch negotiations, the United States has informally consulted with many Members. It is apparent that developing-country Members share an interest in robust results, but it is important to ensure that negotiations are conducted with all Members fully engaged, with a complete understanding of proposals and their implications.
5. The United States is putting forward its proposals in a manner that allows a "bite-sized" approach as the negotiations proceed. The United States is submitting, prior to the 7 February meeting of the WTO Negotiating Group on Trade Facilitation, four discrete proposals representing clarification and improvements in the form of commitments regarding Internet publication, customs fees, express shipments and advance rulings. More proposals of this nature will be forthcoming, each in a similar discrete articulation.

6. Within each proposal, the United States also attempts to address – not in an exhaustive manner – various relevant elements that have been identified as concerns, such as cost implications, special and differential treatment, and technical assistance. In addition, the proposals include citations to WTO documents to allow reference to previous – and often detailed – technical submissions or discussions that have taken place within the WTO regarding the element captured by the particular proposal. Finally, for each of the proposals, the United States suggests next steps for Members to undertake.
