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WTO Trade Monitoring Report on G20 Trade Measures: Possible Improvements

**Discussion Paper for the G20
Prepared by the World Trade Organization**

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(The views expressed in this paper do not necessarily represent those of G20 members.)

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The WTO's Trade Monitoring Report on G20 trade measures has featured prominently in the trade related work of the G20 since it was first published in 2009. Although the Report has evolved and been improved over the years, including by incorporating a number of suggestions put forward by G20 members, discussions under the Chinese G20 Presidency have shown a continuing interest in this issue, including on how further steps might be taken to improve the Report.

This discussion paper on the WTO Trade Monitoring Report on G20 Trade Measures seeks to provide (i) a brief background of the WTO G20 Monitoring Report (ii) an overview of improvements and innovations in the Reports and (iii) a list of possible suggestions to further develop the Reports should there be interest from G20 members.

1. BACKGROUND

The Reports on G20 Trade and Investment Measures are issued twice annually ahead of key G20 meetings and are produced under the responsibility of the heads of the WTO, the OECD and the UNCTAD. The mandate for these reports dates back to the G20 Leaders' Summit in October 2008. The G20 Trade Monitoring Report is prepared by the WTO and the Report on G20 Investment Measures is a joint effort by OECD and UNCTAD. The OECD has since 2013 been contributing a brief substantive input on a topical issue via a box in the Trade Monitoring Reports.

The WTO G20 Trade Monitoring Report is normally made public a few days after circulation to Sherpas¹. The next Report is due to be finalized by mid-June so as to provide an opportunity for discussion at the June Sherpas meeting and the G20 Trade Ministers meeting (and related meeting of the Trade and Investment Working Group).

2. IMPROVEMENTS AND INNOVATIONS

The WTO Report on G20 Trade Measures remains an evolving exercise which attempts to incorporate suggestions from the G20. There seems to be a general recognition that the Reports should be comprehensive, yet also constitute a practical and accessible tool for briefing policymakers on specific trade-related policy trends. In this vein, a number of important changes and adjustments have been made over the years. These include:

- The introduction of a short section on Key Findings with graphics to more clearly illustrate trends on trade measures implemented and the existing stockpile of these.
- A focused Executive Summary which highlights specific substantive findings of the report in a crisp and accessible manner.
- A more analytical approach to the substantive sections of the Report which allows for clearer messages on new developments or trends in areas such as trade remedies, SPS, TBT and services.
- The introduction of a comprehensive new section which covers "trade concerns" raised by Members in all WTO bodies and involving G20 members.
- An expanded section on trade-related services measures for which G20 members are also asked for verification.
- A closer examination of developments and trends in the area of trade remedies since the end of 2008, including on sun-set.
- The introduction of a central feature to measure trends and developments in the accumulation of trade restrictions and the roll back of previous measures,
- The establishment of a Trade Monitoring Database which allows dissemination of information on trade measures to Members and the public.

¹ Although the mandate and the structure of the G20 Report is somewhat different than the WTO-wide version, the data collection method is similar and based on specific verification by each G20 member for which trade-related measures have been identified

3. POSSIBLE FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS

Over the past few years, and under subsequent Presidencies, a number of G20 members have called for possible improvements to the WTO Trade Monitoring Report.

In an endeavor to explore ways in which the Report might be improved, an initial step could consist of specifically encouraging the WTO to further explore with other interested IGOs ways to build on and further strengthen their substantive/analytical contributions to the trade report. This would be consistent with ongoing dialogue already taking place, for example, between the WTO and OECD on trade monitoring work. Such work could, among other things, focus on possible contributions that could enhance the understanding of the importance of specific types of trade measures as well as provide more transparency on the activities of individual G20 members.

G20 members could also consider, as a first step, introducing the option of one-page voluntary contributions to attach to the G20 trade report with individual self-evaluations on roll back and stand-still performance since 2008. Such individual self-evaluations could also provide countries with a platform to showcase forthcoming initiatives and ambitions to deliver on the roll back and stand-still pledge. Such self-evaluations could be annexed to the Trade Monitoring Report.

The business community through the B20 has also regularly pointed to the importance of the G20's trade monitoring work. It might be useful, therefore, to seek further views from the B20 on this subject.