

**PROCEDURES FOR THE CIRCULATION AND DERESTRICTION  
OF WTO DOCUMENTS**

Decision of 14 May 2002

The General Council,

*Having regard to* Articles IV:1, IV:2 and IX:1 of the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization,

*Considering* that there is a need to improve the current Procedures for the Circulation and Derestriiction of WTO documents,

*Emphasizing* the importance of greater transparency in the functioning of the WTO,

*Decides as follows:*

1. All official WTO documents<sup>1</sup> shall be unrestricted.
2. Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph 1,
  - (a) any Member may submit a document as restricted, which shall be automatically derestricted after its first consideration by the relevant body or 60 days after the date of circulation, whichever is earlier, unless requested otherwise by that Member.<sup>2</sup> In the latter case, the document may remain restricted for further periods of 30 days, subject to renewed requests by that Member within each 30-day period. The Secretariat shall remind Members of such deadlines, and derestrict the document upon receipt of a written instruction. Any document may be derestricted at any time during the restriction period at the request of the Member concerned.
  - (b) any WTO body when requesting a document to be prepared by the Secretariat shall decide whether it shall be issued as restricted or unrestricted. Such documents which are issued as restricted shall automatically be derestricted 60 days after the date of circulation, unless requested otherwise by a Member. In the latter case, the document shall remain restricted for one additional period of 30 days after which it shall be derestricted.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this Decision, an official WTO document shall be any document submitted by a Member or prepared by the Secretariat to be issued in any one of the following WTO document series: WT-series (including reports of panels and the Appellate Body); G-series (except G/IT-series); S-series; IP-series; GATS/EL-series; GATS/SC-series; the Schedules of Concessions and TN-series. Where a new WTO document series is created, the relevant WTO body shall decide on the derestriction procedures applicable to that series, taking into account the present decision.

<sup>2</sup> However, any document that contains only information that is publicly available or information that is required to be published under any agreement in Annex 1, 2 or 3 of the WTO Agreement shall be unrestricted.

- (c) minutes of meetings (including records, reports and notes) shall be restricted and shall be automatically derestricted 45 days after the date of circulation.<sup>3</sup>
- (d) documents relating to modification or renegotiation of concessions or to specific commitments pursuant to Article XXVIII of the GATT 1994 or Article XXI of the GATS respectively shall be restricted and automatically derestricted upon certification of such changes in the schedules;
- (e) documents relating to working parties on accession shall be restricted and shall be automatically derestricted upon the adoption of the report of the working party.

3. Translation of official WTO documents in all three official WTO languages (English, French and Spanish) shall be completed expeditiously. Once translated in all three official WTO languages, all official WTO documents that are not restricted shall be made available via the WTO web-site to facilitate their dissemination to the public at large.<sup>4</sup>

4. The Decision of the General Council of 18 July 1996 on Procedures for the Circulation and Derestriction of WTO documents, as contained in WT/L/160/Rev.1, shall be abrogated as of the date of adoption of the present decision, but will remain in effect for documents circulated prior to that date.

5. In the light of the experience gained from the operation of these procedures and changes in any other relevant procedures under the WTO, the General Council will, at an appropriate time, review and if necessary modify the procedures.

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<sup>3</sup> It is understood that, normally, minutes (including records, reports and notes) of meetings shall be circulated within three weeks after a meeting of a WTO body and not later than the notice convening the following meeting of that body. Pursuant to Section C, paragraph (vi) of the Trade Policy Review Mechanism contained in Annex 3 of the WTO Agreement, minutes of the Trade Policy Review Body shall continue to be circulated as unrestricted.

<sup>4</sup> Notwithstanding paragraph 3, any document that contains information that is publicly available or information required to be published under any agreement in Annex 1, 2 or 3 of the WTO Agreement shall continue to be made available via the WTO web-site immediately in the original WTO language in which it is written.