



TECHNICAL COMMITTEE  
ON RULES OF ORIGIN

OC0120E1a

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26<sup>th</sup> Session  
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O. Eng.

Brussels, 18 December 2007.

WCO DATABASE OF PREFERENTIAL ARRANGEMENTS  
AND RULES OF ORIGIN AND FEASIBILITY STUDY  
(Item V (c) on the Agenda)

Reference documents :

SP0237E1a  
Letter No. 07OL0021 of 13 August 2007 to WCO Members  
OC0117E1a (TCRO/26)

**Summary**

1. The purpose of this note is to update WCO Members on the progress on the establishment of a database of preferential trade arrangements.
2. This paper calls for the active support and participation from WCO Members in the establishment of a database of preferential arrangements.

I. BACKGROUND

3. The 109<sup>th</sup>/110<sup>th</sup> Sessions of the WCO Council of June 2007 endorsed the Action Plan and Package of Measures on Preferential Trade Arrangements (Doc. SP0237E1a).
4. Action 1 of the document calls for the establishment of a database of preferential arrangements and lists four specific initiatives, outlined below, to be carried out by the WCO Secretariat in partnership with WCO members.

**Initiative 1 Collection and review of existing material**

5. A letter No. 07OL0021 of 13 August 2007 was sent to all WCO Members, requesting that the texts of all preferential trade arrangements, together with the related rules of origin concluded by the respective country, be submitted to the WCO Secretariat in electronic format and preferably in English, Spanish or French.

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For reasons of economy, documents are printed in limited number. Delegates are kindly asked to bring their copies to meetings and not to request additional copies.

6. To date the WCO Secretariat has collected the legal texts of over 200 preferential trade arrangements, together with related rules of origin.

**WCO Members are asked to confirm that a copy of all reciprocal preferential trade arrangements to which they are a party has been transmitted to the WCO Secretariat.**

#### **Initiative 2 Development of a passive database of preferential trade arrangements**

7. The WCO Secretariat has prepared a detailed product specification with user requirements for the creation of a “passive” database (Phase 1 of the database) listing the arrangements and related rules of origin and allowing a simple and limited range of queries.
8. The proposed timetable for the launch of this database is June 2008.

#### **Initiative 3 Feasibility study on possible development of an “interactive” database**

9. The WCO Secretariat is in the process of carrying out a feasibility study to assess the merits and need for an interactive database, addressing *inter alia* resource, legal and cost issues.
10. A questionnaire has been prepared and distributed as widely as possible to both the public and private sectors (and is also available on the WCO website).

**WCO Members are asked to ensure that the questionnaire is completed and returned to the WCO Secretariat as soon as possible. WCO Members are also requested to support the widespread dissemination of the questionnaire.**

#### **Initiative 4 Presentation Feasibility Study to the WCO Policy Commission**

11. The WCO Secretariat will submit the Feasibility Study report to the WCO Policy Commission in 2008 for a decision regarding the possible future development of the origin database.

## II. CONCLUSION

12. Customs administrations and economic operators are obliged to be fully familiar with different rules of origin and different procedures depending on the type of preference they wish to obtain. The database is seen as an important tool to support the work of customs in the proper understanding and management of the rules of origin.
13. It is proposed that the WCO database will contain all preferential trade arrangements in force. It will be available electronically to all WCO members and the private sector to support easy reference to the arrangements.

14. The TCRO is invited to :

- Note the progress on the development of the database and feasibility study.
  - Support the WCO Secretariat in the collection of the material for inclusion in the database.
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