



**United Nations
Environment Programme**

**Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations**

Distr.: General
12 May 2008

Original: English

**Rotterdam Convention on the Prior
Informed Consent Procedure for Certain
Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in
International Trade**
Conference of the Parties
Fourth meeting
Rome, 27–31 October 2008
Item 6 (d) of the provisional agenda*
**Issues arising out of previous meetings of the
Conference of the Parties: cooperation with the
World Trade Organization**

Cooperation with the World Trade Organization

Note by the Secretariat

1. The annex to the present note contains a note by the Secretariat reporting the progress made in the actions requested of the Secretariat in decision RC-1/15, on cooperation with the World Trade Organization (WTO), taken by the Conference of the Parties at its first meeting.
2. The Conference of the Parties may wish to:
 - (a) Take note of the progress made towards the implementation of the decision;
 - (b) Seek observer status in the regular sessions of the WTO Committee on Trade and Environment, given the relevance of the topics considered in the Committee's regular sessions to the work of the Convention Secretariat.

* UNEP/FAO/RC/COP.4/1.

Annex

1. By decision RC-1/15 on cooperation with the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Conference of the Parties to the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade requested the Secretariat to take the following actions:

(a) To seek observer status in the Committee on Trade and Environment in Special Session of the World Trade Organization and inform Parties when the request had been submitted and when it had been granted;

(b) To report to the Conference of the Parties on any WTO meetings that it attended, any substantive contacts that it had with the WTO secretariat and any general or factual information provided to or any other information requested by the WTO secretariat or any other body of that organization;

(c) To ensure that at no time did it provide an interpretation of the provisions of the Convention;

(d) To monitor developments in the Committee on Trade and Environment in Special Session and report on such developments to the Conference of the Parties;

(e) To reflect on ways of enhancing information flows on matters of common interest with WTO.

2. At its third meeting, the Conference of the Parties took note of the progress in the implementation of decision RC-1/15 on cooperation between the Secretariat and WTO and requested the Secretariat to continue to pursue its application for observer status in the Committee on Trade and Environment in Special Session.¹

3. The Conference of the Parties is invited to take note of the points below describing progress made towards the implementation of the decision.

4. With regard to progress made on the issue of observer status, the Secretariat wrote officially to the WTO secretariat (letter dated 17 December 2004) requesting to be granted observer status in the Committee on Trade and Environment in Special Session. A response received by Secretariat from the Committee's Chair (letter dated 17 January 2005) indicated that the Rotterdam Convention would be invited to Committee meetings on a "meeting-by-meeting basis". At the time when the present document was prepared, negotiations were continuing on criteria for the granting of observer status to the secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements pursuant to paragraph 31 (ii) of the Doha Ministerial Declaration.

5. At the invitation of WTO, the Secretariat participated (directly or through representation by the Secretariat of the Stockholm Convention or the Economics and Trade Branch of the United Nations Environment Programme) as an ad hoc observer in Committee meetings held on 1 and 2 March 2007, 3 and 4 May 2007, 11 and 12 June 2007, 18 July 2007 and 1 and 2 November 2007. In addition, upon special invitation by the WTO secretariat, the Committee held an informal consultation with multilateral environmental agreements on 3 and 4 May 2007. At that session, multilateral environmental agreements were specifically invited to comment on questions posed to them on the issue of information sessions and other forms of information exchange between the agreements and WTO. The statement delivered by the representative of the Secretariat at the session can be found in document UNEP/FAO/RC/COP.4/INF/11.

6. The latest report by the Chair of the Committee on Trade and Environment in Special Session to the Trade Negotiations Committee can also be found in document UNEP/FAO/RC/COP.4/INF/11.²

7. Regarding ways of enhancing information flow on matters of common interest with WTO, the Secretariat provided relevant awareness-raising material on the Convention and its work at a WTO regional workshop on trade and environment for Caribbean countries, organized by the WTO secretariat in Barbados from 4 to 6 February 2008. Information on the Convention's regional official contact points and designated national authorities was also made available to participants.

1 UNEP/FAO/RC/COP.3/26.

2 WTO document TN/TE/17.

8. While continuing to follow up on the request for observer status in the Committee on Trade and Environment in Special Session , the Conference of the Parties may also wish to request the Secretariat to seek observer status in the WTO Committee on Trade and Environment, as it is the WTO standing body mandated to discuss trade and environment issues in regular sessions.
