

Abertura Workshop: Barreiras Não-Tarifárias

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Authorities of FIRJAN and CNI, Professor Marcelo Abreu, Prof. Paulo Ferracioli, Professor Iglesias and his colleague at CINDES, ladies and gentlemen, it is of great pleasure for me and my colleagues in UNCTAD and ALADI to be here in Rio de Janeiro for this first workshop on non-tariff measures.

Non-tariff measures or better known as NTBs are, growing in importance in recent years as the tariffs have been cut to a bare minimum through series of multi-lateral, bilateral and unilateral efforts by countries, except for some sensitive areas. However, the identification of NTB is becoming a problem in itself. This is because more visible NTBs, such as quota, license or prohibition, are no longer allowed to be used by WTO, especially in agricultural products, and countries are resorting to more difficult-to-identify measures. These are, among others, measures related to sanitary and phytosanitary measures, and technical barriers to trade. These measures have the intended purpose of protecting the well-being of consumers, rather than producers, so if applied properly, they should rather enhance the trade than restrict them. However, more and more of these measures are introduced for the benefit of local producers, by applying measures that can only be fulfilled by local industries. For example, there was a case requiring an expiry date of one month from the date of production on bottles of mineral waters. Clearly this is a measure that favors domestic producers, as there is no scientific evidence that properly bottled water can become unfit for consumption after just one month.

The issue of NTBs is not new to us in international organizations, especially to UNCTAD. Since early 1980s, UNCTAD has been collecting NTBs according to the Coding System of Trade Control Measures that was developed for that purpose. The Coding system classified tariffs, para-tariffs and non-tariff measures into over one hundred sub-categories. However, the process had to be slowed down at the turn of the decade basically for two reasons: Lack of resources in the face of growing difficulties in identifying NTBs; and the TCM coding system becoming insufficient or obsolete in certain sub-categories.

The recent initiative by UNCTAD started in 2005, when it organized an inter-governmental expert meeting on NTBs in September. The meeting was a free format discussion forum addressing the issues of NTBs from the points of views of experts representing different professions. It was evident from the meeting that definition of NTB was far from certain. For one, NTM was an "unpaved road", for others it is the "rules of origin". The meeting called the SG of UNCTAD to establish a group of eminent persons on NTBs (GNTB) to recommend on issued on definition, classification, collection and quantification of NTBs. The Group, comprising of eminent personality from various field including academia, government and private sector and international organizations, met in July 2006 and decided, among other things, that in collaboration with other international agencies whose mandate include work on NTMs, a new classification of NTMs should be drafted and to launch a pilot project in several countries with a view to test the new classification and data collection methodology. In doing this exercise, the Group suggested, that data should be collected not only through the official sources of measures-imposing countries but also from exporters/importers engaged in international trade on a daily basis. It was in this way that a Multi-Agency Support Team (MAST) for GNTB was established. MAST members are, in addition to UNCTAD and ITC, FAO, IMF, OECD, UNIDO, the World Bank and WTO. Through its three meetings, in Washington DC, Rome and most recently in Vienna in September 2007, the MAST has completed the first draft of the new classification of NTMs. The Classification will be introduced in more details in today's session, but its most salient features are:

elaboration of SPS and TBT measures exclusively and comprehensively; and introduction of "Procedural Obstacles", which lists the type of problems that exporters/importers are facing vis-à-vis the application or administration of any particular measure. With this classification, we have requested donor for funding to start collecting real data in selected pilot countries. We are very pleased to announce that with financial support from the Swiss government and both financial and substantive collaboration with ITC, we could execute this pilot project in seven countries (Philippines, Thailand and India in Asia, Brazil and Chile in Latin America, and Uganda and Tunisia in Africa). The project was launched in January 2008 with the first workshop, similar to this one, in Manila, Philippines.

On the data collection, UNCTAD and ITC, in collaboration with other MAST members and CRO in each pilot country, and with UNCTAD's long standing collaboration with ALADI secretariat for this part of the world, will continue to collect, in accordance with the new classification, NTMs from official government sources. It is the other side of data collection, namely through importers and exporters that we would like to ask for your active participation. For this purpose, we are proposing two options, namely through questionnaire and web-based trade barrier reporting system. Both these options will be explained in detail during the course of the day.

Let me stop here, but before I do, on behalf of UNCTAD, I would like to thank once again, Dr. Iglesias and CINDES, FIRJAN and CNI for organizing this workshop. Thank you very much.