

DISCLAIMER

The Handbook on Notification Requirements does not constitute a legal interpretation of the notification obligations under the respective Agreement(s) or relevant legal provision(s). It has been prepared by the Secretariat to assist Members in complying with their notification obligations.

TECHNICAL COOPERATION HANDBOOK ON NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

TRANSPARENCY MECHANISM
FOR PREFERENTIAL TRADE
ARRANGEMENTS (PTAs)

This section of the Handbook on Notification Requirements covers the notification obligations under the **TRANSPARENCY MECHANISM FOR PREFERENTIAL TRADE ARRANGEMENTS (PTAs)**¹. It consists of the following five parts:

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For Members which acceded pursuant to Article XII of the Marrakesh Agreement, their respective Protocols of Accession may contain notification obligations in addition to those set out in the WTO Agreements, and may govern the deadlines for the submission of their initial notifications.

¹ The section does not address other notification obligations relating to non-reciprocal preferential schemes which may be contained in specific "waiver" Decisions.

PART 1

OVERVIEW OF NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

INTRODUCTION

The Transparency Mechanism for Preferential Trade Arrangements (PTAs) was established by the General Council Decision of 14 December 2010 ([WT/L/806](#)). The purpose of the Mechanism is to enhance transparency of the PTAs, which in this context refers to non-reciprocal preferential schemes.

The Committee on Trade and Development (CTD) is responsible for the implementation of the Transparency Mechanism. For purposes of performing the functions established under the Mechanism, the CTD is to convene in a dedicated session.

WHAT MUST BE NOTIFIED?

Section A of the Transparency Mechanism specifies the coverage of the Mechanism. According to Paragraph 1, the Transparency Mechanism shall apply to the following PTAs:

- PTAs falling under paragraph 2 of the Decision of 28 November 1979 on Differential and More Favourable Treatment Reciprocity and Fuller Participation of Developing Countries ("Enabling Clause"), with the exception of Regional Trade Agreements under paragraph 2(c) as described in the General Council Decision of 14 December 2006 ([Transparency Mechanism for Regional Trade Agreements](#)).
- PTAs taking the form of preferential treatment accorded by any Member to products of least-developed countries.
- Any other non-reciprocal preferential treatment authorised under the WTO Agreement.

According to *Section B ("Notification")*:

- Notifying Members shall specify under which provision or provisions in paragraph 1 their PTAs are notified. The Member notifying a PTA shall provide the full text of the related legislation and any related instruments (e.g., regulations, annexes, schedules, protocols), in one of the WTO official languages and in an electronically exploitable format, including, when appropriate, internet links.

According to *Section C ("Procedures to Enhance Transparency")*:

- Upon notification, the PTA shall be considered by the CTD under the procedures established in paragraphs 6 to 13.

To assist Members in their consideration of the PTA:

- The notifying Member shall make available to the WTO Secretariat data as specified in Annex 1 (Initial Notification of PTAs by Notifying Members), in an electronically exploitable format. If the PTA covers several sub-schemes, the data should be detailed enough so as to allow an analysis by sub-scheme. Disaggregated data, if available for these sub-schemes, shall be provided. As described in the Annex I, the Member notifying a PTA shall submit, at the tariff-line level, a full listing of preferential duties under the PTA per beneficiary partner, and a full tariff listing of the notifying Member's MFN duty rates applied on the year of the PTA's implementation and on the year preceding it.

The **requirements of notifications of changes affecting a PTA during a calendar year** are contained in *Section D*.

- Elements to be notified in electronically exploitable format include legal changes made, in one of the WTO official languages; changes in the implementation of the PTA, including (but not limited to) the list of graduated beneficiaries and the period of graduation, as well as the list of specific product/country waivers, if appropriate; and changes in the preferential tariffs per beneficiary partner applied under the PTA, at the tariff-line level.
- The notifying Member shall notify data on imports from each of the beneficiary partners on an annual basis at the tariff-line level, in value for total imports, imports entered under MFN and imports entered under PTA benefits no later than 31 October for data of the previous year.

WHICH MEMBERS MUST NOTIFY?

Any WTO Member granting non-reciprocal preferences is required to notify the PTA to the CTD.

PART 1

OVERVIEW OF NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

WHEN TO NOTIFY?

- The required notification of a PTA shall take place as early as possible; it will occur when practicable before the application of preferential treatment by the notifying Member and, at the latest, three months after the PTA is in force (*Section B, paragraph 3*).
- Changes affecting the implementation of a PTA during a calendar year (including legal changes, or changes in coverage in terms of products or beneficiary Members) shall be notified on an annual basis, and no later than 30 June of the next immediate calendar year (*Section D, Paragraph 15*).
- The notifying Member shall notify data on imports from each of the beneficiary partners on an annual basis at the tariff-line level, in value for total imports, imports entered under MFN and imports entered under PTA benefits no later than 31 October for data of the previous year (*Section D, Paragraph 16*).

HOW TO NOTIFY?²

Existing notification formats are available for some of these notification requirements; these are referred to below.

Any questions regarding notifications under the Transparency Mechanism for PTAs can be sent to the Secretariat at pta@wto.org.

² All notifications, regardless of their subject content or the requirement under which they are being submitted, must be directed to the administrator of the Central Registry of Notifications (CRN), as indicated in document [WT/INF/25/Rev.2](#). Notifications may be submitted through online submission systems, as electronic attachments to emails, or on paper. As it may be practice, a copy of the notification may be sent to the Secretariat unit substantively handling the notification.

PART 2

LISTING OF THE NOTIFICATION OBLIGATIONS

NOTIFICATION OF A PTA

	WHAT MUST BE NOTIFIED?		WHICH MEMBERS MUST NOTIFY?	WHEN TO NOTIFY?		HOW TO NOTIFY?		
	Notification requirements	Type of measure	Members notifying	Periodicity	Comments on Periodicity	Format	To whom ³	Notification Symbol
1.	Transparency Mechanism for PTAs , paragraph 1(a).	Establishment of a PTA under paragraph 2 of the Decision of 28 November 1979 on Differential and More Favourable Treatment Reciprocity and Fuller Participation of Developing Countries ("Enabling Clause"), with the exception of regional trade agreements under paragraph 2(c).	Members granting the non-reciprocal preferences.	One time	As early as possible; when practicable before the application of preferential treatment by the notifying Member and, at the latest, three months after the PTA is in force.	Yes (WT/COMTD/73)	Committee on Trade and Development (CTD)	WT/COMTD/PTA*/N/* ⁴

³ All notifications, regardless of their subject content or the requirement under which they are being submitted, must be directed to the administrator of the Central Registry of Notifications (CRN), as indicated in document [WT/INF/25/Rev.2](#). Notifications may be submitted through online submission systems, as electronic attachments to emails, or on paper. As it may be practice, a copy of the notification may be sent to the Secretariat unit substantively handling the notification.

⁴ This is the notification symbol for PTAs agreed to by the CTD at the 108th Regular Session held on 5th April 2019. Prior to this, notifications of PTAs were circulated using the symbol WT/COMTD/N/*.

PART 2

LISTING OF THE NOTIFICATION OBLIGATIONS

NOTIFICATION OF A PTA

	WHAT MUST BE NOTIFIED?		WHICH MEMBERS MUST NOTIFY?	WHEN TO NOTIFY?		HOW TO NOTIFY?			
	Notification requirements	Type of measure	Members notifying	Periodicity	Comments on Periodicity	Format	To whom ³	Notification Symbol	
2.	Transparency Mechanism for PTAs , paragraph 1(b).	Establishment of a PTA by any Member taking the form of preferential treatment accorded by any Member to products of least developed countries.	Members granting the non-reciprocal preferences.	One time	As early as possible; when practicable before the application of preferential treatment by the notifying Member and, at the latest, three months after the PTA is in force.	Yes (WT/COMTD/73)	Committee on Trade and Development (CTD)	WT/COMTD/PTA*/N/*	
3.	Transparency Mechanism for PTAs , paragraph 1(c).	Establishment of a PTA by a Member offering any other non-reciprocal preferential treatment authorized under the WTO Agreement.	Members granting the non-reciprocal preferences.	One time	As early as possible; when practicable before the application of preferential treatment by the notifying Member and, at the latest, three months after the PTA is in force.	Yes (WT/COMTD/73)	Committee on Trade and Development (CTD)	WT/COMTD/PTA*/N/*	

³ All notifications, regardless of their subject content or the requirement under which they are being submitted, must be directed to the administrator of the Central Registry of Notifications (CRN), as indicated in document [WT/INF/25/Rev.2](#). Notifications may be submitted through online submission systems, as electronic attachments to emails, or on paper. As it may be practice, a copy of the notification may be sent to the Secretariat unit substantively handling the notification.

PART 2

LISTING OF THE NOTIFICATION OBLIGATIONS

SUBSEQUENT NOTIFICATION AND REPORTING

	WHAT MUST BE NOTIFIED?		WHICH MEMBERS MUST NOTIFY?	WHEN TO NOTIFY?		HOW TO NOTIFY?			
	Notification requirements	Type of measure	Members notifying	Periodicity	Comments on Periodicity	Format	To whom	Notification Symbol	
1.	Subsequent Notification and Reporting (Section D, Paragraph 15 of the Transparency Mechanism for PTAs).	Changes affecting the implementation of a PTA. These include changes in the corresponding national legislation and other changes specified in WT/L/806 (e.g. updated list of beneficiaries, as well as changes in the preferential tariffs applied under the PTA, at the tariff-line level).	Members granting the non-reciprocal preferences.	Regular – Annual	Changes affecting the implementation of a PTA during a calendar year shall be notified on an annual basis. No later than 30 June of the next immediate calendar year.	Yes (With regard to changes in the product coverage of the PTA, in spreadsheet (e.g. MS Excel or CSV), database format (e.g. MS Access or SQL) or other formats which are ready to be imported into spreadsheet or database format following Examples 2.1 in Annex 2 of document G/MA/367)	CTD/IDB	WT/COMTD/PTA*/N/* series (if submitted to the CTD; relevant changes may also be submitted directly for integration into the IDB).	

PART 2

LISTING OF THE NOTIFICATION OBLIGATIONS

SUBSEQUENT NOTIFICATION AND REPORTING

	WHAT MUST BE NOTIFIED?		WHICH MEMBERS MUST NOTIFY?	WHEN TO NOTIFY?		HOW TO NOTIFY?			
	Notification requirements	Type of measure	Members notifying	Periodicity	Comments on Periodicity	Format	To whom	Notification Symbol	
2.	Subsequent Notification and Reporting (Section D, Paragraphs 16 and 17 of the Transparency Mechanism for PTAs).	The notifying Member shall notify data on imports from each of the beneficiary partners on an annual basis at the tariff-line level, in value for total imports, imports entered under MFN and imports entered under PTA benefits.	Members granting the non-reciprocal preferences.	Regular – Annual	No later than 31 October for data of the previous year.	Yes (With regard to changes in the product coverage of the PTA, in spreadsheet (e.g. MS Excel or CSV), database format (e.g. MS Access or SQL) or other formats which are ready to be imported into spreadsheet or database format following Examples 2.2 in Annex 2 of document G/MA/367)	CTD/IDB	There is no notification symbol for this data.	

PART 3

RELEVANT DOCUMENT(S) CONCERNING GUIDELINES AND FORMATS

The format for notification of a PTA is contained in document [WT/COMTD/73](#). Notifying Members are also invited to consult the information note on "Modalities and Operation of the Integrated Database (IDB)" ([G/MA/367](#)) provided by the WTO Secretariat through the Committee on Market Access and adopted on 28 May 2019. The note summarizes various notification requirements of tariff and import data to the WTO's Integrated Data Base (IDB), including notification requirements as set out under the PTA Transparency Mechanism ([WT/L/806](#)). Specific examples of tariff and import data notifications are found in the Annex of the note [G/MA/367](#).

PART 4

LIST OF NOTIFICATIONS SINCE 2011

LIST OF NOTIFICATIONS OF PREFERENTIAL TRADE ARRANGEMENTS

[Database on Preferential Trade Agreements](#). As required by the Transparency Mechanism for PTAs, the WTO Secretariat maintains an updated electronic database on individual PTAs. This database includes all written material (including notifications of PTAs) related to the notified PTAs available at the WTO as well as relevant tariff and trade-related information.

PART 5

TEXT OF THE LEGAL PROVISION

Transparency Mechanism for Preferential Trade Arrangements – General Council Decision of 14 December 2010 [WT/L/806](#).