

**GENERAL AGREEMENT  
ON TARIFFS AND TRADE**

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ARAB MAGHREB UNION - REQUEST FOR OBSERVER STATUS

Communication from the Arab Maghreb Union

The following communication has been received from the Secretary General of the Arab Maghreb Union.

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I have the honour to convey to you my sincere congratulations on the fruitful results obtained by GATT at the conclusion of the Uruguay Round negotiations and on the creation at the Marrakesh Conference of the World Trade Organization, which will open up a new era in international trade relations.

I would like to reaffirm the support of the Arab Maghreb Union for the efforts made by GATT and its readiness to collaborate in order to promote a more open economic environment and a healthier climate in international trade relations.

For this purpose and taking into account the scope of the agreements concluded within the framework of the Arab Maghreb Union and the objectives it pursues in the area of economic and trade integration, the General Secretariat of the Arab Maghreb Union would like at the present stage to benefit from the status of observer at meetings of the GATT CONTRACTING PARTIES and, in the near future, at sessions of the WTO.

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A note describing the activities of the Arab Maghreb Union is attached hereto. This request will be considered at the 50th session of the CONTRACTING PARTIES scheduled to take place in December 1994.

Information Note on the Arab Maghreb Union

1. Official title

- اتحاد المغرب العربي
- Union de Maghreb Arabe (UMA)
- Arab Maghreb Union (AMU)
- Unión del Maghreb Arabe (UMA)

2. Members

- Republic of Tunisia
- The People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
- The Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
- Kingdom of Morocco
- Islamic Republic of Mauritania

3. Headquarters

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4. Constituent Treaty

Date of signature: 17 February 1989, Marrakesh (Kingdom of Morocco)  
Date of entry into force: 1 July 1989

5. Historical background

The AMU was established on 17 February 1989 with the signing of the Constituent Treaty of the Arab Maghreb Union in Marrakesh.

Prior to the Marrakesh Summit a meeting of the five Maghreb heads of State took place in Zeralda (Algeria) on 10 June 1988. It was decided that a Grand Commission would be set up to determine how to establish a Union between the five Arab Maghreb States. The Grand Commission subsequently drew up the AMU's short- and medium-term work programme.

In addition to signing the Treaty, the Marrakesh Summit adopted a solemn Declaration concerning the establishment of the AMU and the Union's work programme.

Since then, six Summits have been held in:

- Tunis, 21-23 January 1990
- Algiers, 21-23 July 1990
- Ras Lanouf (Libya), 10-11 March 1991
- Casablanca (Morocco), 15-16 September 1991
- Nouakchott, 10-11 November 1992
- Tunis, 2-3 April 1994

During these summits, the Presidential Council adopted several resolutions including:

- the finalization of the AMU's structures now provided for under the Constituent Treaty;
- the adoption of 36 Maghreb conventions relating to various sectors;
- the adoption of work programmes initiated by AMU authorities.

6. Aims, goals and activities

The Constituent Treaty of the AMU laid down the following goals:

- To consolidate fraternal relations among member States and their peoples; to ensure the progress and welfare of their communities and defend their rights;
- To implement a comprehensive common policy;
- Progressively to provide for the free movement of persons, services, goods and capital among member States. To work towards the establishment of a Maghreb economic union among the five member States. To this end, the following stages have been agreed:
  - A free-trade area, with the removal of all tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade among the member countries;
  - A customs union designed to establish a unified customs area, with the adoption of a common external tariff to be applied to the rest of the world;
  - A common market to embody the integration of Maghreb economies, with the removal of restrictions on the movement of factors of production across the national boundaries of member countries.

7. Structures

The Arab Maghreb Union has:

- A Presidential Council, the supreme body of the Union with sole responsibility for decision-making; decisions must be unanimous (a draft amendment providing for some decisions to be taken on the basis of a majority vote is in the pipeline);
- A Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, responsible for preparing the sessions of the Presidential Council and examining proposals from other AMU institutions;
- A permanent General Secretariat which services the Secretariat of the Presidential Council, the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, the Follow-up Committee and Specialized Ministerial Committees;
- A Follow-up Committee comprising one member of each Government, responsible for following up the Union's activities;

- Four specialized Ministerial Committees, responsible for the economy and finance, food safety, the infrastructure and human resources, respectively. Each of these Committees may set up sectoral Ministerial Councils and Committees of Experts responsible for preparing matters to be submitted to the Councils then to the Specialized Ministerial Commission concerned;
- A Consultative Council comprising 20 representatives per country, selected from the legislative institutions of member States;
- A judicial authority.

In practice, the General Secretariat maintains close links with these institutions and keeps their official records. On the basis of its statutes, the General Secretariat works closely with the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, the Follow-up Committee and Specialized Ministerial Committees.

#### 8. Cooperation agreements with international and regional organizations

The AMU's Constituent Treaty and relevant resolutions of the Presidential Council have asserted the principle of maintaining fruitful cooperation and relations, with the specialized agencies and bodies of the United Nations and other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.

The AMU should therefore establish relations with:

- The specialized agencies and bodies of the United Nations system such as UNCTAD, FAO, ILO, IMF, the Economic Commission for Africa, etc.;
- Arab and Islamic intergovernmental organizations: the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Gulf Cooperation Council, etc.;
- African intergovernmental organizations pursuing goals similar to those of the AMU;
- The European Union in the framework of cooperation agreements linking Maghreb countries to the EEC and in the framework of the Five plus Twelve and Five plus Five dialogues;
- Intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations in developing countries in the framework of South-South cooperation.

At present, the AMU General Secretariat enjoys observer status at meetings of UNCTAD and in other international and regional bodies. It is trying to cement its relations with similar regional groupings through cooperation agreements and joint programmes.