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**1 ARTICLE V OF THE MARRAKESH AGREEMENT ESTABLISHING THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION**

**1.1 Text of Article V**

**Article V**

*Relations with Other Organizations*

1. The General Council shall make appropriate arrangements for effective cooperation with other intergovernmental organizations that have responsibilities related to those of the WTO.
2. The General Council may make appropriate arrangements for consultation and cooperation with non-governmental organizations concerned with matters related to those of the WTO.

**1.2 Article V:1**

**1.2.1 "Shall make appropriate arrangements for effective cooperation with other intergovernmental organizations"**

1. As of 30 June 2022, the General Council has made arrangements for effective cooperation with: the United Nations<sup>1</sup>, the International Monetary Fund (IMF)<sup>2</sup>, the International Telecommunication Union<sup>3</sup>, the World Organization on Animal Health (OIE)<sup>4</sup>, the World Bank<sup>5</sup>, and the World Intellectual Property Organization.<sup>6</sup>

**1.2.2 Observer status**

2. The General Council has allowed some intergovernmental organizations to observe its meetings.<sup>7</sup> In 1995 and 1996, the General Council accorded *ad hoc* observer status to seven international intergovernmental organizations, including the United Nations, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), IMF, the World Bank, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), and the Organisation for

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<sup>1</sup> [WT/GC/W/10](#).

<sup>2</sup> [WT/L/195](#).

<sup>3</sup> [S/C/11](#).

<sup>4</sup> [WT/L/272](#).

<sup>5</sup> [WT/L/195](#).

<sup>6</sup> [IP/C/6](#).

<sup>7</sup> See "The Rules of Procedure of the General Council", Chapter IV, Rule 11. Rule 11 of the Rules of Procedure for the General Council provides: "Representatives of international intergovernmental organizations may attend the meetings as observers on the invitation of the General Council in accordance with the guidelines in Annex 3 to these Rules."

Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).<sup>8</sup> Subsequently, the IMF and the World Bank were granted permanent observer status in General Council meetings by the terms of their respective cooperation agreements.<sup>9</sup> In its meetings of 7 February 1997, the General Council granted permanent observer status to the United Nations, UNCTAD, FAO, WIPO, and the OECD.<sup>10</sup> In the General Council meeting of 10 December 1997, the International Trade Centre (ITC), as a joint technical cooperation agency between the WTO and UNCTAD, was "invited, as appropriate, to attend meetings of those WTO bodies it wished to attend without having to submit a request for observer status".<sup>11</sup>

3. To date, no other intergovernmental organizations have been granted permanent observer status in General Council meetings pursuant to the guidelines for "Observer Status for International Intergovernmental Organizations in the WTO" set out in Annex 3 to the "Rules of Procedure for Sessions of the Ministerial Conference and Meetings of the General Council."<sup>12</sup>

4. Intergovernmental organizations were accorded observer status at various Ministerial Conferences until the Seventh Session in 2009. Since the Eighth Session in 2011, Members have been unable to repeat past practice with respect to observership for intergovernmental organizations, and no intergovernmental organizations have been able to attend as Observers.<sup>13</sup>

### 1.3 Article V:2

#### 1.3.1 "[M]ay make appropriate arrangements ... with non-governmental organizations"

##### 1.3.1.1 Guidelines for Arrangements on Relations with Non-Governmental Organizations

5. At its meeting of 18 July 1996, and pursuant to Article V:2 of the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization (WTO Agreement), the General Council adopted the "Guidelines for Arrangements on Relations with Non-Governmental Organizations".<sup>14</sup> Since the adoption of the Guidelines, the General Council has addressed the issue of external transparency in its meetings.<sup>15</sup>

6. At its meeting of 18 July 1996, the General Council agreed to allow non-governmental organizations to attend the Singapore Ministerial Conference.<sup>16</sup> Since then, the General Council has agreed to allow non-governmental organizations to attend subsequent Ministerial Conferences according to the procedure agreed upon in 1996.<sup>17</sup>

Current as of: May 2023

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<sup>8</sup> [WT/GC/M/3](#); [4](#); [5](#); [6](#); [8](#); [13](#); and [17](#). The General Council, upon the recommendation of the Preparatory Committee, extended *ad hoc* observer status to the UN, UNCTAD, IMF and the World Bank for the first General Council meeting. WT/GC/M/1. In subsequent meetings, WIPO, FAO, and the OECD were extended the same invitation. [WT/GC/M/3](#); [4](#); [5](#); [6](#); [8](#); [13](#); and [17](#).

<sup>9</sup> With respect to the Agreement with the IMF, see [WT/L/195](#), Annex I, para. 6. Also, with respect to the Agreement with the World Bank, see [WT/L/195](#), Annex II, para. 5.

<sup>10</sup> [WT/GC/M/18](#).

<sup>11</sup> [WT/GC/M/25](#). This involved a grant of permanent observer status.

<sup>12</sup> [WT/L/161](#).

<sup>13</sup> See, e.g., [WT/MIN\(05\)/INF/7/Rev.3](#) (final participant list for Hong Kong Ministerial Conference) and INF/ documents for other Ministerial Conferences.

<sup>14</sup> [WT/GC/M/13](#), section 9(c). The text of the adopted guidelines can be found in [WT/L/162](#).

<sup>15</sup> [WT/GC/M/29](#); [35](#); [45](#); [57](#); [58](#); and [66](#).

<sup>16</sup> [WT/GC/M/13](#), section 11(b). See WT/L/162 for the text of the guidelines.

<sup>17</sup> [WT/GC/M/65](#); [66](#); [68](#); [78](#); and [95](#). See, e.g. list of NGOs accredited to attend the 2009 Seventh Session of the Ministerial Conference at Geneva ([WT/MIN\(09\)/INF/10](#)). The procedure is as follows: (i) A limited number of accredited representatives for non-governmental organizations are allowed to attend only the Plenary Sessions of the Conference, without the right to speak; (ii) applications from non-governmental organizations to be registered are accepted on the basis of Article V:2 of the WTO Agreement, i.e. non-governmental organizations "concerned with matters related to those of the WTO"; and (iii) a deadline is established for the registration of non-governmental organizations that wish to attend the Conference.