3

The TPRM Today: Process and Product

The TPRM's evolution is not yet complete. This chapter describes the TPRM as it exists today, as a prelude to the discussion in chapter 4 of how it might be improved—that is, of the direction its evolution should take next. This description covers both the TPRM process—how the reviews are conducted—and the product—the published TPRs. It concludes with a description of how that product is currently disseminated to the wider audience beyond the WTO itself.

The Process

Under current procedures, the trade policy review process begins when the WTO Secretariat, after consulting with the member countries, selects a set of countries to be reviewed the following year. The selection is based on the intervals set in the Marrakesh Agreement (see chapter 2), and only those countries that have voluntarily submitted themselves for review are subject to selection. Usually, but not always, countries that have already been reviewed one or more times are rereviewed when the prescribed interval has passed (with a general flexibility of up to six months). Although the intervals are well established and do not change, no reviews are formally scheduled, even tentatively, beyond this scheduling horizon. In the absence of a continuously updated, rolling schedule, review meetings tend to become bunched in the last months of the year, and in some cases meetings must be postponed until the following year.

The WTO Secretariat, through its TPRD, sends a questionnaire to each country scheduled for review about 10 months in advance of the antici-

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pated review meeting. The questionnaire is organized according to the planned structure of the Secretariat's report (see below).

Many countries complete and return the questionnaire promptly and without fuss. Often, however, the government of the country under review has a difficult time reaching internal agreement on its answers. The foreign ministry, the finance ministry, the trade ministry, and other agencies and concerned organizations may disagree about the facts of the country's trade practices or their interpretation. Thus, completion of the questionnaire may be subject to considerable delay, even when the intent is full cooperation. Moreover, cooperation is not always full, and indeed the behavior of some countries, or of some of their ministries or agencies, has at times betrayed an intent to obstruct the process. In some such cases the review meeting has had to be delayed two to three months or more, and the quality of the final report has suffered as well.

In addition to answering the questionnaire, each country under review is required to submit its own report (now called a "policy statement") on its trade policies and practices. This document usually concentrates on the overall context of the country's trade policies and on intended future policy changes. It becomes part of the final published report. The self-reports of the major trading powers are usually quite well crafted. Some smaller and less-developed countries, however, lack the internal resources to prepare an adequate report on their own—a fact that partly explains why some members have not yet volunteered for review. In some cases the Secretariat has provided technical assistance to countries in answering the questionnaire and preparing its report.

The most important document in the review process is the report on the country's trade policies and practices prepared by the TPRD. This report, called the Secretariat's report, is based not only on the country's answers to the questionnaire but on a wide range of other materials, including the country's official publications and those of international organizations; the country's official notifications of trade policy changes to the WTO (for the handful of countries that provide such notifications); academic and other books and journal articles; articles in the general and business press; information obtained from the Internet; and other sources. The report is usually written by a single TPRD staff economist, with hands-on guidance from his or her supervisor (one of two or three deputy directors), who may also draft some sections. Sometimes an additional staff member contributes to the drafting, and help may also be provided by one or more statistical assistants.

Preparation of the Secretariat's report includes a visit to the country under review by the principal writer, accompanied by the supervisor and possibly one other staff member. During this visit of a week to 10 days the WTO officials engage in a crowded schedule of meetings with the relevant government agencies, private business groups and organizations, and, where they exist, academic research institutes concerned with trade policy.

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Before the meeting in Geneva that is the culmination of the review process, a preliminary draft of the Secretariat's report (except the summary, which contains the report's conclusions) is sent to the country under review for comments on its factual accuracy. The country is given two weeks to respond. The TPRD takes the country's comments into account and tends to accept for inclusion in the report any statements offered by the government about its intentions in maintaining this or that trade practice. However, the final report often prefaces these statements with phrases such as "According to the authorities," to signal to readers that the TPRD cannot independently verify the information.

At least four weeks after completion and distribution to the member delegations of both the Secretariat's report and the country's self-report, the trade policy review process for each country culminates in two successive half-day meetings of the Trade Policy Review Body. This body consists of official WTO representatives of those member countries that choose to participate in the country's review—the proceedings are open to all members. Intergovernmental organizations may also send observers. At the first day's meeting, following an initial statement by an official of the country under review, two discussants chosen from among the participating members comment (on their own responsibility, not as representatives of their governments) on the two reports. Next, questions from the other participants are invited. Those who have previously submitted questions in writing are allowed to speak first. Often these "questions" are in fact probing, even barbed, comments and critiques. The larger trading powers routinely prepare questions for each meeting: the United States, for example, reportedly has submitted written questions in advance of every review meeting to date.

During the afternoon and evening of the first day, the representatives of the country under review work to prepare their responses to the commentators and questioners, to be presented at the second morning's session. These responses are not infrequently evasive, however, and follow-up is often less than persistent. Even so, under an able chairperson, the second morning's session often witnesses a fine cut-and-thrust interactive discussion, raising many new and important points as additional countries speak out. As already noted, these meetings give the smaller member countries a rare opportunity to question the country under review directly about its policies and practices that affect them adversely. The larger countries, too, go at each other lustily when one of them comes up for review: Canada and the United States, for example, regularly trade sharp blows, and the United States goes after Japan with great gusto. At times, however, a "glass houses" effect inhibits participants from throwing stones. Countries are also often reluctant to criticize fellow members on whom they are dependent for special privileges: when the European Union is up for review, for example, developing-country beneficiaries of EU trade preferences conspicuously hold their fire.

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Table 3.1 Trade policy reviews published through 1996, by date of meeting

Year	No. of reviews
GATT	
1989	3
1990	6
1991	8
1992	14
1993	9
1994	14
1995	3
Total GATT	57
WTO	
1995	8
1996	15
Total WTO	23
Total GATT and WTO	80

Source: WTO Trade Policies Review Division.

After the review meeting has adjourned, the TPRD compiles and ultimately releases the final report, which consists of the Secretariat's report (the format of which is described further below), the chairperson's concluding remarks, the country's self-report, and the minutes of the meeting. The minutes include the initial comments by the country under review, the comments of the two discussants, the questions raised by those present, and the answers provided by the country under review, first on the spot and then later in writing. Publication is delayed by the fact that these minutes must be drafted and edited and then circulated to the participants for verification. Also, if there has not been time during the meeting for the country under review to respond in full to all the questions submitted, or if the answers require consultation with officials at home, further delays arise. The documents must also be translated from English into the WTO's other two official languages, French and Spanish. The result is that publication may be put off until several months after the meeting, and delays of more than a year are not unheard of.

Through March 1997 a total of 80 TPRs had been completed and published. Table 3.1 shows the number of reviews completed in each year through 1996, first under the GATT (1989–95) and since then under the WTO (1995–96). According to the table, at least 8 reviews have been completed each year since 1991, and the greatest number of reviews completed in a single year has been 15, in 1996.

These 80 reviews covered 57 countries in all, including what is now the European Union and three countries (Austria, Finland, and Sweden) that have since joined the European Union. The other 23 reviews to date have been repeat reviews (table 3.2). Canada and the United States were each

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Table 3.2 Trade policy reviews published through 1996, by world region

Africa	North and South America	Asia and Pacific	Europe and Middle East
Cameroon (1995)	Argentina (1992)	Australia (1989, 1994)	Austria (1992)
Côte d'Ivoire (1995)	Brazil (1990, 1996)	Bangladesh (1992)	Czech Republic (1996)
Egypt (1992)	Bolivia (1993)	Hong Kong (1990, 1994)	EC/EU (1991, 1993, 1995)
Ghana (1992)	Canada (1990, 1992, 1995, 1996)	India (1993)	Finland (1992)
Kenya (1993)	Chile (1991)	Indonesia (1991, 1995)	Hungary (1991)
Mauritius (1995)	Colombia (1990, 1996)	Japan (1990, 1992, 1995)	Iceland (1994)
Morocco (1989, 1996)	Costa Rica (1995)	South Korea (1992, 1996)	Israel (1995)
Nigeria (1991)	Dominican Republic (1996)	Macao (1994)	Norway (1991, 1996)
Senegal (1994)	El Salvador (1996)	Malaysia (1993)	Poland (1992)
South Africa (1993)	Mexico (1993)	New Zealand (1990, 1996)	Romania (1992)
Tunisia (1994)	Peru (1994)	Pakistan (1995)	Slovak Republic (1995)
Uganda (1995)	United States (1989, 1992, 1994, 1996)	Philippines (1993)	Sweden (1990, 1995)
Zambia (1996)	Uruguay (1992)	Singapore (1990, 1996)	Switzerland (1991, 1996)
Zimbabwe (1995)	Venezuela (1996)	Sri Lanka (1995)	
		Thailand (1991, 1995)	

Note: Years are those listed on the back cover of the published report.

Source: Published trade policy reviews.

reviewed four times through March 1997; Japan and what is now the European Union three times each; and Australia, Brazil, Colombia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, South Korea, Morocco, Norway, New Zealand, Singapore, Sweden, Switzerland, and Thailand twice each. The smallest economies reviewed to date have been those of Iceland and Macao.

As of January 1997 the WTO had 130 member countries; 15 of these, however, are members of the European Union and are therefore not subject to individual review. (Austria, Finland, and Sweden joined the European Union after having been reviewed individually—in Sweden's case, twice.)

Sixty-two member countries had yet to go through the review process as of the end of 1996 (table 3.3). Most of these are very small and/or very poor countries, which would probably require considerable technical assistance to carry out their side of a review. Twenty-six of the 62 coun-

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Table 3.3 WTO members not yet reviewed as of December 1996

West and Central Africa	East and Southern Africa	North and South America	Europe, Asia, and Pacific
Benin[a]	Angola	Antigua and Barbuda	Bahrain
Burkina Faso[a]	Botswana	Barbados	Brunei
Burundi[a]	Djibouti[a]	Belize	Bulgaria
Central African Rep.[a]	Lesotho[a]	Cuba	Cyprus
Chad[a]	Madagascar[a]	Dominica	Fiji
Congo (Kinshasa)[a]	Malawi[a]	Ecuador	Kuwait
Gabon	Mozambique[a]	Grenada	Liechtenstein
Gambia[a]	Namibia	Guatemala	Maldives[a]
Guinea[a]	Swaziland	Guyana	Malta
Guinea-Bissau[a]	Tanzania[a]	Haiti[a]	Mongolia
Mali[a]		Honduras	Myanmar[a]
Mauritania[a]		Jamaica	Papua New Guinea
Niger[a]		Netherlands Antilles	Qatar
Rwanda[a]		Nicaragua	Slovenia
Sierra Leone[a]		Paraguay	Solomon Islands[a]
Togo[a]		St. Kitts and Nevis	United Arab Emirates
		St. Lucia	
		St. Vincent and the Grenadines	
		Suriname	
		Trinidad and Tobago	

a. Classified by the United Nations as a least-developed country.

Sources: World Trade Organization; United Nations Conference on Trade and Development for classification of least-developed countries.

tries not yet reviewed are in sub-Saharan Africa, and 22 of these are among those classified by the United Nations as "least developed"; another dozen of the 62 are small Caribbean countries. (Three least-developed countries—Bangladesh, Uganda, and Zambia—have been reviewed.) Thirty-two of the 62 have populations of under 2 million, and many others are not much larger. With the substantial improvement over time in the quality of the reviews (discussed in chapter 4), many of these countries might now be willing to submit to the process, and the requisite assistance could likely be found.

Another 30 potential members have applied to join the WTO and 32 have been granted observer status as of the end of September 1997 (see table 3.4). Among these are four—China, Taiwan, Russia, and Saudi Arabia—that, because of the size of their trade, would be reviewed every 16 years once they accede to the WTO. Indeed, China could in the foreseeable future catch up with Canada in terms of the volume of its trade, and thus take its place in the select group of four countries reviewed every two years. Twelve of the 15 former Soviet republics as well as 8 other former centrally planned economies (including China) have applied for membership. Five Central and Eastern European nations—the Czech

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Table 3.4 Countries that have requested to join the WTO and have been granted observer status, as of September 1997

Former Soviet republics	Asia	Europe and Middle East	Other
Armenia	Cambodia[a]	Albania	Algeria
Belarus	China	Croatia	Jordan
Estonia	Laos PDR	Macedonia, FYR	Seychelles
Georgia	Mongolia	Oman	Sudan[a]
Kazakstan	Nepal	Saudi Arabia	Tonga
Kyrgyz Rep.	Taiwan	Andorra	Vanuatu[a]
Latvia	Vietnam		
Lithuania			
Moldova			
Russian Fed.			
Ukraine			
Uzbekistan			
Azerbaijan			

a. Classified by the United Nations as a least-developed country.

Sources: World Trade Organization; United Nations Conference on Trade and Development for classification of least-developed countries.

Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and the Slovak Republic—have realistic chances of joining the European Union within the next few years and thus would automatically be covered in subsequent EU reviews.

Fifteen reviews are scheduled to be completed in 1997 (table 3.5). The South African Customs Union, made up of Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, and Swaziland, will be reviewed as a group; this would be the only multicountry review to date other than those of the European Union. Jamaica, which is not now formally scheduled for review in 1997 (and which has never previously been reviewed), may be reviewed in conjunction with Trinidad and Tobago, which is scheduled. In a sense, as many as 20 countries are scheduled to be reviewed in 1997, although some meetings may end up being delayed until 1998.

The review of the South African Customs Union would constitute the second review of South Africa, which is due in 1997, its last review having been completed in 1993. India, Mexico, Malaysia, and Poland are other countries on a four-year schedule that will be reviewed for the second time in 1997. Three countries on six-year review calendars—Chile, Hungary, and Nigeria—will also be reviewed in 1997. Five countries (not counting the smaller members of the South African Customs Union) will be reviewed for the first time: Benin, Cyprus, Fiji, Paraguay, and Trinidad and Tobago (Jamaica would be a sixth). Of these, only Benin is considered a least-developed country, along with Lesotho. The European Union and Japan are also up for their biennial reviews.

The TPRM process has reportedly improved over the years. Insiders speak of a trend toward increasing participation: meetings are being

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Table 3.5 Countries scheduled for review in 1997

Country	Year of previous review
Benin	na[a]
Chile	1991
Cyprus	na[a]
European Union	1995
Fiji	na[a]
Hungary	1991
India	1993
Japan	1995
Malaysia	1993
Mexico	1993
Nigeria	1991
Paraguay	na[a]
Poland	1993
South African Customs Union[b]	na
Trinidad and Tobago	na[a]

a. Not previously reviewed.

b. Consists of Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, and Swaziland (never previously reviewed), and South Africa (last reviewed in 1993).

Source: WTO Trade Policies Review Division, early 1997.

attended both by more members and by more senior representatives from member delegations. More and better questions are being raised. Participants praise highly the efforts of the 1995 and 1996 chairpersons: Nestor Osorio of Colombia and Anne Anderson of Ireland, respectively.

The Product

The first published TPRs (those from 1989 and 1990) had a four-part format, all in one long volume. The chairperson's concluding remarks led off, followed by the country's report on its own policies, the Secretariat's report, and finally the minutes of the TPR meeting. Since 1991, however, TPRs have been packaged in two volumes. The Secretariat's report (including its summary) constitutes Volume I. Volume II consists of the chairperson's concluding remarks, the report by the country on its own policies, and the minutes of the meeting. Prior to 1995, Volumes I and II were published as physically separate volumes. In reports since 1995 these two "volumes" are usually bound together as one.

The format of Volume I, the Secretariat's report, has changed only moderately since 1991. From 1991 through the first three reports in 1996 the reports were, as a rule, organized into six chapters:

I. The Economic Environment

II. Trade Policy Regime: Framework and Objectives

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III. Foreign Exchange Regime (in reports from 1991 to 1993), or Foreign Direct Investment and Trade (in reports from 1993 to 1996)

IV. Trade Policies and Practices by Measure

V. Trade Policies and Practices by Sector

VI. Trade Disputes and Consultations.

Within this format some variance can be observed in the chapter titles, but not a great deal. In particular, since 1994, Chapter III has at times dealt with topics other than (or sometimes in addition to) investment. For example, Chapter III in the 1995 report on the European Union is on "Trade-Related Developments in the Monetary and Financial Sphere."

The most recent reports, starting with the report on Switzerland in the spring of 1996, have in general adopted a four-chapter format, dispensing with separate chapters on foreign investment and trade disputes. A few, however, have retained the investment chapter and thus have five chapters in all. The standard organization under the new four-chapter format is thus as follows:

I. The Economic Environment

II. Trade Policy Regime: Framework and Objectives

III. Trade Policy and Practices by Measure

IV. Trade Policy and Practices by Sector.

The four chapters that remain in the new format are those that covered the most important topics in the earlier reports; the investment and trade disputes chapters under the six-chapter format were generally much shorter than the others. In most cases the discussion of foreign investment has been parceled off into other chapters, and the discussion of trade disputes and consultations has been relocated to Chapter II.

In reports prior to 1994 Chapter III also treated the country's foreign exchange regime. Since then this discussion has been replaced by a one- or two-page annex at the end of Chapter I describing the exchange control system, in reports on those countries that still have such systems.

The reorganization into four chapters may prove sound once the problem of where to deal with investment is resolved. However, the organization within each chapter varies from report to report in the recent four-chapter format (which is still regarded as experimental) more than it did under the six-chapter format. Topics that used to be covered regularly are now sometimes missing or hard to find. Some of the new reports stray so far from both the previous and the more recent pattern that they suffer from both incomplete coverage and an annoying lack of comparability with contemporaneous reports on other countries as well as with earlier

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reports on the same country. Some examples of this variation are presented in the discussion of Chapter III below.

Under the current four-chapter format the Secretariat's report begins, as it always has, with a summary, usually titled "Summary Observations." Its organization does not follow any single pattern: sometimes it parallels the organization of the rest of the report, sometimes not. A typical summary of recent vintage starts, following an introduction, by describing the importance and role of the country in world trade and then surveying the country's institutional or policy framework, including the institutions involved in trade policy decisions. Next comes a section called "Trade Policy Features and Trends," which summarizes the country's international obligations, including any memberships in regional arrangements and the country's status within the WTO. Next comes the central, rather long section on "Type and Incidence of Trade Policy Instruments," followed by a section on sectoral policies. The summary's final section, before the conclusion, is usually on "Trade Policies and Trading Partners."

Chapter I of the Secretariat's report continues under the new format to treat "The Economic Environment." It covers major features of the country's economy and its recent performance, the country's trade performance and external links, and the economic outlook. In reports without a separate chapter on investment, this chapter also usually deals with both inward and outward foreign direct investment. In a few cases the chapter ends, as noted above, with a brief annex on the country's foreign exchange system, and in most it reviews exchange rate policy and the trade balance.

Chapter II continues to be called "Trade Policy Regime: Framework and Objectives." It lists and describes the institutions that make trade and investment policy and summarizes the legal and regulatory framework. It also covers the country's officially announced trade policy objectives, its participation in the WTO and the obligations it has taken on, its participation in any regional arrangements, its operation of any nonreciprocal preferential trade arrangements (such as preferences to developing countries or benefits gained from a special arrangement), and its trade disputes, consultations, and settlements to date.

Chapter III, "Trade Policies and Practices by Measure," has generally been the central chapter of the report under the four-chapter format, looking at the details of protectionist policies and practices economy-wide and assessing their severity. Until the new experiments, this chapter had four sections. The second (following the introduction) and most important of these, usually called "Measures Directly Affecting Imports," anatomizes the system of protection under what are often over 20 headings, of which ordinary import duties may be only one. Import duties and their statistical distribution across products are summarized in various ways and in considerable detail. The other subsections cover a welter of other barriers and complications, including nontariff barriers, supplementary taxes and

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restrictions, registration and documents required, customs valuation procedures, and standards and technical requirements.

There has then followed a third section on "Measures Directly Affecting Exports," which typically has around 15 subheads. These range from export licensing and taxes on exports to export subsidies, export finance, and export marketing assistance.

The fourth section of Chapter III has usually been called "Measures Affecting Production and Trade." In recent years this section has dealt with such matters as public enterprises and privatization, subsidies, adjustment assistance, regulation of pricing and marketing, competition policy, and protection of intellectual property rights.

The changing contents of Chapter III in some of the most recent reviews can be illustrated by comparing the 1996 TPRs of El Salvador and Switzerland. The former has an organization similar to that of the corresponding chapter (Chapter IV) in the old, six-chapter format (box 3.1). In contrast, in the review of Switzerland (which was actually published some five months before that of El Salvador), an attempt has been made to integrate trade and investment in a single chapter. At least that is what the title implies—in fact, there is little in the chapter outline that indicates any discussion of investment (box 3.2). The chapter outline in the Swiss review is also much shorter than that of El Salvador, with the result that many significant features of the Swiss import and export regimes are, at a minimum, not clearly flagged, if indeed they have not been dropped from the discussion altogether.

As another experiment, in the 1996 review of Brazil Chapter III is replaced by three separate chapters. Chapter III in the Brazil report is titled "Trade Measures Directly Affecting Imports" and contains 30 subheadings. Chapter IV, on "Trade Measures Directly Affecting Exports," has 18 subheadings, and Chapter V, on "Measures Affecting Production and Trade," has 19. In place of the usual Chapter IV, the Brazil report goes on to include a Chapter VI, on "Trade Policies and Practices in Non-Service Industries," and a Chapter VII, titled simply "Services."

Chapter IV in the new four-chapter framework treats "Trade Policy and Practices by Sector." Industries are usually grouped under such headings as agriculture, forestry and fishing, mining and energy, manufacturing, and services. The services discussion is a relatively new addition to this chapter and includes, at a minimum, tourism, financial services, telecommunications, and transport of various kinds.

The contents and organization of Volume II have changed very little since 1991, but as table 3.6 shows, this volume has been greatly shortened beginning in 1995 compared with previous years. This reduction was largely accomplished by reducing the typical length of the country's own report on its trade policies. Most of these reports are now only about 30 pages in length, although those for the European Union and the other large trading powers are usually much longer.

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Box 3.1 Contents of Chapter III in the 1996 Review of El Salvador

Chapter III Trade Policies by Measure
- (1) Overview
- (2) Measures Direc'tly Affecting Imports
  - (i) Registration, documentation, and rules of origin
  - (ii) Customs valuation
  - (iii) Tariffs
    - (a) Structure
    - (b) Average tariff levels and tariff range
    - (c) Tariff escalation
    - (d) Tariff bindings in the Uruguay Round
    - (e) Seasonal tariffs
    - (f) Concessional entry
    - (g) Tariff preferences
  - (iv) Tariff quotas
  - (v) Variable import levies
  - (vi) Other levies and charges
  - (vii) Import prohibitions
  - (viii) Import licensing and authorization
  - (ix) Import quotas
  - (x) Import surveillance
  - (xi) Import cartels
  - (xii) State-owned enterprises
  - (xiii) Countertrade
  - (xiv) Standards and other technical requirements
    - (a) Standards, testing, and certification
    - (b) Sanitary and phytosanitary regulations
    - (c) Marketing, labeling, and packaging
  - (xv) Government procurement
  - (xvi) Local-content schemes
  - (xvii) Anti-dumping and countervailing measures
  - (xviii) Safeguard actions
  - (xix) Measures implemented in exporting countries
  - (xx) Balance-of-payments measures
  - (xxi) Import privileges extended to free zones
- (3) Measures Directly Affecting Exports
  - (i) Registration and documentation
  - (ii) Export taxes, charges, and levies
  - (iii) Minimum prices
  - (iv) Export prohibitions and other controls
  - (v) Export licensing
  - (vi) Export quotas
  - (vii) Export cartels
  - (viii) Voluntary restraints, surveillance, and similar measures
  - (ix) Measures maintained by importing countries
  - (x) Export subsidies
  - (xi) Duty and tax concessions
  - (xii) Export finance
  - (xiii) Export insurance and guarantees
  - (xiv) Export promotion and marketing assistance
  - (xv) Export performance requirements
  - (xvi) Free zones and tax-free areas
- (4) Measures Affecting Production and Trade
  - (i) Adjustment assistance
  - (ii) Assistance for research and development
  - (iii) Production subsidies and tax concessions
  - (iv) Competition rules
  - (v) Pricing and marketing arrangements
  - (vi) Trade-related investment measures (TRIMs)
  - (vii) Intellectual property protection

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Box 3.2 Contents of Chapter III in the 1996 Review of Switzerland

Chapter III Policy Developments Affecting Trade and Investment
- (1) Main Features
- (2) Tariffs and Trade-related Taxes and Charges
  - (i) Border taxation
    - (a) Import tariffs
    - (b) Additional duties and charges on imports
    - (c) Export taxes
  - (ii) Internal taxation
    - (a) Turnover tax
    - (b) Excise duties
- (3) Other Policies Directly Affecting External Trade
  - (i) Licensing requirements
  - (ii) Trade controls, prohibitions, and sanctions
  - (iii) Trade defense mechanisms
  - (iv) Rules of origin
  - (v) Local-content and local-purchase requirements
  - (vi) Countertrade
  - (vii) Export facilitation and promotion policies
    - (a) Export subsidies
    - (b) Export finance
    - (c) Export insurance and guarantees
- (4) Policies Influencing Adjustment, Growth, and Trade
  - (i) Internal market liberalization
  - (ii) Standardization policies
    - (a) General orientation
    - (b) Initiatives with an environmental background
    - (c) Labeling and other information requirements
  - (iii) Government procurement
    - (a) International obligations
    - (b) Domestic legislation
    - (c) Market structure
  - (iv) Regional and sectoral intervention
  - (v) Support for research and development
- (5) Other Policies Affecting Market Allocation and Trade
  - (i) Competition policy
    - (a) Cartels and similar arrangements
    - (b) Price regulation and surveillance
    - (c) Exclusivity rights (state trading)
  - (ii) Intellectual property protection
    - (a) Overview
    - (b) Policies in individual areas
    - (c) Provisions affecting parallel imports
    - (d) Additional considerations

The length of these self-reports does not always correlate with the complexity of the country's trade regime. Here the recent reports by Hong Kong and India provide an interesting contrast. Hong Kong, as is well known, operates a virtually pure free trade regime. But in its 1994 report Hong Kong included the details of its many bilateral textile agreements,

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Table 3.6 Average length of trade policy reviews and components, 1991–96 (number of pages)

Year	Summary	Volume I[a]	Volume II	Total
GATT				
1991	16.1	238.0	137.3	391.4
1992	11.1	214.0	111.5	336.6
1993	8.8	218.9	108.4	336.1
1994	5.8	152.4	121.0	279.2
1995	6.0	158.4	72.1	236.5
WTO				
1995–96	5.5	133.3	70.0	208.8

Note: Years are those listed on the back cover of the published report.

a. Excluding Summary Observations.

Source: Computed by the author from published trade policy reviews.

and thus supplied a very long report on its own policies as forced on it by others. In sharp contrast, in its 1993 report India contented itself with a mere 40 pages (30 pages excluding tables) of exposition of its Himalayan array of nontariff barriers and other market interventions. Most observers familiar with India's trade policies would readily agree that the country still operates the most complex national trade regime in the world that is actually written down. Unpublished World Bank analyses of Indian trade policy by Ataman, Aksoy, Keesing, and others required several hundred pages to cover it in detail, yet still did not elucidate the whole complex mechanism. That mechanism rests in part on a severe discrimination and prejudice against wholesale and retail trade, and also interlocks with the licensing of capital investment (which is gradually being liberalized). In practice the Indian regime is even more restrictive than the TPR indicates: despite some recent opening, imports of almost all consumer goods are for practical purposes banned, and most import licenses for items permitted are given to current users. The list alone of goods whose production is reserved for small domestic enterprises is longer than India's self-report.

Volume II has also been reduced by shortening the minutes of the review meeting, even though the number of participants and the number of questions and comments raised seem to be rising. The compression is usually done so well that the main points of each speaker come through clearly.

The average overall length of published TPRs has been cut nearly in half since 1991, when their organization first approximated what it is today. Table 3.6 shows the year-by-year reduction in the average number of pages in the published reviews under the GATT (1991–95) and to date under the WTO, counting all reviews on the same basis, that is, with the first page of the Summary Observations as page 1. The average combined total of what the GATT published as Volumes I and II fell from 391 pages in 1991 to 209 pages in the WTO reports. Two "volumes" have been bound together in almost all cases.

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Meanwhile the length of the average Summary Observations has fallen from 16 pages in 1991 to 5½ in the reviews done under WTO auspices. Part of this reduction was achieved by eliminating the large, practically double-space type font used in a majority of the 1991 and 1992 reviews.

The overall reduction has been achieved by a very careful self-discipline, much cross-referencing to eliminate unneeded repetition, and excellent editing. A concerted effort has been made to shorten the reports and to draw out the linkages between policy and events. Helpful overviews have also been added to some chapters. Much of the improvement can be attributed to the fact that the TPRD hired an editor in 1994. Recent TPRs read very well, and far better than did the earliest ones. Occasionally, however, a review, such as the 1996 review of the United States, is still much too long and would have been better had it received a much more thorough process of editing and condensing.

For most readers, the amount of material in the typical TPR that actually needs to be read is much less than the total length would suggest. The text portion of the WTO Secretariat's report, including the summary, averages only 117 pages—and even that includes many charts and tables and sometimes sizable annexes. The rest of the Secretariat's report consists of bibliographic references and appendix tables. Within the text, the section on "Trade Policy and Practices by Sector," which in recent reviews averages about 40 pages, contains much detail on each major industry and can be skimmed by the reader interested only in real barriers such as subsidies. These are usually to be found in agriculture and services, plus coal mining (in countries where that industry is important) and exceptional manufacturing industries such as motor vehicles.

In Volume II the concluding remarks of the chairperson take up only three or four pages and are worth reading. The minutes of the review meeting, including the discussants' comments, average fewer than 20 pages and can be read selectively to find the most revealing criticisms and comments, particularly if the chairperson's remarks indicates that sharp exchanges took place or that new points emerged in the discussion. The country's report on its own policies can usually be skipped. Thus in most reports, most of what is of interest to the typical reader is contained within about 100 pages.

Dissemination

Dissemination of the published TPRs is limited. The English-language print run for a review of a country that is not especially prominent in world trade is just 900 copies (300 and 150 copies, respectively, for the French and Spanish editions). The numbers are only modestly greater—1,000 in English, 500 in French, and 300 in Spanish—for the reviews most in demand. At least five copies are given away for every two that are sold:

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sales of over 400 copies are exceptional. The current price is 50 Swiss francs (about $33 at exchange rates prevailing in August 1997) for most reviews, and 60 Swiss francs for reviews of the four economies with the greatest international trade.

The largest share of the free distribution stays within Geneva, going to the trade delegations of the WTO member countries. Country delegates can order as many additional free copies as they like, and many make liberal use of this privilege. Other free copies go to trade-related agencies and other official organizations in the member countries, to a select number of private institutions and scholars around the world who specialize in WTO affairs, to a few libraries, and to certain other institutions on an exchange basis.

Since the WTO launched its own site on the World Wide Web of the Internet in April 1995 (http://www.wto.org), selected parts of TPRs have been made available on the site. As of July 1997, summaries of the Secretariat's report and the chairperson's concluding remarks were available electronically for the 28 most recent reviews, including several not yet available in print. As yet, the website contains no complete TPRs. Even so, the number of documents downloaded each week increased eightfold over the second half of 1996, and by early 1997 the site was attracting some 18,000 visits per month—a commendable performance.

Distribution is managed by the WTO's External Relations Division, not by the Trade Policies Review Division. At first the External Relations Division focused mainly on securing coverage of TPRs by the traditional media, with considerable success: news stories of TPRM meetings have regularly appeared in the *Financial Times*, the *Journal of Commerce*, and other business newspapers and magazines. In 1996 the division hired a deputy director from the private sector, who immediately began to explore the involvement of commercial intermediaries in the electronic dissemination of TPRs and other WTO documents. Nonexclusive contracts were eventually granted to the Financial Times Network, with 1.6 million subscribers, and the Reuters news agency. Meanwhile Kluwer International, a major commercial book publisher based in the Netherlands, took over the production, marketing, and distribution of the print (and eventually CD-ROM) versions of the TPRs and other WTO reports, beginning in April 1997.

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