

a proposed process for the Work Programme until MC13 was then circulated.⁵ A Member subsequently submitted comments on the proposed process.⁶ Taking into account Members' comments provided in writing and during the November 2022 informal Committee meeting, a revised version of the process was subsequently proposed. The process was adopted at the November 2022 Committee meeting and was circulated as [G/SPS/W/330/Rev.1](#).

2.2 Establishment of Thematic Groups

2.2. Paragraph 8 of the Declaration identified several themes for discussion:

How to facilitate global food security and more sustainable food systems, including through sustainable growth and innovation in agricultural production and international trade, and through the use of international standards, guidelines, and recommendations developed by the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the World Organisation for Animal Health and the International Plant Protection Convention as the basis of harmonized SPS measures to protect human, animal or plant life or health;

How to support basing SPS measures on scientific evidence and principles, including where international standards, guidelines, or recommendations do not exist or are not appropriate; and how to promote the use by Members of principles employed by the international standard setting bodies for considering scientific uncertainty in risk analysis;

How to enhance the safe international trade in food, animals and plants and products thereof through the adaptation of SPS measures to regional conditions, including pest- or disease-free areas and areas of low pest or disease prevalence which can strengthen Members' ability to protect plant and animal life or health through efforts to limit the spread of pests such as the Mediterranean fruit fly, diseases such as African swine fever, disease-carrying organisms, or disease-causing organisms;

How to encourage cooperation with observer organizations that support the work of the SPS Committee and the international standard setting bodies through technical exchanges and assistance in the context of this work programme;

How to increase participation of and support for the special needs of developing and least developed country Members in the development and application of SPS measures; and in particular, to increase awareness of and sensitivity to the impacts of SPS measures on the export possibilities of such Members;

Other topics as identified over the course of the work programme or as a result of emerging sanitary or phytosanitary challenges or risks worldwide.

2.3. At the June 2022 SPS Committee meeting, Members decided to organize Thematic Groups to discuss each of the five themes specifically identified in the Declaration.⁷ The work of the Groups would be facilitated by stewards. Throughout the process, the Committee would receive oral and written reports to ensure that all delegations were informed of discussions going on in each of the Thematic Groups. For that purpose, the Committee would regularly hold intersessional consultations, chaired by the Chairperson of the SPS Committee, in between regular Committee meetings.

2.4.

2.3 Communication channels

2.5. Throughout the process, the Secretariat shared all relevant information through the informal SPS delegates email list. Additionally, the stewards of the Groups requested Members to designate focal points through whom more targeted Group communications on the specific work of the Groups would be shared. The Secretariat and the co-stewards worked in close coordination to ensure the proper circulation of information.

2.6. A [dedicated webpage](#)⁸ "SPS Declaration at MC12" was created to keep track of all the information relative to the Work Programme. Meeting calendars, draft agendas for meetings, inputs submitted by Members, and presentations and reports delivered during the process were regularly updated for Members only in a restricted part of the webpage. All documents related to the MC12 SPS Declaration are tagged with the keyword MC12 Work Programme and can be retrieved through the [ePing SPS&TBT Platform](#).

3 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORK PROGRAMME

3.1. The first meeting of each Thematic Group was convened by the Secretariat and took place via Zoom, in English only, during the weeks of 19 and 26 September 2022. The first intersessional consultations, held on 4 October 2022, provided an opportunity for all SPS delegates to be informed of the ongoing discussions and to clarify any remaining queries on the proposed process. Some stewards convened additional meetings of their Groups in October and November 2022, prior to the November 2022 Committee meeting.

3.2. Members requested that all subsequent meetings be held in hybrid mode, with interpretation, in order to increase participation and to facilitate preparations ahead of the meetings. Members also decided to allocate time to the implementation of the Work Programme around the regular SPS Committee meetings. The proposed process foresaw Group meetings and intersessional consultations in between the formal Committee meetings. In the November 2022 Committee meeting, Members agreed to cluster intersessional meetings of all Thematic Groups within the same week in between Committee meetings to streamline the process and to facilitate delegates' preparations.⁹ As such, additional clusters of meetings, followed by intersessional SPS Committee consultations, were scheduled in February and May 2023. All meetings were convened by the Secretariat in hybrid format, both in 03.39 Tm0 g0 G{)F(b)-3(r)14(i)-7(d)-3()58(0)-3(2)9(u)-6(ri)-ct 406.39 c 39

These presentations underscored that uncertainty was a constant in risk analysis processes and that risk assessors needed to be transparent and document the methodologies followed. Some of the presentations highlighted how the emerging challenges were adding to the complexities in how risk assessments were undertaken and provided an update on relevant reference materials and capacity building activities. Members also presented case studies on their experiences in dealing with u

organizations might be able to provide developing and least developed country (LDC) Members on the application of the SPS Agreement in the context of the challenges identified in the Declaration, among others.

4.11. Based on Members' inputs, Group 4 circulated a set of questions to all the observer organizations, inviting views on their interactions with the Committee, the work they undertake that supports the implementation of the SPS Agreement, and where they considered there may be scope for improvements. Thirteen observer organizations, including the three standard setting bodies, provided answers that included suggestions on how to improve cooperation.

4.12. Group 4 requested the Secretariat to explain the procedures, expectations and a brief history