

Foreword

The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) is an historical agreement covering a wide range of international service transactions. The underlying theme of this Guide is that competitive suppliers of all kinds of services, both from developing and developed economies, can expect to benefit directly from the more open trading regime of GATS which aims to reduce and eventually eliminate regulatory restrictions affecting the international supply of services. Users of services, including service businesses themselves, can also expect to gain from the greater variety of service products and prices offered by more companies around the world. The primary focus of the Guide is to inform the business community of the key features of the multilateral system of trade rules covering services. It seeks to improve understanding by the business community of the rights and benefits GATS confers and the obligations it imposes on them and their governments. It also identifies the main opportunities and challenges that may be encountered at the practical business level in the implementation of GATS rules and market access commitments.

A new round of liberalization negotiations will begin by the year 2000. It is hoped that the Guide will also be helpful to trade officials in developing countries and economies in transition as they develop their trade policies and prepare for the next round. In support of further trade negotiations, the Guide also highlights issues on which the business community may wish to provide input as preparations for trade negotiations move forward.