



Press release

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US import duties on steel and aluminium: Switzerland initiates WTO dispute settlement proceedings

On 23 March, the United States imposed additional duties on imports of certain steel and aluminium products, a move which will have effects on Switzerland. In response, on 9 July, Switzerland, like other countries, submitted a request for consultations with the US as part of WTO dispute settlement proceedings. The head of the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research, Federal Councillor Johann N. Schneider-Ammann, duly notified the Federal Council of this decision.

In 2017, Switzerland exported around CHF 80 million of the steel and aluminium products concerned to the US. From Switzerland's point of view, the additional duties, which according to the US have been introduced to protect national security, are unjustified. Switzerland first intervened with the US in March and also submitted a formal request to the US Administration for a country-specific exemption from these import duties.

The US has not responded to Switzerland's request for an exemption from the tariffs to date. In order to protect Switzerland's interests, Federal Councillor Schneider-Ammann has taken the decision to initiate WTO dispute settlement proceedings. Other WTO members affected by the tariffs, including Canada, the EU, Mexico, and Norway, have also requested consultations with the US.

Switzerland, together with other WTO members, brought proceedings against the US in the steel sector in 2002. The US subsequently lifted the trade measure in question.

WTO dispute settlement proceedings begin with consultations. During this first stage of the process, the parties seek to resolve their differences amicably. If these consultations fail to produce a satisfactory solution, a panel of arbiters may be convened. Panel decisions may be appealed to the WTO's Appellate Body.

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