

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1289/03
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to the Commission

Subject: Disruption of market access to the People's Republic of China for photographic products: specific import tariffs not complying with WTO agreements

Since 1997 the People's Republic of China has imposed an import tariff on photographic products, in the form of a specific duty calculated in renminbi per product unit (measured in square metres). In connection with its accession to the World Trade Organisation China has undertaken to phase out this specific tariff and replace it with an ad valorem tariff. These commitments are set out in the bilateral agreement between the European Union and China and in the protocol on China's accession to the WTO. In January 2002, however, China announced that it would maintain the specific import tariffs on photographic products. This is not compatible with the WTO agreements.

As an illustration, in 2002 China committed itself to a 42% ad valorem import tariff on rolls of 35mm film. However, in practice China has imposed a specific tariff of 155 renminbi per square metre. This has resulted in an effective ad valorem tariff of 89%. This specific tariff thus exceeds the authorised limit.

1. Is the Commission aware of these specific levies per product unit on various photographic products?
2. Does it consider that this constitutes an illegal tariff barrier under China's obligations within the World Trade Organisation?
3. Has the Commission already made a complaint to the authorities responsible in China?
4. If so, what has been their reaction? If not, why not, and does the Commission intend to take action in the near future?