

request for comments, and notice of public hearing.

SUMMARY: The United States intends to initiate negotiations with Bahrain on a free trade agreement. The interagency Trade Policy Staff Committee (TPSC) will convene a public hearing and seek public comment to assist the United States Trade Representative (USTR) in amplifying and clarifying negotiating objectives for the proposed agreement and to provide advice on how specific goods and services and other matters should be treated under the proposed agreement.

DATES: Persons wishing to testify orally at the hearing must provide written notification of their intention, as well as their testimony, by October 17, 2003. A hearing will be held in Washington, DC, beginning on November 5, 2003 and will continue as necessary on subsequent days. Written comments are due by noon, November 17, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Submissions by electronic mail: *FR0092@ustr.gov* (notice of intent to testify and written testimony); *FR0093@ustr.gov* (written comments). Submissions by facsimile: Gloria Blue, Executive Secretary, Trade Policy Staff Committee, at (202) 395-6143. The public is strongly encouraged to submit documents electronically rather than by facsimile. (See requirements for submissions below.)

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For procedural questions concerning written comments or participation in the public hearing, contact Gloria Blue, Executive Secretary, Trade Policy Staff Committee, at (202) 395-3475. All other questions should be directed to Jason Buntin, Director for Western Europe and Middle East Affairs at (202) 395-3320.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

1. Background

Under section 2104 of the Trade Act of 2002 (Trade Act) (19 U.S.C. 3804), for agreements that will be approved and implemented through trade promotion authority (TPA) procedures, the President must provide the Congress with at least 90 days written notice of his intent to enter into negotiations and must identify the specific objectives for the negotiations. Before and after the submission of this notice, the President must consult with appropriate Congressional committees and the Congressional Oversight Group (COG) regarding the negotiations. Under the Trade Act of 1974, as amended, the President must (i) afford interested persons an opportunity to present their views regarding any matter relevant to any proposed agreement, (ii) designate

an agency or inter-agency committee to hold a public hearing regarding any proposed agreement, and (iii) seek the advice of the U.S. International Trade Commission (ITC) regarding the probable economic effects on U.S. industries and consumers of the removal of tariffs and non-tariff barriers on imports pursuant to any proposed agreement.

On August 4, 2003, after consulting with relevant Congressional committees and the COG, the USTR notified the Congress that the President intends to initiate free trade agreement negotiations with Bahrain and identified specific objectives for the negotiations. In addition, the USTR has requested that the ITC provide its advice on probable economic effects no later than December 13, 2003. This notice solicits views from the public on these negotiations and provides information on a hearing that will be conducted pursuant to the requirements of the Trade Act of 1974.

2. Public Comments and Testimony

To assist the Administration as it continues to develop its negotiating objectives for the proposed agreement, the Chairman of the TPSC invites written comments and/or oral testimony of interested persons at a public hearing. Comments and testimony may address the reduction or elimination of tariffs or non-tariff barriers on any articles provided for in the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States (HTSUS) that are products of Bahrain, any concession that should be sought by the United States, or any other matter relevant to the proposed agreement. The TPSC invites comments and testimony on all of these matters and, in particular, seeks comments and testimony addressed to:

- (a) General and commodity-specific negotiating objectives for the proposed agreement.
- (b) Economic costs and benefits to U.S. producers and consumers of removal of tariffs and non-tariff barriers to U.S.-Bahrain trade.
- (c) Treatment of specific goods (described by Harmonized System tariff numbers) under the proposed agreement, including comments on
 - (1) product-specific import or export interests or barriers,
 - (2) experience with particular measures that should be addressed in the negotiations, and
 - (3) in the case of articles for which immediate elimination of tariffs is not appropriate, a recommended staging schedule for such elimination.
- (d) Adequacy of existing customs measures to ensure Bahraini origin of

imported goods, and appropriate rules of origin for goods entering the United States under the proposed agreement.

(e) Existing Bahraini sanitary and phytosanitary measures and technical barriers to trade.

(f) Existing barriers to trade in services between the United States and Bahrain that should be addressed in the negotiations.

(g) Relevant trade-related intellectual property rights issues that should be addressed in the negotiations.

(h) Relevant investment issues that should be addressed in the negotiations.

(i) Relevant government procurement issues that should be addressed in the negotiations.

(j) Relevant environmental and labor issues that should be addressed in the negotiations.

Comments identifying as present or potential trade barriers laws or regulations that are not primarily trade-related should address the economic, political and social objectives of such regulations and the degree to which they discriminate against producers of the other country. At a later date, the USTR, through the TPSC, will publish notice of reviews regarding (a) the possible environmental effects of the proposed agreement and the scope of the U.S. environmental review of the proposed agreement, and (b) the impact of the proposed agreement on U.S. employment and labor markets.

A hearing will be held on November 5, 2003, in Rooms 1 and 2, 1724 F Street, NW, Washington, DC. If necessary, the hearing will continue on subsequent days. Persons wishing to testify at the hearing must provide written notification of their intention October 17, 2003. The notification should include: (1) The name, address, and telephone number of the person presenting the testimony; and (2) a short (one or two paragraphs) summary of the presentation, including the subject matter and, as applicable, the product(s) (with HTSUS numbers), service sector(s), or other subjects (such as investment, intellectual property and/or government procurement) to be discussed. A copy of the testimony must accompany the notification. Remarks at the hearing should be limited to no more than five minutes to allow for possible questions from the TPSC. Persons with mobility impairments who will need special assistance in gaining access to the hearing should contact the TPSC Executive Secretary. Interested persons, including persons who participate in the hearing, may submit written comments by noon, November 17, 2003. Written comments may include rebuttal points demonstrating