Dated: August 21, 2000.

Susan M. Daniels,

Deputy Commissioner for Disability and Income Security Programs.

Teleconference Meeting: Social Security Administration, 8th Floor Theatre Room, 500 E Street, SW, Washington, DC 20254; Monday, September 11, 2000.

1:30 p.m.—Meeting Convened,
Presiding: Sarah Mitchell, Chair.
1:30–2:30 p.m.—Implementation of TWWIIA Panel response to NPRM.
2:30–3 p.m.—Public Comment.
3–3:30 p.m.—Organizational Issues.
3:30 p.m.—Adjournment.

[FR Doc. 00–22139 Filed 8–28–00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4191–02–P

OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES TRADE REPRESENTATIVE

[Docket No. WTO/D–204]

WTO Consultations Regarding Telecommunications Trade Barriers in Mexico

AGENCY: Office of the United States Trade Representative.

ACTION: Notice; request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Office of the United States Trade Representative (''USTR'') is providing notice that on August 17, 2000, the United States requested consultations in the World Trade Organization (''WTO'') with Mexico regarding its commitments and obligations under the General Agreement on Trade in Services (''GATS'') with respect to basic and value-added telecommunications services. Pursuant to Article 4.3 of the WTO Dispute Settlement Understanding (''DSU''), such consultations are to take place within a period of 30 days from the date of receipt of the request, or within a period otherwise mutually agreed between the United States and Mexico. USTR invites written comments from the public concerning the issues raised in this dispute.

DATES: Although the USTR will accept any comments received during the course of the dispute settlement proceedings, comments should be submitted on or before September 25, 2000 to be assured of timely consideration by USTR.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments to Sandy McKinzy, Monitoring and Enforcement Unit, Office of the General Counsel, Room 122, Office of the United States Trade Representative, 600 17th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C., 20508, Attn: Mexico Telecommunications Dispute. Telephone: (202) 395–3582.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Demetrios J. Marantis, Associate General Counsel, Office of the United States Trade Representative, 600 17th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C., (202) 395–3581.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Section 127(b) of the Uruguay Round Agreements Act (URAA) (19 U.S.C. 3537(b)(1)) requires that notice and opportunity for comment be provided after the United States submits or receives a request for the establishment of a WTO dispute settlement panel. Consistent with this obligation, but in an effort to provide additional opportunity for comment, USTR is providing notice that consultations have been requested pursuant to the WTO Dispute Settlement Understanding. If such consultations should fail to resolve the matter and a dispute settlement panel is established pursuant to the DSU, such panel, which would hold its meetings in Geneva, Switzerland, would be expected to issue a report on its findings and recommendations within six to nine months after it is established.

Major Issues Raised by the United States

Since the entry into force of the GATS, the Government of Mexico has adopted or maintained anti-competitive and discriminatory regulatory measures, tolerated certain privately-established market access barriers, and failed to take needed regulatory action in Mexico's basic and value-added telecommunications sectors. These acts and failures to act raise serious questions regarding whether Mexico is in compliance with its GATS commitments in these sectors. For example, Mexico has:

(1) Enacted and maintained laws, regulations, rules, and other measures that deny or limit market access, national treatment, and additional commitments for service suppliers seeking to provide basic and value-added telecommunications services into and within Mexico;

(2) Failed to issue and enact regulations, permits, or other measures to ensure implementation of Mexico's market access, national treatment, and additional commitments for service suppliers seeking to provide basic and value-added telecommunications services into and within Mexico;

(3) Failed to enforce regulations and other measures to ensure compliance with Mexico's market access, national treatment, and additional commitments for service suppliers seeking to provide basic and value-added telecommunications services into and within Mexico;

(4) Failed to regulate, control and prevent its major supplier, Telefonos de Mexico (''Telmex''), from engaging in activity that denies or limits Mexico's market access, national treatment, and additional commitments for service suppliers seeking to provide basic and value-added telecommunications services into and within Mexico; and

(5) Failed to administer measures of general application governing basic and value-added telecommunications services in a reasonable, objective, and impartial manner, ensure that decisions and procedures used by Mexico's telecommunications regulator are impartial with respect to all market participants, and ensure access to and use of public telecommunications transport networks and services on reasonable and non-discriminatory terms and conditions for the supply of basic and value-added telecommunications services.

Public Comment: Requirements for Submissions

Interested persons are invited to submit written comments concerning the issues raised in the dispute. Comments must be in English and provided in fifteen copies. A person requesting that information contained in a comment submitted by that person be treated as confidential business information must certify that such information is business confidential and would not customarily be released to the public by the commenter. Confidential business information must be clearly marked ''BUSINESS CONFIDENTIAL'' in a contrasting color ink at the top of each page of each copy.

Information or advice contained in a comment submitted, other than business confidential information, may be determined by USTR to be confidential in accordance with section 135(g)(2) of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2155(g)(2)). If the submitter believes that information or advice may qualify as such, the submitter—

(1) Must so designate the information or advice;

(2) Must clearly mark the material as ''SUBMITTED IN CONFIDENCE'' in a contrasting color ink at the top of each page of each copy; and

(3) Is encouraged to provide a non-confidential summary of the information or advice.

Pursuant to section 127(e) of the URAA (19 U.S.C. 3537(e)), USTR will maintain a file on this dispute settlement proceeding, accessible to the public, in the USTR Reading Room: Room 101, Office of the United States

Trade Representative, 600 17th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20508. The public file will include a listing of any comments received by USTR from the public with respect to the dispute; if a dispute settlement panel is convened, the U.S. submissions to that panel, the submissions, or non-confidential summaries of submissions, to the panel received from other participants in the dispute, as well as the report of the panel; and, if applicable, the report of the Appellate Body. An appointment to review the public file (Docket WTO/D–204, Mexico Telecom Dispute) may be made by calling Brenda Webb, (202) 395–6186. The USTR Reading Room is open to the public from 9:30 a.m. to 12 noon and 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Catherine Field,

Acting Assistant, United States Trade Representative for Monitoring and Enforcement.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Office of the Secretary

RIN 2105–AC90

Participation by Disadvantaged Business Enterprises in Department of Transportation Financial Assistance Programs; Inflationary Adjustment

AGENCY: Office of the Secretary, DOT.

ACTION: 2000 inflation adjustment of size limits on small businesses participating in the DOT's Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Program.

SUMMARY: Under the statutes governing the Department's Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Program, firms are not considered small businesses concerns and are therefore ineligible as DBEs once their average annual receipts over the preceding three fiscal years reach specified dollar limits. These statutes, and the DOT rule implementing them (49 CFR part 26), provide that the Secretary may adjust these specified dollar limits for inflation. Consequently, this notice revises the limits established by section 1101(b)(2)(A) of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA–21), Public Law 105–178, July 22, 1998 as well as the Airport and Airway Safety, Capacity, Noise Improvement and Intermodal Transportation Act of 1992, Public Law 102–581, October 31, 1992, 49 U.S.C. 47113 (formerly section 505(d) of the Airport and Airway Improvement Act of 1982, as amended (AAIA)), Public Law 97–248, Title V, September 3, 1982. The Department has determined that the appropriate cap for all portions of the DBE program (airport, highway and transit) is now $17,420,000.

EFFECTIVE DATE: August 29, 2000.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Laura Aguilar, Office of the Assistant General Counsel for Environmental, Civil Rights, and General Law, Department of Transportation, 400 Seventh Street, SW, Room 10102, Washington, D.C. 20590; Telephone: 202–366–0365.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The DBE program is a statutory program intended to provide contracting opportunities for small business concerns owned and controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals in the Department's highway, mass transit and airport financial assistance programs. The statutory provision governing the DBE program in the highway and mass transit financial assistance programs is section 1101(b) of TEA–21, Public Law 105–178, July 22, 1998. The statutory provision governing the DBE program as it relates to the airport planning and airport development financial assistance programs is section 505(d) of the AAIA, Public Law 97–248, Title V, September 3, 1982, as amended by section 105(f) of the Airport and Airway Safety and Capacity Expansion Act, Public Law 100–223, December 30, 1987, and section 117(c) of the Airport and Airway Safety, Capacity, Noise Improvement, and Intermodal Transportation Act of 1992, Public Law 102–581, October 31, 1992. This provision is codified at 49 U.S.C. 47113.

The DBE provisions in TEA–21 and AAIA reflect Congress' intention that the DBE program meets the objective of helping small business concerns, owned and controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals, become self-sufficient and able to compete with non-disadvantaged firms. To achieve this, DBE firms are currently ineligible for the program once their average annual gross receipts over the preceding three fiscal years exceed $16,600,000. This specified gross receipts cap is subject to adjustment by the Secretary of Transportation for inflation. See TEA–21 § 1101(b)(2)(A) and 49 U.S.C. 47113(a)(1)(B).

This notice adjusts the DBE gross receipts cap for inflation since enactment of TEA–21 in July 1998. This notice does not address the small business size standards for the DBE program for airport concessions established pursuant to section 511(a)(17) of the AAIA, as amended (49 U.S.C. 47107(e)). The maximum size standards for airport concessionaires under that program are currently set forth in 49 CFR Part 23, Subpart F, Appendix A.

The current gross receipts cap regulates DBE's operating under both TEA–21 and AAIA. The Department last adjusted these DBE size limits for inflation in 1994. Under the 1994 adjustment, the cap was raised for inflation from $16,015,000 to $16,600,000 or 3.63%. In recognition of the overall effects of inflation on the economy within the past few years, the Department wants to insure that DBE's have the maximum opportunity to participate in DOT-assisted contracts of highway, transit and airport recipients by adjusting the small business size limit for inflation. With an inflationary adjustment for the period from TEA–21's enactment through the first quarter of 2000, the Department has determined that the appropriate cap for all portions of the DBE program (airport, highway and transit) is now $17,420,000.

In arriving at the $17,420,000 figure, the DOT used a Department of Commerce price index to make a current inflation adjustment. The Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis prepares constant dollar estimates of state and local government purchases of goods and services by deflating current dollar estimates by suitable price indexes. These indexes include purchases of durable and non-durable goods, financial and other services, structures (11 types of new construction, net purchases of existing residential structures, nonresidential structures and maintenance repair services) and compensation of employees. Using these price deflators enables the Department to adjust dollar figures for past years' inflation.

Given the nature of DOT's DBE Program, adjusting the gross receipts cap in the same manner in which inflation adjustments are made to the costs of state and local government purchases of goods and services is simple, accurate and fair. The inflation rate on purchases by state and local governments for the current year is calculated by dividing the price deflator for the first quarter of 2000 (109.56) by 1998's third quarter price deflator (104.40). The third quarter of 1998 is used because that is when TEA–21 was enacted, along with the DBE statutory cap amount of $16,600,000. The result of the calculation is 1.0494, which represents an inflation rate of 4.94% from the third quarter of 1998 through the first quarter of 2000. Multiplying the $16,600,000 figure by 1.0494 equals