

Costa Rica wins betting negotiation with US

Costa Rica achieved US to allow the provision of several services such as investigations, postcards and storage to local firms as an agreement to a negotiation initiated by limitations imposed by the US nation to games of chance and online bets.

Minister of Foreign Trade, Marco Vinicio Ruiz, explained Tuesday that „We achieved what we wanted; and that is that a country that changes the rules of the game in the middle of a negotiation, must compensate the others“.

Costa Rica felt affected by legislation imposed in 2006 by United States, which banned banks and credit card companies to process payments to Internet websites. Many of those companies operate in the Central American country.

Antigua and Barbuda was the first country affected for that measure, which initiated a demand for a similar regulation and succeeded in 2005, so US offered as a compensation to open sectors of its economy to companies belonging to the countries affected.

In Costa Rica, „We decided to wait and we also notified our interest to open an eventual arbitration process if we did not find a solution. However, in the first days of March, we reached an agreement“, said Ruiz.

According to the minister, US would allow Costa Rican firms to participate in services of investigation and development, storage and technical analysis, as well of some courier services.

„We has access for services, which are very important for the country as investigation, where, for example, we will be able

to choose for funds which US opens for different projects. Firms related to the development of networks and biotechnology companies will also be developed, as well as certain storage services in ports which currently have restrictions", he detailed.

The minister remarked that those services have not been included by US in the free-commerce agreement between that nation and Dominican Republic. The negotiation has been performed under the sponsorship of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

In order that the agreement comes into force, it will be necessary for US citizens to conclude the procedure with Antigua and Barbuda, the only one remaining, indicated Ruiz. Negotiation did not solve the restrictions to Internet sites known as "sportbooks", which are legal in the Central American country.

Costa Rica is base of several operation of „sportbooks“. In 2006, BetonSports, one of the biggest of the country with a staff of almost 2,000 people, closed its offices due to the arrest of several executives in US, among them its manager, David Carruthers.