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FOR THE INTERNATIONAL
TRADE ORGANIZATION**

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THE INTERNATIONAL CUSTOMS TARIFF BUREAU

Document ICITO/EC.2/Add.5 contains a description of the International Customs Tariff Bureau. This Bureau was established in Brussels in 1891 with almost universal membership. Its object is to translate and publish in five languages (English, French, German, Italian and Spanish) the customs tariffs of all countries. The tariffs and amendments are published in the International Tariff Bulletin. Enquiries reveal a high regard for the work of the Bureau. Members of the staff of the Bureau gave valuable assistance during the negotiations of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

The Bureau has, however, been experiencing increasing difficulties in carrying on. Faced with rising costs and the increasing complexity and variability of tariffs, the Bureau has had to limit the scope of its publication to only the minimum of essential material. Even so, the maintenance of its work is seriously handicapped by financial difficulties and consequent shortage of staff. A fortiori, any extension of the work at present being performed by the Bureau, for example, complete up-to-date publication of all tariffs and amendments, would demand a substantial increase in the finances and personnel of the Bureau.

The functions of the Bureau are essential to the purposes of the ITO and Article 38 (1) makes express provision for prompt publication "in such a manner as to enable governments and traders to become acquainted with them", of all regulations pertaining to rates of duties, taxes, charges, etc. It would appear that the continuation and extension of the work of the Bureau would be the best way to fulfil this responsibility. If that is accepted, the next question is as to the steps to be taken by the ITO. The relevant provision of the Havana Charter is Article 87 (3) which provides

/"3. Whenever

"3. Whenever the Conference and the competent authorities of any inter-governmental organization whose purposes and functions lie within the scope of this Charter deem it desirable

- (a) to incorporate such inter-governmental organization into the Organization, or
- (b) to transfer all or part of its functions and resources to the Organization, or
- (c) to bring it under the supervision or authority of the Organization,

the Director-General, subject to the approval of the Conference, may enter into an appropriate agreement. The Members shall, in conformity with their international obligations, take the action necessary to give effect to any such agreement."

Of these alternatives, (a) or (b) would, it is suggested, be the most satisfactory to the International Trade Organization. If the work is to be done, it will have, in any case, to be substantially financed by the International Trade Organization and therefore it is desirable that the work should be under the immediate direction of the Director-General of the International Trade Organization. Absorption would, moreover, probably be more economical than maintaining the Bureau as a separate entity since the common services of the Organization would cover the requirements of the staff engaged in this work.

If the Executive Committee concurs in this recommendation, it is suggested that the Secretariat be instructed to prepare, in consultation with the Bureau, a draft of a suitable arrangement for submission, after approval by the Committee, to the first Conference of the International Trade Organization.
