

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

RESTRICTED
LIMITED B
GATT/CP.6/17
12 September 1951
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

CONTRACTING PARTIES
Sixth Session

NOTE ON GENEVA AS A PERMANENT SITE FOR THE GATT

1. In order to facilitate further consideration at the Sixth Session of arrangements for the continuing administration of the General Agreement based on the Report of Working Party I of the Fifth Session (document GATT/CP.5/49), the Executive Secretary was instructed to prepare a site study of Geneva. In view of the fact that detailed studies on various aspects such as housing, cost of living, education etc. have been prepared by other organizations, particularly the FAO*, this note is limited to the question of conference and office facilities and the privileges and immunities available to the Contracting Parties in Geneva.
2. The United Nations will provide 14 offices for the Secretariat in the Palais des Nations until the end of 1952. This is sufficient for the present size of the staff but would allow no expansion. The United Nations is not able to give any commitment as to space after 1952. However, the Canton of Geneva is planning a new building (or buildings) in the Place des Nations for the use of the International Telecommunications Union and World Meteorological Organization and would be willing to make space available to the GATT as well. The cantonal authorities should receive before the end of October 1951 a firm commitment on the part of GATT as to the space required in order to enable them to complete their plans. This building would be ready by the autumn of 1953 and the Secretariat has been assured that, should Geneva be decided upon as the site of GATT, either the U.N. or the Canton would find accommodation for the Secretariat between the end of 1952 and completion of the new building.
3. Adequate conference space for meetings of the Contracting Parties and subsidiary bodies would be available in the Palais. It is contemplated that two or three small committee rooms could be provided in the new building for the use of the agencies there, one of which would be appropriate for the meetings of the Standing Committee.
4. Accommodation for delegations

The office accommodation for delegations in the Palais des Nations would be very restricted during about half of the year when major conferences of U.N. and specialized agencies meet in Geneva. During the rest of the year, it has

* Available in Secretariat.

also been very difficult to obtain the space required by delegations. For the current session, for example, it has only been possible to meet a part of delegations' requirements for offices (out of 53 offices requested 30 offices have been available). It is expected, however, that the situation will improve when the proposals which the Secretary General of the U.N., after consultation with the heads of the specialized agencies, intend to submit for the coordination of conference programmes in Geneva are implemented. In addition, plans are under consideration by the Canton of Geneva for providing a substantial increase in the number of offices available to delegations at reasonable prices. These new offices would not, however, be ready before 1953.

Hotel accommodation in Geneva is normally ample for all conference requirements and at reasonable rates. (For example, the rates in first-class hotels for rooms alone range between 20 and 30 francs a day and, including pension, from 30 to 45 francs. In the secondary hotels the range is from 11 to 16 and from 22 to 27 francs respectively. There are, of course, a great many hotels and pensions with much lower rates).

5. The cost of offices in the Palais is 97 Swiss francs per square metre per year. The cost of space in the cantonal building would be 3% of the building cost and would include external but not internal maintenance. The agencies concerned consider that this would amount to a very reasonable rent. A certain initial outlay on furniture and equipment by the GATT on moving into its new quarters together with arrangements for internal maintenance and services would be necessary. In the long run this would be offset by a rent lower than that in the Palais which covers maintenance and other services and where no extra charge is made for the wear and tear of furniture. It is contemplated that certain services such as documents reproduction and distribution, etc. could be jointly provided by the agencies in the new building for their common use.

6. The Swiss Federal Government grants the ICITO the same privileges and immunities as those accorded to the United Nations and other international agencies and it is considered that there would be no difficulty in having these privileges and immunities transferred to the GATT.