

GENERAL AGREEMENT
ON TARIFFS AND
TRADE

ACCORD GENERAL SUR
LES TARIFS DOUANIERS
ET LE COMMERCE

LIMITED B
GATT/CP.4/4
19 January 1950.
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Contracting Parties
Fourth Session.

DERESTRICTION OF DOCUMENTS

Proposal by the United States

The following proposal for derestriction of documents has been received from the United States in a letter of 12 January, with a request that it be considered at the start of the Fourth Session of the Contracting Parties.

At the Third Session steps were taken to declassify the bulk of the documents of that session. However, no action has been taken with respect to documents of previous sessions, which still remain classified, documents of future sessions, or documents issued in the continuous series. It is therefore proposed that:

1. All documents of the Fourth Session and of future sessions shall be de-restricted 90 days after the end of the session with the exception of the following:
 - a. documents originally classified "secret";
 - b. documents of working parties (but not including reports of working parties issued as numbered GATT documents);
 - c. summary records of the plenary meetings; and
 - d. documents which before that date any Contracting Party requests the Executive Secretary to continue to classify as restricted.
2. Documents of the First and Second Sessions shall be de-restricted on the same basis, also 90 days after the end of the Fourth Session.
3. Documents issued in the continuous GATT series shall be declassified on March 31 following the calendar year in which they were issued with the exception of any secret documents and those documents which before that date a Contracting Party requests the Executive Secretary to continue to classify as restricted. However, documents in this continuous series which were issued through December 31, 1949 shall be declassified on June 30, 1950 except for those documents which any Contracting Party requests the Executive Secretary to continue to classify as restricted.

4. Documents arising out of tariff negotiations conducted within the framework of the General Agreement shall remain classified.

5. The Executive Secretary is requested to notify the Contracting Parties within fifteen days after a deadline which documents he has been requested to continue to classify as restricted.

The suggested method of de-restricting documents would permit action to be taken on the bulk of documents automatically, but still would permit any participating government to request certain documents to be kept classified. This would permit the governments to make available to their legislatures and to the public documents which would cause no embarrassment to any government. The de-restriction procedure suggested would also result in materially reducing the burden of storing large quantities of classified material. Furthermore, the somewhat automatic nature of the procedure as proposed would prevent the accumulation of a great volume of documents which governments may ultimately have to review.