

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

RESTRICTED

G/17/Add.1

21 October 1952

General Distribution

NOMINATION OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE INTERIM COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR INTERNATIONAL COMMODITY ARRANGEMENTS

(An addendum to the Note by the Executive Secretary (G/17) to furnish additional information as requested at the meeting of the CONTRACTING PARTIES on 14 October 1952.)

The History, Structure and Functions of the ICCICA

When plans were being devised during the Second World War for international economic coordination, it was widely recognized that special arrangements should be made for action in the field of inter-governmental commodity agreements. Before the end of the war, various combined boards and the International Emergency Food Council were set up. An International Cotton Advisory Committee was established in 1940. A preliminary report on wheat arrangements was made in 1941 with a Memorandum of Agreement following in 1942. A Rubber Study Group was convened, and at Hot Springs in 1943 and at other meetings of the Food and Agriculture Organization, the methods of commodity control were examined.

The principal result of the wartime and post-war discussions was Chapter VI on "Inter-governmental Commodity Agreements" of the Havana Charter for an international trade organization. The Preparatory Committee of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Employment, in its preparation of the Draft Charter, set out the techniques and principles for commodity agreements and suggested machinery for coordinating the activities of various bodies concerned with commodity problems. At its first session in 1946 the Committee adopted a resolution requesting the Secretary-General of the United Nations to appoint an Interim Coordinating Committee for International Commodity Arrangements which was to keep itself informed of and to facilitate inter-governmental consultation or action in this field. The Food and Agriculture Organization's Preparatory Commission on World Food Proposals endorsed the objectives of Chapter VI of the Draft Charter and adopted a similar resolution.

These resolutions were submitted to the Economic and Social Council which, on 28 March 1947, resolved as follows:

"Requests the Secretary-General to appoint an interim coordinating committee for international commodity arrangements to keep informed of and to facilitate by appropriate means such inter-governmental consultation or action with respect to commodity problems, the committee to consist of a chairman to represent the Preparatory Committee of the United Nations Conference on Trade and

Employment, a person nominated by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to be concerned, in particular, with agricultural primary commodities, and a person to be concerned, in particular, with non-agricultural primary commodities."

ICCICA held its first meeting in Geneva in 1947. It has since met annually for periods of from three to five days (in 1950, two such meetings were held). The Secretary-General of the United Nations named Mr. P. R. Juñed of the United Nations Department of Economic Affairs as Secretary of the ICCICA.

The activities of the ICCICA have consisted principally of the preparation each year of a statement regarding inter-governmental collaboration in the field of commodity problems. To this is appended significant documentation and a survey by the Secretary of the current situation as regards a number of commodities important in international trade. On occasion, the ICCICA has advised the Secretary-General of the United Nations, at his request, on specific problems in the field of inter-governmental commodity collaboration.

Since the Preparatory Committee ceased to exist at the United Nations Conference on Trade and Employment, that Conference, in its Final Act of 24 March 1948, recommended that the Economic and Social Council amend the composition of the ICCICA to provide that its chairman be nominated by the Interim Commission for the International Trade Organization. This recommendation was adopted by the Council in Resolution 110 (VI) of 3 March 1948.

The Committee held its 1948 meeting in Geneva. Its "Review" for 1948 stated the accepted guiding principles of international commodity collaboration and set out its intentions regarding the facilitation of such collaboration. To help avoid overlapping of study groups and conferences, the Committee issued a calendar of proposed commodity meetings. It also prepared a schedule of inter-governmental organizations having functions in regard to commodities and, in collaboration with existing commodity groups, prepared a memorandum summarising current trends in certain commodities.

The 1949 Review examined the general nature of primary commodity problems with special consideration being given to post-war difficulties. Further observations were made by the Committee on current inter-governmental consultation and action with a view to improving the procedures for such action. It asked its Secretariat to collaborate in the improvement of international commodity statistics.

In 1950, the Committee held two meetings, one in Washington and the other in Torquay. During that year, it drew attention to the fluctuation of prices and to the problems arising from surpluses and/or shortages in certain commodities. It discussed the relation of commodity agreements, full employment and the methods of summoning commodity conferences. On 2 August 1950, the Economic and Social Council, in its Resolution 296 (XI), authorised the Secretary-General, acting on the advice of the Committee and at the request of appropriate inter-governmental study groups, to convene international conferences so as to meet special difficulties existing or expected concerning

primary commodities. Further, the Council instructed the Committee to follow the principles of Chapter VI of the Havana Charter relating to the calling of commodity conferences. The Committee was directed to prepare agenda, rules of procedure and working papers in order to facilitate the work of conferences. Also in 1950, the Committee received the request of the International Tin Study Group to call a conference, and the Committee advised the Secretary-General of the United Nations in this connection.

The statement of the Committee in 1951 was devoted to an analysis of commodity price instability since the end of the War. There was a comment on various proposed coordinated approaches to international commodity problems and a discussion of progress in the preparation of information in this field.

In view of the inactive status of the ICITO, the Secretary-General of the United Nations recommended to the Economic and Social Council that the CONTRACTING PARTIES to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade should be substituted for ICITO in relation to ICCICA. Accordingly, the following Resolution, 373 (XIII) was adopted by the Council on 13 September 1951:

"to reconstitute as soon as practicable the Interim Coordinating Committee for International Commodity Arrangements so that it shall consist of a chairman nominated by the Contracting Parties to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, a person nominated by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to be concerned in particular with agricultural primary commodities, and a person to be concerned in particular with non-agricultural primary commodities."

Accordingly, on 18 April 1952 the Secretary-General of the United Nations addressed a communication to the Executive Secretary requesting him to arrange for the CONTRACTING PARTIES to nominate a Chairman.

Sir James R. C. Helmore, who was Chairman of the Committee, at the First Session of the Preparatory Committee, which drafted the chapter of the Havana Charter on Inter-governmental Commodity Arrangements, was nominated Chairman of ICCICA in 1947 by the Preparatory Committee and again in 1948 by ICITO. He is still serving in that capacity.