

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

RESTRICTED

L/395

24 August 1955

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TARIFF NEGOTIATIONS - 1956

Statements from contracting parties concerning participation

At its meeting in July the Working Party on Tariff Reduction adopted an interim report (L/373) recommending that a tariff conference be convened to begin in January 1956, and decided to meet again to formulate recommendations on the procedures to be followed and on the date and site of the conference. Contracting parties have since been informed in GATT/AIR/73 that the Working Party will meet on 15 September in Geneva.

That airgram also contained a list of the governments which have notified their intention to take part in the proposed 1956 tariff negotiations and indicated that the relevant portions of the statements received would be circulated separately.

The following summarizes the position of contracting parties with respect to the proposed tariff negotiations and in some cases the statements received are reproduced.

I. HAVE NOTIFIED INTENTION TO NEGOTIATE

Australia	Dominican Republic	Nicaragua
Austria	Finland	Norway
Belgium	France	Sweden
Luxemburg	Germany	Turkey
The Netherlands	Greece	United Kingdom
Canada	Haiti	Union of South Africa
Ceylon	India	United States of
Cuba	Italy	America
Denmark	Japan	

COMMENTS

Belgium, Luxemburg and The Netherlands

"Firmly expect that the participating countries will find it possible to agree before January 1956 upon satisfactory multilateral rules and procedures taking into full account the particular position of the low-tariff countries at such a conference."

Ceylon

"Contrary to its earlier notification, the Government of Ceylon has decided, in view of the large numbers of countries participating, to take part in the negotiations."

Denmark

"The Danish Government is vitally interested in having new constructive rules adopted for tariff negotiations which, in practice, will lead to a general reduction of tariff rates, including reductions of tariff rates which are particularly inhibitory to international trade, as well as a reduction of disparities in the tariff levels of the contracting parties.

"Already in 1951, at the end of the Torquay Conference, there was a consensus of opinion that the then existing rules for tariff negotiations had not made it possible to realise that objective, among other reasons because the low-tariff countries had not obtained satisfactory compensation for the binding of their low tariff rates. As the other contracting parties know, Denmark has taken an active part in the subsequent examination and discussions which led to the preparation of the detailed plan for tariff reductions which was submitted to the CONTRACTING PARTIES in the autumn of 1953. This plan, in our view, provides for tariff reductions which would make it possible to achieve considerable progress towards the above-mentioned objectives.

"At the Eighth and Ninth Sessions of the CONTRACTING PARTIES Denmark voted for declarations which prolonged the validity of the tariff rates bound under GATT, thereby accepting a continuation of a situation which was unsatisfactory to the low-tariff countries in that it maintained the existing disparities between the tariff levels of the contracting parties. Denmark, as then stated, did so in the firm expectation that the CONTRACTING PARTIES would reach agreement on the implementation of a tariff reduction plan which, in conformity with the principles embodied in the above-mentioned tariff reduction plan, would contribute towards a general tariff reduction and help remove disparities in the existing tariff levels.

"The Danish Government, therefore, expects that before the planned Tariff Conference is held the CONTRACTING PARTIES will reach agreement on rules and procedures for the conference which take full account of the views expressed by Denmark and other low-tariff countries."

France

"Intend to negotiate with the United States, but is not in a position to participate in negotiations with other contracting parties."

Germany

"In expressing its readiness to participate, the Federal Government assumes that in the course of the tariff conference uniform procedures will be followed in respect of all contracting parties participating."

India

"Interested in the exchange of concessions over a limited range of items and actively studying the position of the different items with a view to participating

"In the last session of the CONTRACTING PARTIES it was accepted that negotiations should be conducted on a basis which takes into account the needs of less-developed countries for a more flexible use of tariff protection and their revenue requirements. Although the Working Party on Tariff Reduction has taken cognisance of this point, the Government of India are not at all sure that these special problems could be adequately provided for by the kind of arrangements referred to in the interim report of the Working Party. Indeed, it is doubtful whether in practice it would be easy to reconcile the concept of the Negotiations Committee deciding whether or not a country had made offers up to the minimum requirements to qualify for entering into negotiations, with the principles laid down in paragraph 3 of Article XXIX, as suggested in paragraph 9 of Annexure A, Document L/373. What is more, many countries may hesitate to undertake all the preparatory work necessary for the purpose if they are uncertain as to whether or not they would qualify specially when, as would probably be the case with the less-developed countries, they know that their offers are likely to be below the requisite minimum. These uncertainties and fears would be less likely to arise if negotiations were to be conducted on the traditional product by product basis.

"As India is not a member of the Working Party and as many other countries may have a similar problem to consider, I am to suggest that these considerations may be brought to the notice of the Working Party and also contracting parties not represented on it, so that if a product-by-product approach is not accepted the manner in which the less developed countries would be accommodated could be considered and more clearly spelt out."

Nicaragua

Up to now has only notified its intention to negotiate with United States.

Norway

"In the opinion of the Norwegian Government the modifications to the general procedures formerly used which the Working Party on Tariff Reduction have agreed upon are not adequate for achieving the aims of Article XXIX of the revised Agreement, and consequently it reserves its rights to propose additional modifications during the next meeting of the Working Party."

Sweden

"The Swedish Government wishes to emphasize that it expects such procedural rules to be adopted for the conference as will give due consideration to the views expressed by the low-tariff countries in the recent discussions held by the Working Party on Tariff Reduction."

Turkey

Intends to negotiate with the United States on tobacco and "reserves the right to take part in negotiations if these or the rules adopted might affect the status of concessions granted initially to Turkey".

United Kingdom

"Subject to the adoption of satisfactory negotiating procedures, Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom intend to take part in this proposed conference.

"At the meeting of the Intersessional Working Party, the representative of the United Kingdom explained that it was unlikely that Her Majesty's Government could agree to participate in further negotiations conducted on the basis envisaged in Annex A to the Interim Report. It is now confirmed that Her Majesty's Government would not be prepared to negotiate on this basis, but that they are ready to negotiate either on the traditional product-by-product basis or in accordance with the alternative procedure proposed to the Working Party by the United Kingdom representative and specified in Annex B."

II. ARE NOT YET CERTAIN

Chile
Czechoslovakia

COMMENT

Chile

"In principle intends to participate but still requires interdepartmental consultation."

Czechoslovakia

"Envisages participation but position still reserved."

III. DO NOT INTEND TO NEGOTIATE

Brazil
Indonesia

New Zealand
Pakistan
Rhodesia and Nyasaland

COMMENT

New Zealand

"From New Zealand's point of view further negotiations appear at the present time unlikely to be a satisfactory basis of reciprocity and mutual advantage. The reasons for reaching this conclusion include (a) the extent to which New Zealand has made concessions in previous tariff negotiations; (b) special problems facing a country largely dependent on a small number of primary products and relying on the tariff as an important aid for further diversification of economy; (c) uncertainty regarding the form of the projected negotiations; and (d) other factors affecting exports. It is therefore not New Zealand's present intention to participate in the proposed tariff conference."

IV. HAVE NOT REPLIED

Burma
Peru
Uruguay