

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

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PROVISIONAL ACCESSION OF TUNISIA

Request for Further Extension

The following communication, dated 12 August 1968, has been received from the Government of Tunisia:

"I have the honour to advise you that Tunisia, which has been a provisional member of the General Agreement since 12 November 1959, has, on four occasions, requested an extension of the period granted for it to negotiate definitive accession.

"These four extensions were justified for domestic reasons connected with the structural reform of the Tunisian economy envisaged under the country's Economic and Social Development Plan.

"Tunisia will shortly undertake negotiations with the European Economic Community and with the three other Maghreb countries. It therefore requests that the date set by the fourth Procès-Verbal of 14 November 1967 (15th Supplement, page 61, paragraph 1) be further extended to 31 December 1969.

"The Tunisian Government, whose relations with your organization are excellent, would not wish to enter into negotiations if it were later necessary to request waivers, with respect to the results thereof.

"It is our hope that the Tunisian Government's request, with your support, will meet the approval of the CONTRACTING PARTIES at their twenty-fifth session. Accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration."

The following aide-mémoire accompanied the foregoing communication:

"Pursuant to the Declaration approved at Tokyo on 12 November 1959, Tunisia became a provisional member of GATT.

"This Declaration provided for Tunisia's full accession to the General Agreement, under Article XXXIII, before 31 December 1961.

"Paragraph 6 of the Declaration states that "it shall remain in force until the Government of Tunisia accedes to the General Agreement under the provisions of Article XXXIII thereof or until 31 December 1961, whichever date is earlier, unless it has been agreed by Tunisia and the participating governments to extend its validity to a later date".

"In accordance with the said paragraph 6, the Tunisian Government requested the extension of the time-limit set for changing its status from that of a provisional member to that of a full contracting party.

"The reason for these several extensions was that the Tunisian Government wished to negotiate on the basis of a new customs tariff, with a nomenclature and new duty rates consistent with the objectives of the Tunisian three-year and four-year plans.

"The executive authority which has approved this draft tariff considers it inadvisable to submit it to the National Assembly for approval at the present juncture, for the following reasons:

"- The negotiations between Tunisia and the EEC, the principle of which has already been agreed to by the two parties concerned, are unlikely to be initiated and completed before 31 December 1968, on which date the period provided for in paragraph 6 of the Declaration will expire, pursuant to the fourth Procès-Verbal dated 14 November 1967.

"- In the context of the Maghreb integration programme, the Ministers of Economy of the four countries concerned are to meet in November 1968 to examine the draft treaty now being drawn up by the Standing Advisory Committee of the Maghreb; the treaty provides inter alia for the progressive establishment of a free-trade area over the next five years, after which time closer integration of the economies of the four countries should, in principle, be achieved.

"- Lastly, the third Tunisian Plan (1969-1972), now being drawn up, has highlighted certain principles for the promotion of industrial production that will require adjustments of the customs duty rates on certain tariff headings.

"For these three reasons and in order not to have to negotiate on the basis of a draft that would subsequently require waivers or the modification of concessions, the Tunisian Government has the honour to request the Director-General of GATT to take cognizance of the Tunisian Government's desire to ask for an extension until 31 December 1969 of the time-limit provided for in the Declaration of 12 November 1959, as amended by the fourth Procès-Verbal dated 14 November 1967 (15th Supplement, page 65, paragraph 1).

"The Tunisian Government takes this opportunity to request the Director-General to submit this application to the Council for consideration at its next meeting.

"The Tunisian Government hopes that the Council will appreciate the reasons underlying this request for a further extension and will make a favourable recommendation to the twenty-fifth session of the CONTRACTING PARTIES."