

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

RESTRICTED

TAR/63

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Committee on Tariff Concessions

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON TARIFF CONCESSIONS
TO THE COUNCIL ON 2 NOVEMBER 1982

1. The Committee on Tariff Concessions has met four times in the course of the year: on 1 April, 21 April, 13 July and 21 October 1982.
2. In accordance with its terms of reference the Committee has continued to oversee the status of acceptances of the Geneva (1979) Protocol and the Supplementary Protocol. At its meeting on 13 July 1982, the Committee noted that both Protocols had been accepted by all countries having schedules of concessions annexed to them.
3. With regard to the implementation of the stage-by-stage tariff cuts granted in the Multilateral Trade Negotiations, the Committee noted at its meeting of 1 April 1982 that all countries concerned had given the necessary information concerning the implementation of their tariff reductions granted during the MTN.
4. Questions related to the preparation of loose-leaf schedules have regularly been taken up at the meetings of the Committee. The Council may wish to note that presently twenty contracting parties have submitted their schedules in loose-leaf form. This is not a very impressive figure and the number of schedules approved for certification - two - is still less impressive. I hope therefore that the Council will agree with me when I urge contracting parties, which have not already submitted their loose-leaf schedules, to do so without delay. I also wish to invite all contracting parties concerned to speed up the process of checking schedules already circulated.
5. Several delegations have raised various technical problems related to the information to be provided in the loose-leaf schedules. It has been suggested to use a simplified method for indicating initial negotiating rights on previous concessions and the Committee agreed to a solution based on bilateral agreements between the countries concerned as set out in document TAR/W/30. The question of the legal status of the loose-leaf schedules has been raised by one delegation (TAR/W/33). At the meeting of 21 October the secretariat was asked by several delegations to give its views on the matter; these were subsequently circulated in written form in document TAR/W/34.

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6. At its last meeting in 1981 the Committee asked the secretariat to prepare a document on procedures to be followed in the renegotiations likely to take place in connexion with the introduction of the Harmonized System. This item has since then been regularly taken up and discussed in the meetings of the Committee. The secretariat has held a series of informal meetings with interested delegations in order to draw up guidelines to be applied in the renegotiations. The document containing those guidelines (TAR/W/25/Rev.2 and Add.1) was submitted to the Committee at its meeting of 21 October. The paper could not be approved at that meeting since some delegations had not had enough time to study it. It was decided therefore to postpone the question of its approval to the next meeting of the Committee.

7. At the Committee's meeting in October 1981 many members expressed the desirability of having a document prepared by the secretariat on the subject of tariff escalation. A pilot study on copper producing and copper consuming industries was submitted to the members of the Committee in April 1982 in document TAR/W/26. It was taken up for a detailed discussion at the Committee meeting held on 13 July 1982. In the meantime the secretariat had issued another paper, TAR/W/29, which set out the difficulties encountered in measuring tariff escalation. In view of the preliminary nature of the comments made on these two documents, and in view of the substantial support given by the Committee members for continued work on tariff escalation, the Committee decided to keep this item on the agenda for its future meetings.

8. At the meeting of 21 October the question of the extension of the Tariff Study was taken up. It was agreed that the secretariat should make a study of the implications of the adoption of the Harmonized System for the Tariff Study work. Some delegations have also expressed the wish to see more countries participating in the Tariff Study.

9. After a preliminary discussion on 1 April 1982, the Committee decided to hold an extra meeting on 21 April 1982 to examine its possible contribution to the Ministerial Meeting. The Committee discussed two topics in the tariff area which it felt should be considered by the Ministers: tariff escalation and the Harmonized System. Its recommendations are contained in document TAR/57. I note that these proposals have been retained in the draft Ministerial Declaration annexed to the final report by the Preparatory Committee.