

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON

RESTRICTED

TARIFFS AND TRADE

LIC/M/26

30 April 1990

Special Distribution

Committee on Import Licensing

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 MARCH 1990

Chairman: Mr. D. Plunkett

1. The Committee on Import Licensing held its twenty-sixth meeting on 19 March 1990.

2. The agenda contained in GATT/AIR/2941 was adopted.

A. Election of Officers

3. The Committee elected Mr. David Plunkett (Canada) as Chairman and Miss Yong Siew Min (Singapore) as Vice-Chairperson for 1990.

B. Status of signatories and observers

4. The Chairman reported that there had been no changes in the status of signatories or observers since the last meeting.

C. Information available on Import Licensing Procedures

5. The Chairman reported that since the last meeting publications containing information on import licensing procedures had been received from the United States, Canada and Hong Kong (LIC/3/Add.24 and 25). New replies to the GATT Import Licensing Questionnaire in the L/5640/- series had been received from Argentina (Add.27/Corr.3), New Zealand (Add.18/Rev.2), and the United States (Add.40/Rev.1).

6. The representative of Hungary informed the Committee that since his authorities' last reply to the Questionnaire on Import Licensing Procedures (L/5640/Add.12/Rev.1/Suppl.1), further changes had been introduced in Hungary's import licensing procedures. In addition to the formal abolition of licensing requirements for the importation of goods representing 40 per cent of Hungary's imports in convertible currencies, from 1 January 1990 licensing requirements had been abolished for the importation of a large number of other goods representing approximately 30 per cent of Hungary's imports in convertible currencies. As a result of this second step, import licensing requirements were now abolished for more than two-thirds of the imports in question. The relevant decree of the Ministry of Trade was

published in the Official Gazette, and the regulation and the list of products concerned would be notified to the Committee. He hoped that Signatories would appreciate this step, which should be regarded, inter alia, as a contribution by Hungary to the Uruguay Round negotiating objectives. He also expressed the hope that other Parties would implement import liberalization measures resulting in improved market access opportunities for Hungary's exports. Such steps would be vital for the process of integrating the Hungarian market into the world economy.

7. The representative of Poland informed the Committee that changes to Poland's import licensing procedures had been introduced on 1 January 1990. The product coverage of the licensing system had been considerably reduced for imports from the convertible currency area. Import licences were now required for only a small number of products such as radioactive materials, durable isotopes, and military equipment, which amounted to a small portion of the value of total imports in convertible currencies. Therefore, the great majority of Poland's imports in convertible currencies was no longer subject to import licensing. The detailed list of products which were still subject to import licensing would be notified to the Committee. This relaxation of the import licensing system had been made within the framework of general economic and foreign trade liberalization policies aimed at basing the economy on the market system. His authorities considered the liberalization of the import licensing system to be a contribution to the objectives of the Uruguay Round, and hoped that it would be met with appropriate negotiating credit from Poland's trading partners.

8. The representative of Argentina informed the Committee that changes to Argentina's import licensing system were in the process of being introduced. In particular, the number of products subject to the system of prior study for the issue of a DJNI (Sworn Declaration of Import Needs) Certificate had been reduced from 840 to 80 on 16 February 1990. These changes would be notified to the Committee once they had been introduced. The idea of waiving the 3 per cent bank deposit currently required for the issue of a DJNI Certificate was also under consideration.

9. The Committee took note of the information provided.

D. Relationship of the Committee's work to the Uruguay Round

10. The Chairman informed the Committee that, at its meeting on 2 February 1990, the Negotiating Group on MTN Agreements and Arrangements established an informal group, open to all interested parties, to clarify and exchange views on the proposals that had been made for improving the Agreement on Import Licensing. It was agreed that the informal group would report to the Chairman of the Negotiating Group at the Negotiating Group's March meeting so that the Group could take a view on how to proceed further.

11. The representative of the United States said that the informal group had met on 28 February 1990 and examined the proposal by the United States

and Hong Kong to strengthen the Agreement on Import Licensing (LIC/W/49/Rev.1). The meeting had helped her delegation to understand better the concerns of other delegations; her delegation had been particularly encouraged by the suggestions made by other delegations in the form of text changes to the proposal. There were certain parts of the proposal on which no comments or suggestions for change had been made, and her delegation hoped this was an indication that there was consensus on those parts. It appeared that differences of views on certain other parts of the proposal could be accommodated through drafting changes. However, substantive differences did exist on some parts of the proposal. The informal group meeting had proved useful, and in the view of her delegation a point had been reached at which a more concrete process should evolve. She reiterated the interest of her delegation in reaching agreement on strengthening the Agreement on Import Licensing in the Uruguay Round, and hoped the Committee would play an active rôle in the process.

E. Other Business

12. The Committee agreed to leave it to the Chairman to consult informally on an appropriate time for the Committee to hold its next meeting.