

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON

RESTRICTED

L/7208

30 April 1993

TARIFFS AND TRADE

Limited Distribution

COUNCIL

12-13 May 1993

TRADE POLICY REVIEW MECHANISM

Procedures for Review Meetings

Communication from the Chairman

1. This communication is circulated following consultations with delegations regarding possible improvements in procedures, in particular, in the light of their experience gained from TPRM meetings. It reflects the Chairman's understanding of the main points of agreement.
2. The proposed changes are intended to guide the evolution of the TPRM, and in particular of the special Council meetings, within the guidelines agreed in 1989 by the CONTRACTING PARTIES, and aim, in the light of experience, to give more emphasis to dialogue and discussion and thus make the operation of the mechanism more effective. The proposals concern the preparatory stage of the TPR, the rôle of discussants, the timing of review meetings, the length of statements in the special Council meetings, the replies by the country under review and the nature of the Chairman's concluding remarks.
3. Preparatory stage of the TPR: Contracting parties which accept to be subject to review at a given time should adhere strictly to the timetable agreed for the preparation of the review. Slippage of review dates is regarded as a major obstacle to ensuring the smooth functioning and effectiveness of the TPR process. Delegations are urged to continue to send written questions to countries under review at least one week before the Council meeting; in particular, technical or other specific questions should be dealt with in this way. In the interests of transparency, written questions will be circulated to all participants at the time of the meeting.
4. Rôle of discussants: It is emphasised that discussants continue to be nominated keeping in view their competence for the task. They act in their personal capacity and not as representatives of their Governments. The

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existing practice of having two discussants for each review should continue. It is agreed that all concerned in the process of nominating discussants will cooperate in ensuring prompt and early action. Advance copies of the Secretariat and Government reports should be given to discussants as early as possible. It is hoped that discussants will be available to serve for more than one review. An outline of the main points to be raised by each discussant at the review meeting should be circulated to Council members in advance, not later than one week before the meeting. Discussants' full statements would, as at present, be given to the country under review shortly before the meeting.

5. Timing of review meetings: It appears generally agreed that TPR meetings should be held on two successive mornings, unless requested otherwise by the country under review, with the possibility of some exceptional carryover into the afternoon of the first day and the possibility that the Chairman's closing remarks be delivered in the second afternoon if necessary. Meetings should begin at 09.30. These changes are designed to give more flexibility in the running of the meetings and provide extra time for the delegation under review to prepare replies to points raised in the meetings.

6. Statements in the Council: The Chairman's opening statement will be a brief introduction. The initial remarks by the country under review should be limited to 15 minutes; they should provide an overview of policy, noting any new developments since the completion of the reports. Discussants' statements should be designed to provide specific themes for discussion and should not exceed in length that by the country under review. To give fair opportunities to Council members wishing to take the floor, initial statements by members should not exceed seven minutes.

7. Replies by countries under review: It would be useful for the country under review to discuss with the Chairman, discussants and Secretariat, after the first meeting, the main themes to be covered in the reply. In delivering the reply, time will be given for discussion by Council members after the responses on each theme; discussants should play an active rôle in this process. It is recognized that replies by countries under review must be comprehensive. Where possible, the replies should be distributed in writing in the second day's meeting. The practice of distributing supplementary written replies after the meeting will be continued.

8. Chairman's Concluding Remarks should outline the main themes raised in the review: it is not necessary for them to be "mini-minutes". They remain on the Chairman's own responsibility and are not a negotiated text.