

# GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

RESTRICTED

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Ad Hoc Committee on Agenda  
and Intersessional Business

## SUMMARY RECORD

of the Meeting held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,  
on Tuesday, 27 July 1954

Chairman: Mr. L. Dana WILGROSS (Canada)

Subjects discussed: 1. Arrangements for the Ninth Session:

- (a) Opening Date
- (b) Attendance of Ministers
- (c) Appointment of Working Parties
- (d) Administrative Arrangements
- (e) Representation of Non-Contracting Parties

2. Next Meeting of the Committee

1. ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE NINTH SESSION (IC/W/26)

(a) Opening Date

The CHAIRMAN proposed that the Ninth Session should open on 28 October and that the item "Review of the Agreement" should be discussed in plenary meetings commencing on 8 November -- the idea being to make as much progress as possible with the ordinary sessional business before the review was taken up. Plenary meetings for the Review begun on 8 November would last as long as necessary; by the time this was completed some of the working parties might have completed their work and their reports might then be discussed.

Mr. BOTHA (Union of South Africa) remarked that the agenda seemed to provide for the simultaneous discussion of the usual agenda questions and of the review of the Agreement. He felt it might be better to dispose of normal agenda business before beginning the review. Ministers attending the Ninth Session would not want to spend a long time in Geneva and a reasonably fixed period should be set aside for ministerial discussions. He thought the Ninth Session should begin early enough to enable the usual agenda items to be disposed of before the review of the Agreement, and suggested that the Session should open not later than 21 October and that the period 8 November to 24 December should be exclusively reserved for the review. If necessary, the Session could be resumed after a short holiday recess at Christmas.

Mr. GARCIA OLDINI (Chile) said that the Ninth Session would be called upon to deal with three matters: (i) normal questions, (ii) review of the Agreement, and (iii) negotiations. There was no reason to suppose that the discussion of the usual agenda items would be shorter than in past sessions. As for negotiations, great uncertainty existed as to their scope and duration. Further he called attention to the fact that a conference of American States would open in Rio de Janeiro on 22 November which would deal with the same range of questions as were covered by the General Agreement and he considered that it might be better to postpone the review of the Agreement until the decisions and findings of the Rio Conference had become known.

Mr. BUNTING (Australia) stated that his Government would prefer to defer the opening of the session by at least a week, but was prepared to accept the dates proposed by the Chairman. The difficulties mentioned by the South African representative would be met if it was decided that the review would begin on 8 November irrespective of the status of other agenda questions at that time. However, if 28 October was not considered suitable, the Ninth Session should open on 8 November.

Mr. BROWN (United States) supported the timetable proposed by the Chairman, as it seemed desirable to have a definite date for the review so that Ministers attending the session might be able to make their arrangements. His Government attached great importance to the General Agreement and was anxious to provide it with a firm foundation. It was necessary to proceed expeditiously with the review, which should be completed by the end of January 1955 at the latest, so that legislation enabling the United States to participate in an organization might be proposed to Congress in February. The United States would be taking part in the important Rio Conference of American States, but he found it difficult to accept the idea that the review should await the end of that conference. The General Agreement was global in nature and the CONTRACTING PARTIES were the forum in which rules for world trade should be developed. It was more important to know first what the CONTRACTING PARTIES decided than the other way round. He felt it would be unwise and impracticable to take the Rio Conference as a reason to defer the review of the Agreement.

Mr. GARCIA OLDINI (Chile) declared that the General Agreement was the code to which Chile adhered and that there was no intention of formulating new rules at Rio to take its place. Nevertheless, resolutions adopted at the Rio Conference would most likely determine the position of a number of Latin American countries and if the Agreement was to establish world-wide regulations it must first take some account of the Rio Conference decisions. Otherwise the Agreement might become unacceptable for some of the Latin American countries. He suggested that no immediate decision be taken on the timetable and that a period of two or three days should be given to delegations to consider matters.

Mr. PRENDERGAST (New Zealand) remarked that it was difficult to sense the feeling of the Committee as to the opening date of the Ninth Session because so far only a few representatives had spoken on the subject. The date proposed by

the Chair coincided with parliamentary elections in New Zealand and that fact might entail difficulties for his Government. November 15 might be a suitable date for New Zealand.

Mr. SANDERS (United Kingdom) stated that many governments would have liked more time to prepare for the discussion on the review of the Agreement but his delegation was impressed by the United States' arguments in favour of starting and finishing the review as rapidly as possible. It was important to all that the Agreement should be considered and approved next year by the United States Congress. He suggested the Committee should follow the timetable proposed by the Chairman.

Mr. AZIZ AHMAD (Pakistan) supported the views of the United Kingdom representative. He had intended at first to ask for a postponement of at least two weeks but would now go along with the United Kingdom and the United States.

Mr. BROWN (United States) said he appreciated the Chilean representative's reasons for wishing to postpone the review. If any delegations felt that they would like to put off taking a decision for two to three days he was quite ready to fall in with the idea, but it was important to decide matters during the current week.

Mr. REISMAN (Canada) remarked that it was a difficult task to fix dates suitable to so many countries. His delegation had at one time felt that the review of the Agreement might be postponed for a month or so, but after consultations with a number of delegations it now felt that the Chairman's proposals were the best. He, however, would agree to leave the decision for two or three days reflection. In fixing a timetable the CONTRACTING PARTIES should have in mind the desirability of making as short as possible the period of uncertainty intervening between the commencement of the review and the bringing into force of the results of the review.

The CHAIRMAN said there seemed to be general agreement with the timetable he had proposed. In making the proposal he had had in mind that at the Ninth Session, regardless of everything else, the review of the Agreement would begin on 8 November. Ordinary working party work could continue when review plenaries were held. When these had been completed and review working parties set up, plenaries could be held to deal with the reports of ordinary working parties which had completed their work. But priority would always be given to the review. In his opinion, there would be no difficulty in arranging for tariff negotiations which, however, would not take place at the same time as the Ninth Session but afterwards. The only difficult point seemed to be how to reconcile the conflict of dates of the opening session and the Rio de Janeiro Conference. In accordance with the views of the representative of Chile he would propose that the decision be held over for a few days; thus the delegations would have time to consider the matter thoroughly.

It was so agreed.

**(b) Attendance of Ministers**

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the importance of the review required the presence of Ministers. Although they might wish to take part also in the discussion of other questions, the most important time for Ministers to attend would be during the first plenary meetings on the review.

Mr. AZIZ AHMAD (Pakistan) said that it would be helpful if the Chairman would reaffirm that once the review was begun it would not be held back on account of any other business of the session. He wanted to be in a position to inform his Government of that fact so that a cabinet minister might find it possible to attend.

The CHAIRMAN repeated his statement that the review would commence on 8 November, (or whatever other date might be chosen), and would be pursued continuously regardless of all else.

Mr. SANDERS (United Kingdom) announced that the President of the Board of Trade would attend the session. Mr. BROWN (United States) affirmed that Assistant Secretary of State Waugh would attend. A similar announcement was made by Dr. BOTHA (Union of South Africa) regarding the presence of the South African Minister of Economic Affairs.

**(c) Appointment of Working Parties**

The CHAIRMAN stated that a number of items on the agenda would probably require working parties. Those should be appointed during the early days of the session so as to enable them to complete or at least to advance their work before the review of the Agreement began. For the examination of problems arising out of the review it was expected that several working parties, including a legal drafting committee, would be required and they would be appointed during the review as required. On the other hand, some working parties could be set up in advance of the session. A Budget Working Party was always necessary and might be constituted forthwith. The Budget Working Party could be manned by the Geneva representatives of its members.

The CHAIRMAN then proposed that the Budget Working Party should meet about a week before the opening of the session, and that its membership and terms of reference should be as follows:

**Membership**

**Chairman: Mr. O. Machado (Brazil)**

**Australia  
Canada  
Chile**

**Denmark  
Finland  
France**

**India  
United Kingdom  
United States**

Terms of Reference

"To examine any questions arising in connection with the financing of the 1954 budget and the proposals for the budget of 1955 and to submit recommendations thereon at the opening of the Ninth Session."

It was so agreed.

(d) Administrative Arrangements

The CHAIRMAN said that the Executive Secretary would require instructions as to the arrangements he should make for the session. In particular, he must know by the end of July how many meetings were to be held simultaneously. Present budget appropriations (including the appropriation for unforeseen expenditure) would be sufficient to provide the usual facilities until the opening of the review, and thereafter additional facilities to make it possible to hold either a plenary session and one working party at the same time or three working parties meeting simultaneously. The Committee should decide whether to instruct the Executive Secretary to provide services on that scale.

It was agreed to do so.

The EXECUTIVE SECRETARY expressed the wish that all delegations should be of adequate size to be able fully to participate in the work of the session with its augmented facilities.

In reply to Mr. AZIZ AHMAD (Pakistan), the EXECUTIVE SECRETARY stated that simultaneous interpretation would be provided for plenary meetings.

(e) Representation of Non-Contracting Parties

The CHAIRMAN explained that the representation of governments other than contracting parties was determined by rules 8 and 9 of the rules of procedure. Invitations to send observers were sent regularly to some twenty governments and this appeared to provide adequately for representation during the review of the governments which had shown an interest in the work of the CONTRACTING PARTIES. He suggested, however, that the Executive Secretary might be given authority to invite, subject to formal confirmation of the CONTRACTING PARTIES, any other government which indicated a desire to be represented.

Mr. BUNTING (Australia) asked how an invitation could be subject to confirmation, and in reply the CHAIRMAN stated that the Executive Secretary, on receiving information that a government desired to be represented, would send an invitation but that the representative sent could only take his place at the session after the CONTRACTING PARTIES had so agreed.

Mr. BROWN (United States) felt that such an arrangement might lead to embarrassment for either the Executive Secretary or the invited delegate.

The EXECUTIVE SECRETARY thought that this difficulty could be avoided if such an invitation were issued only to a government which participated in the Havana Conference and which wished to be represented.

This was agreed.

With regard to intergovernmental organizations, the CHAIRMAN explained that several of these were regularly invited to send observers, namely United Nations, International Monetary Fund, Food and Agriculture Organization, International Labour Office, Organization for European Economic Co-operation and the Customs Co-operation Council. In addition, the Council of Europe and the European Coal and Steel Community had been invited to be represented when questions of special interest to them were under consideration. The Committee agreed that these arrangements were satisfactory. /

## 2. NEXT MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE

The CHAIRMAN said that the arrangements for the intersessional administration of the Agreement provided that the Committee would meet from four to six weeks before the opening of an ordinary session to consider what matters were likely to arise and to examine the adequacy of the documentation available. If the date of 28 October were approved for the opening of the session the next meeting of the Committee would be convened at some time between 16 and 30 September. On this occasion, however, governments would be busy preparing for the review and might have difficulty arranging for appropriate representation at a meeting in September. Since the items on the advance agenda have been examined at this meeting, the Committee might wish to forgo the September meeting and not meet again until shortly before the opening of the session as was also provided in the standing procedures.

The CHAIRMAN went on to explain that any decisions on this point had to be considered in relation to the preparation of an annotated agenda for the review. A September meeting would be useful only if a large number of proposals would have been received by mid-September for an annotated agenda to be compiled by the Committee. If the proposal to dispense with a September meeting were adopted an annotated agenda for the review could be prepared by the Secretariat for examination by the Committee at the meeting held shortly before the session opens.

After a discussion in which Mr. STEYN (Union of South Africa), Mr. SANDERS (United Kingdom), Mr. GARCIA OLDINI (Chile), Mr. BROWN (United States), Mr. VARGAS GOMEZ (Cuba), Baron BENTINCK (Netherlands) and Mr. SINGH (India) participated, the Committee agreed that contracting parties should submit

their proposals for the review of the Agreement before 25 September, but that countries having special difficulties might send their proposals later than that date but in any case before 26 October. Proposals would be circulated by airmail to all contracting parties as they reached the secretariat. The Committee would hold no meeting in September but would meet two days before the opening of the Ninth Session.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.