

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

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ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE TWENTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

Note by the Director-General

At its last meeting, on 14-15 December, the Council gave preliminary consideration to arrangements for the twenty-third session of the CONTRACTING PARTIES, including the date of the session and the items for inclusion in the agenda. The secretariat was requested to put forward proposals for the conduct of the work of the session for consideration at the next Council meeting.

The Council agreed in principle that it should meet prior to the session to carry out as much preparatory work as possible on many of the agenda items and that the twenty-third session should be of shorter duration than had been previously envisaged. It is suggested that the meeting of the Council should begin on 7 March, continuing for as long as may be necessary to complete its work, and that the session should be held from 24 March to 6 April.

A preliminary list of the items for the session agenda is annexed hereto, together with brief annotation on the matters involved. It is suggested that the Council at its meeting on 7 March should review these items with a view to making as complete preparations for the session as may be possible. On many items the Council may be able to carry out the necessary discussions and formulate recommendations to be submitted for formal approval by the CONTRACTING PARTIES. On some items it may be possible for the Council to do some preparatory work which will facilitate and shorten their examination at the session; while a few remaining items will necessarily have to be left for the consideration of the CONTRACTING PARTIES. A more fully annotated agenda will be prepared for the meeting of the Council in March.

It is suggested that at its March meeting the Council should prepare a report for the CONTRACTING PARTIES on the business it has conducted since the twenty-second session including in this report its comments and recommendations arising from its review of the provisional agenda for the twenty-third session.

ANNEX

PRELIMINARY AGENDA FOR THE TWENTY-THIRD SESSION

1. Trade of less-developed countries

The Committee on Trade and Development will meet at the end of February or early in March to receive reports from its various sub-groups and expert groups, and to prepare a report on its work for the CONTRACTING PARTIES.

2. Fellowship programme and technical assistance

The Director-General will report to the Council on the commercial policy training programme for officials from developing countries on the joint ECA/GATT training programme for African officials and on other technical assistance activities in the past year.

3. Trade negotiations (Kennedy Round)

The Chairman of the Trade Negotiations Committee will report to the CONTRACTING PARTIES on developments in 1965 and on the outlook for the negotiations.

4. Balance-of-payments import restrictions

The reports by the Committee on Balance-of-Payments Import Restrictions on consultations carried out in 1965 were submitted to the Council which has agreed to recommend their adoption by the CONTRACTING PARTIES. No further action is required by the Council.

5. Import restrictions applied contrary to GATT and not covered by waivers

Procedures for dealing with import restrictions which contracting parties apply contrary to the provisions of the GATT and without having obtained the authorization of the CONTRACTING PARTIES were adopted at the seventeenth session (9S/19). The secretariat will provide information on the restrictions concerned.

The Committee on Trade and Development has decided to examine those restrictions which are of special interest to less-developed countries with a view to calling the attention of the CONTRACTING PARTIES to the continuing existence of this problem.

In the light of the information available the Council might consider what proposal should be made to the CONTRACTING PARTIES as to the action that should be taken to deal with this matter.

6. Trade in cotton textiles

As required by Article 8(c) of the Long-Term Arrangement Regarding International Trade in Cotton Textiles, the Cotton Textiles Committee carried out, in December 1965, the major review of the Arrangement in the light of its operation in the preceding years. The Committee will meet again on 15-18 March. The Committee's report will be available for consideration at the session.

7. The impact of commodity problems upon international trade

Under the Resolution adopted on 17 November 1956 (5S/26 and 7S/42) the CONTRACTING PARTIES at their annual sessions have reviewed the trends and developments in international commodity trade. At the last session the Committee on Trade and Development was requested to carry out this review in relation to those commodity problems which affect the trade of less-developed countries and in a plenary meeting the CONTRACTING PARTIES discussed problems in commodity trade which were of particular interest to other contracting parties.

The Committee on Trade and Development has established a working group on international commodity problems which met in November 1965 and a note on the discussions has been distributed in COM.TD/C/2.

8. Disposal of commodity surpluses

Experience under the Resolution of 4 March 1955 (3S/50-51) on the disposal of surpluses and the liquidation of strategic stocks has been reviewed at recent sessions of the CONTRACTING PARTIES. A request that contracting parties should again submit reports of any disposal or liquidation arrangements in which they may have engaged during the past year has been issued in document L/2533 and the statements received will be distributed. The Director-General will also distribute a report on action in this field by other intergovernmental agencies.

9. Customs unions and free-trade areas

The working parties appointed to examine the following conventions in the light of the relevant provisions of the GATT have submitted their reports:

- (a) Association between EEC and associated African and Malagasy States and the association of overseas territories (L/2441)
- (b) Arab Common Market (L/2518)

The Working Party appointed to consider the following item will meet from 8-11 March:

(c) New Zealand/Australia Free-Trade Area

The parties to the following regional arrangements are expected to furnish information on developments since the twenty-second session:

(d) European Economic Community - Rome Treaty and agreements of association with Greece and Turkey

(e) European Free-Trade Area - Stockholm Convention and the association agreement with Finland

(f) Latin American Free Trade Area

(g) Central American Common Market

(h) Central African Economic and Customs Union

10. United Kingdom/Turkey - Consultation under Article XXII:2

The Working Party which was appointed at the last session to carry out a consultation on the application by Turkey of Article XXIV:5(a) and Article XXIV:6 in implementing its agreement of association with the European Economic Community has submitted its report in document L/2465.

11. Article XVIII - annual review under paragraph 6

Paragraph 6 of Article XVIII requires the CONTRACTING PARTIES to review annually the measures applied under Sections C and D of the Article. The annual reviews at recent sessions were carried out in plenary meetings.

A background document on the measures applied by Ceylon under Section C is being prepared. No measures are at present being applied under Section D.

12. Consular formalities

At the twentieth session the CONTRACTING PARTIES adopted the report and approved the recommendations of a panel of experts (11S/59) which had been appointed to survey the consular formalities still maintained by contracting parties and to recommend ways and means of ensuring their simplification and their elimination in accordance with the recommendations adopted by the CONTRACTING PARTIES in 1952 and 1957 (13/25 and 6S/25). Contracting parties still regularly requiring consular formalities have been invited to submit reports on their reasons for maintaining these requirements and on their future policy (11S/217).

13. Accession of Yugoslavia

The Working Party on the Accession of Yugoslavia will meet again before the session and will submit a report.

14. Provisional accession of Switzerland

Under paragraph 1(b) of the Declaration of 22 November 1958 (7S/19), the Government of Switzerland is required to furnish an annual report on the measures maintained consistently with the reservations set out in that paragraph. If so requested by the CONTRACTING PARTIES, the Government of Switzerland will consult with them regarding these measures.

15. Relations with Poland

The fourth annual review, envisaged in the Declaration of 9 November 1959, on relations between contracting parties and Poland (8S/12), is to be carried out by the working party established by the Council (C/M/27).

16. United Kingdom temporary import charges

The Working Party appointed by the Council to consult with the Government of the United Kingdom in connexion with the 15 per cent charge on imports which was imposed in October 1964 held a third meeting in June, and its report has been distributed in document L/2446. A secretariat note on the discussions at a fourth meeting held in October is being distributed. The Working Party will resume the consultation in March and its report will be submitted to the CONTRACTING PARTIES.

17. Review of waivers

(a) Luxemburg agricultural import restrictions

A report by the Government of Luxemburg has been distributed in L/2479. At its last meeting the Council agreed that this review should be carried out by a working party during the session. The working party has yet to be appointed and a time fixed for its meeting.

(b) Italian special customs treatment for imports of Somalian products

At the last meeting of the Council it was agreed to recommend the extension of the existing waiver until the end of the twenty-third session, by which time the Government of Italy would have submitted its annual report on the development of trade with Somalia and would have

decided whether to request a further extension of the waiver. The Decision extending the waiver until the end of the twenty-third session has been adopted, and the report submitted by the Government of Italy, with a request for a further extension of the waiver subject to certain amendments, has been issued in document L/2537.

18. Reports under waivers

- (a) Australia/Papua, New Guinea (2S/18)
- (b) Ceylon Duty Increases (13S/21)
- (c) Italy/Libya (13S/24)
- (d) United Kingdom/Article I (2S/20)
- (e) United Kingdom/Overseas Territories (3S/21)
- (f) United States Import Restrictions (3S/32)

The report of the Government of Italy under sub-item (c) has been distributed in L/2508. If a report from the Government of Libya under the same waiver and reports by the governments concerned under the other sub-items are received by the end of February, they will be made available to the Council at its meeting in March.

19. Newly-independent States

The recommendation of 18 November 1960, providing for the reciprocal de facto application by the GATT vis-à-vis territories which have acquired full autonomy in the conduct of their external commercial relations, is at present applicable to Algeria, Congo (Leopoldville), Mali, Singapore and Zambia. The status of these territories requires review.

20. Status of Protocols

A statement on the Protocols and other instruments which have not yet been accepted by all contracting parties will be distributed. A number of Protocols, some of them dating from 1955, have not entered into force because they have not been accepted by one of the contracting parties. The most important of these is the Protocol Amending Part I and Articles XXIX and XXX. The status of these Protocols will have to be reviewed.

The Protocol Introducing Part IV on Trade and Development has also not yet entered into force. The extension of the time-limit for acceptance of this Protocol, as recommended by the Council, has been adopted.

21. Financial and administrative questions

The Director-General will issue a report on the final 1965 budget position for noting by the CONTRACTING PARTIES.

22. Election of officers

At the twenty-second session the Chairman and Vice-Chairmen of the CONTRACTING PARTIES, the Chairman of the Council and the Chairman of the Committee on Trade and Development were elected for one year. The election of officers for the ensuing year will be considered in the first instance at a meeting of heads of delegations early in the session.