

ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL QUESTIONS

Meetings Including Simultaneous Meetings

Establishment of a Sixth Interpreter Post
in the Interpretation Unit

1. At its meeting on 24 February 1986, the Committee on Budget, Finance and Administration requested the secretariat to examine the possibility of establishing a sixth interpreter post.
2. In view of the fact that, with very few exceptions, the meetings of GATT are conducted in three languages (English, Spanish and French), it is necessary to have three cabins with two interpreters each.
3. The present staff of the Interpretation Unit is five interpreters. The fact that this staff is insufficient causes difficulties, since it is necessary to recruit a "free-lance" for each meeting in order to have a complete team.
4. The delegates to the meetings of GATT have frequently expressed their satisfaction with the quality of the interpretation provided. This is mainly due to the services of a permanent team of interpreters entirely familiar with the "house", who can easily change from one subject to another in the many fields of knowledge required by the increasingly varied activities of GATT, and can constantly supply information to their free-lance colleagues who have to be called in to supplement the permanent staff at meetings. In this connection, it must be stressed that these free-lance interpreters are excellent, but that it is sometimes difficult to engage them because meetings are frequently convened at the last minute.
5. In 1985, the 376 meetings held were spread over 172 days. The engagement of an additional permanent interpreter would make it possible to reduce the budget item for temporary interpreters by about Sw F 103,000. This is about Sw F 27,000 less than the annual cost of an interpreter of P-4 grade, which is about Sw F 130,000. Nevertheless, in view of the advantages of having a complete permanent team in GATT, as regards both the quality of the service provided for delegates and administration (recruitment procedure ...), it might be wise to envisage the possible recruitment of a sixth interpreter, particularly having regard to the age of the interpreters currently on the staff.