

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON

RESTRICTED

Spec(91)73

2 August 1991

TARIFFS AND TRADE

AIRGRAMS CONVENING COUNCIL MEETINGS

Note by the Secretariat

At the Council meeting on 11 July 1991, the Chairman strongly encouraged representatives wishing to have a substantive discussion in the Council on any issues to bring these to the notice of the Secretariat in sufficient time so that they could be placed on the airgram convening the meeting (C/M/251, item 22) rather than to raise them under "Other Business".

For the information of contracting parties, the practice relating to the issuance of airgrams convening Council meetings is set out in the following paragraphs.

For over thirty years, the Council has followed the practice of convening its meetings by an airgram issued at least ten calendar days prior to the date set for the meeting. In the event that the tenth day falls on a weekend or GATT holiday, the preceding GATT working day is retained for the purpose.

The "ten-day rule" has been reaffirmed at various times by Council Chairmen and delegations.¹ While this customary rule of procedure can be amended by the CONTRACTING PARTIES, or waived in specific cases, it has nearly always been adhered to, even on occasions when one or several delegations made urgent requests for convening an additional or "emergency" meeting of the Council at short notice. The notable exception occurred in 1971 when nearly all delegations wanted a meeting to be held immediately to discuss a trade measure of one contracting party, which did not oppose the shortened notice for that particular meeting (cf. C/M/71).

Requests for items to be placed on the agenda of a forthcoming meeting should be communicated in writing to the Secretariat, together with any accompanying documentation (one to two pages) to be issued in connection with that item, at the latest on the day before the airgram is to be issued. Longer communications intended for circulation as documents should, because of translation and printing requirements, be submitted two to three or more days prior to the deadline, depending on the nature and length of the text. Delegations should consult with the Council Secretary on a case-by-case basis to ensure that prospective documents can be issued in time.

¹An early reference to this practice in GATT can be found in the rules of procedure of the Intersessional Committee, which preceded the Council (BISD 7S/8).