

Elimination of tariffs on computer products by year 2000 agreed

Forty governments agreed, on 26 March, to implement the WTO Ministerial Declaration on Trade in Information Technology Products (ITA) that will cut customs duties on computer and telecommunications products beginning on 1 July 1997 and eliminate them altogether by the year 2000. These tariff reductions will apply to all WTO members.

The WTO Director-General, Mr Renato Ruggiero hailed the ITA as “representing another very important success for the multilateral trading system”. He said: “This accord, which covers nearly \$600 billion in world trade, means lower prices for consumers and fewer barriers to the spread of technology that is so critical to the development of all our members.”

Mr Ruggiero added: “Taken together with the historic deal reached last month on trade in telecommunications services, the ITA provides a springboard for economic growth and development in the 21st century. WTO agreements to liberalize trade in these two sectors, which collectively are the lifeblood of the world economy, amounts in quantitative terms to a new trade round.”

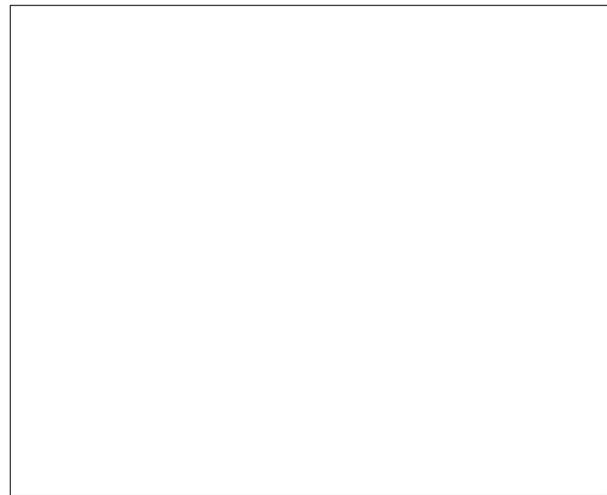
In statistical terms, the ITA accord and the telecoms agreement cover international business worth over a trillion U.S. dollars, which is roughly the equivalent of world trade in agriculture (\$444 billion in 1995), automobiles (\$456 billion) and textiles (\$153 billion) put together.

The WTO Director-General said that “the impact of these agreements on improved living standards for the world’s citizens should not be underestimated. The computers, semiconductors, telecoms hardware and computer software that are included in the ITA are the conduit for the delivery of information. By making such products more affordable, we move one step closer to the vision of a telephone in every village of the world. The ramifications of such an achievement to the health and education of those in the poorest countries are obvious.”

Committee of Participants

In approving the implementation of the ITA, the participants established a Committee of Participants on the Expan-

Continued on page 2



Large and small businesses all over the world will benefit from lower computer and telecoms equipment prices in July 1997 when governments start implementing tariff cuts. (ILO Photo)

Significant progress in China talks

The Working Party on the Accession of China made significant progress in bilateral meetings and informal multilateral consultations in March, particularly on issues related to its draft Protocol of Accession to the WTO.

This was the conclusion by the Chairman, Ambassador Pierre-Louis Girard of Switzerland, at the end of the formal meeting held on 6 March. He said there was “a clear need to build on the existing momentum” and called for sustained bilateral and multilateral discussions on the four WTO instruments necessary for accession: the draft report of the Working Party, the

Continued on page 8

ITA

(Continued from page 1)

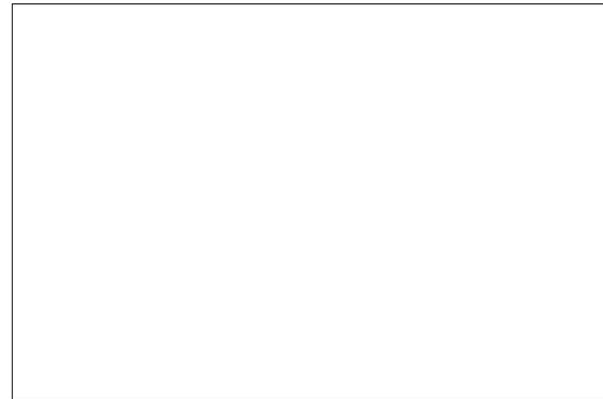
sion of Trade in Information Technology Products to carry out provisions in the Annex to the Declaration (review and possible expansion of product coverage, achieving common classification for covered products and requests for consultations) and serve as a forum for meetings required under ITA procedures.

The participants also agreed that any WTO member or a government in the process of acceding to the WTO that notifies the Committee of its interest in binding and eliminating customs duties and other duties and charges on information technology products may join the ITA on terms to be agreed between it and the participants.

Informal meetings

Since January, the ITA participants have held several informal meetings, under the chairmanship of WTO Deputy Director-General Anwarul Hoda, to pave the way for the implementation of the agreement. On 31 January, the participants finalized discussions on product coverage as required by the agreement.

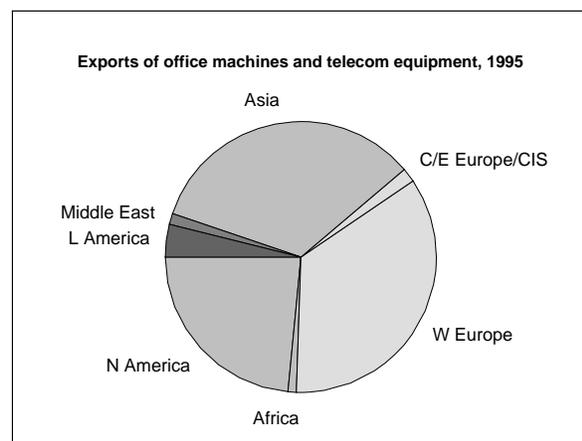
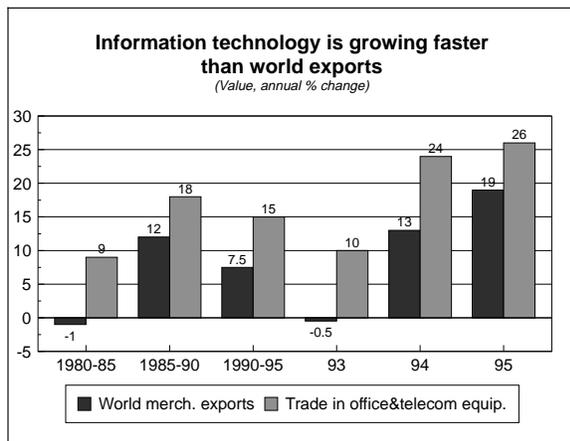
Most of the ITA tariff schedules of participants were submitted on 1 March. For the first time in GATT/WTO, participants agreed to provide their schedules in electronic



WTO Director-General Renato Ruggiero announces the ITA agreement on 26 March. (Photo by VIROT)

format using special software designed by Ms. Denby Misurelli of the WTO Secretariat. This facilitated considerably the verification (review) process which started in mid-March.

On 25-26 March, the participants approved by consensus 25 tariff schedules representing the 40 participants. The United States expressed reservations about the tariff classification of certain computer products in the schedule of the European Union, but nonetheless joined the consensus for ITA implementation, noting that the matter was already in WTO dispute settlement. □



Leading exporters of IT products, 1995 (\$ billion)		Leading importers of IT products, 1995 (\$ billion)	
1. Japan	106.6	1. United States	139.93
2. United States	97.99	2. European Union (extra-EU imports)	104.84
3. European Union 15 (extra-EU exports)	57.07	3. Japan	37.68
4. Singapore (domestic exports)	41.27	4. Singapore (retained imports)	24.72
5. Korea	33.22	5. Malaysia	22.22
6. Malaysia	32.84	6. Canada	19.81
7. Chinese Taipei	28.71	7. Chinese Taipei	16.53
8. China	14.51	8. Korea	16.47
9. Mexico	11.67	9. China	14.35
10. Canada	11.55	10. Hong Kong (retained imports)	12.1
Total of above	435.43	Total of above	408.65

The WTO Ministerial Declaration on Trade in Information Technology Products

The WTO Ministerial Declaration on Trade in Information Technology Products (ITA) was agreed at the close of the first WTO Ministerial Conference on 13 December 1996 in Singapore. The ITA provides for participants to eliminate customs duties and other duties and charges on information technology products (contained in the annexes) by the year 2000, on an m.f.n. basis (applied to all WTO members).

The Declaration, however, provides that implementation is contingent on expanding ITA participation to cover approximately 90 per cent of world trade in IT products by 1 April 1997.

The ITA participants, on 26 March, agreed that this criterion had been met. They also established a Committee on the Expansion of Trade in Information Technology Products, which will monitor the implementation of the ITA, discuss and approve expansion of product coverage and deal with requests from other countries to join in.

Participants

40 - The 29 participants in Singapore (Australia, Canada, the 15 members of the European Communities, Hong Kong, Iceland, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Liechtenstein, Norway, Chinese Taipei, Singapore, Switzerland, Turkey and United States) plus 11 other countries that have come on board since then (Costa Rica, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Israel, India, Macau, Malaysia, New Zealand, Romania, the Slovak Republic and Thailand). The 29 participants in Singapore accounted for about 83% of world trade in IT products; the current 40 participants represent 92.5% of world trade in this sector. The ITA tariff schedules of these governments have been approved by consensus. Approval for Panama and Poland has been delayed because it has not been possible to conclude the negotiations with trading partners. Two more WTO members, the Philippines and El Salvador, have indicated their intention to join in the near future.

Tariff-reduction timetable

The ITA provides for the “staging” of tariff reductions in four equal rate reductions (25% each time):

First cut	1 July 1997
Second cut	1 January 1998
Third cut	1 January 1999
Fourth cut	1 January 2000 - Complete elimination of duties.

In addition to regular customs duties, the ITA Declaration also provides for the elimination of other duties and charges (ODCs) by 1 July 1997 (except if otherwise specified in a participants schedule).

Costa Rica, Indonesia, India, Korea, Malaysia, Chinese Taipei and Thailand have been granted flexibility in cutting their tariffs on a few products to zero after the year 2000 but not beyond 2005.

IT tariffs in the “Quad” countries are generally low but some duties reach as high as 17%. Relatively high tariffs are concentrated in the telecom sector in the United States and Canada, and on semiconductors in the European Communities. Many developing country participants apply high tariffs on IT products, including more than 50 per cent in some cases.

Product coverage

World trade in IT products is significant—about \$600 billion annually, or about 10.2 per cent of world merchandise trade. There are six main categories of products covered by the agreement:

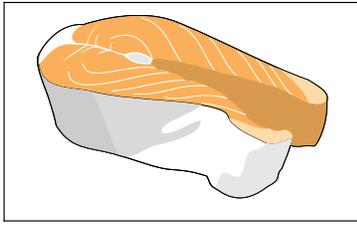
1. **Computers** (including computer systems and laptops as well as the components such as CPUs, keyboards, printers, monitors, scanners, hard disk drives, power supplies, etc...)
2. **Telecom equipment** (including telephone sets, videophones, fax machines, switching apparatus, modems, and parts thereof, telephone handsets, answering machines, radio-broadcasting and television transmission and reception apparatus, and pagers.)
3. **Semiconductors** (include chips, wafers, etc... of various sizes and capacities)
4. **Semiconductor manufacturing equipment** (includes a wide variety of equipment and testing apparatus used to produce semiconductors such as vapor deposition apparatus, spin dryers, etching and stripping apparatus, lasercutters, sawing and dicing machines, deposition machines, spinners, encapsulation machines, furnaces and heaters, ion implanters, microscopes, handling and transport apparatus, measuring and checking instruments, and parts and accessories.)
5. **Software** (contained in diskettes, magnetic tapes, CD-ROMs, etc...)
6. **Scientific instruments** (include measuring and checking devices, chromatographs, spectrometers, optical radiation devices, and electrophoresis equipment.)

Additionally, other main products of interest covered by the ITA include word processors, calculators, cash registers, ATM machines, certain static converters, indicator panels, capacitors, resistors, printed circuits, certain electronic switches, certain connection devices, certain electric conductors, optical fibre cables, certain photocopiers, computer network equipment (LAN & WAN equipment), flat panel displays, plotters, and multimedia upgrade kits. The ITA **does not** cover consumer electronic goods.

The participants, after finalizing technical discussions on product coverage on 31 January 1997, agreed that the first set of consultations on additional product coverage would begin on 1 October 1997. These consultations will be completed during 1998 with a view to the entry into force of the revised schedules (incorporating the enlarged product coverage resulting from the initial review) no later than 1 January 1999. □

Canada asks for panel on Australia's salmon ban

Canada, on 20 March, requested the Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) to establish a panel on its complaint against Australia's import ban on fresh, chilled or frozen salmon. It said that consultations with Australia in November 1995 had failed, and that the measures, which it considered inconsistent with and unjustified under WTO rules, were still in force.



Australia did not agree to the panel request, pointing out that Canada had not sought further consultations on the matter since November 1995 and had not considered sufficiently Australia's recently-completed risk analysis on salmon. It said that the measures in question reflected the country's conservative approach to quarantine procedures, which it maintained were consistent with the WTO Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS).

Canada said it had postponed its panel request expecting that Australia's risk analysis would lead to the removal of the measures. As this did not happen, it was pursuing its request.

In its formal complaint, Canada said that Australia's measures prohibiting the importation of fresh, chilled or frozen salmon, including the 1975 Quarantine Proclamation 86A, adversely affected the importation of Canadian salmon. Consultations did not settle the dispute and in December 1996, Australia announced it would keep the measures in force. Canada claimed that the Australian measure were inconsistent with, among other things, provisions of the SPS Agreement, Articles XI and XIII of the GATT 1994, and nullified or impaired Canada's WTO benefits.

US expands computer complaint against EC

The United States complained that its export of certain computer equipment to Ireland and the United Kingdom had been subjected to higher duties as a result of actions by those countries' customs authorities. It said that the new customs duties exceeded the bound tariffs under the European Communities' schedule in violation of Article II of GATT 1994. The United States said that it had agreed with the EC to request the DSB to incorporate its complaints against Ireland and the United Kingdom into the terms of reference of the panel established by the DSB in February 1997 to examine the US complaint against EC's classification of certain computer equipment.

The EC said that in the light of the application of common customs tariffs in the Communities and a single EC schedule under GATT 1994, it would be acting on behalf of Ireland and the U.K. in the panel proceedings.

The DSB agreed to incorporate the US panel requests concerning Ireland and the United Kingdom into the panel's terms of reference.

In its formal panel requests, the United States complained that in 1995, customs authorities in Ireland and the United Kingdom had reclassified imports of local area network (LAN) equipment from the category of "automatic data processing" (ADP) equipment to the higher-duty category

of "telecommunications apparatus". In addition, the United States said that the United Kingdom had reclassified personal computers with multimedia capability from the ADP category to other categories with higher duty rates.

Panel on Guatemala's anti-dumping action

Mexico reiterated its request for a panel to examine its complaint against Guatemala's anti-dumping investigation regarding portland cement from Mexico (see *WTO FOCUS No. 16*).

Guatemala said that it had held consultations with Mexico on this matter in January, and expressed regret that these consultations had not continued. It said that it would exert efforts to find a solution outside the panel process.

The DSB established a panel to examine Mexico's complaint.

India asks for panel on US shrimp measure

India said it had no objections to countries implementing environmental measures within their territories, and that it supported conservation efforts with respect to sea turtles. However, it claimed that the United States' ban on imports of wild-harvested shrimps from countries without certified conservation measures for sea turtles was extraterritorial, arbitrary and discriminatory. India said that along with the three complainants in a panel established by the DSB on the US measure (Malaysia, Pakistan and Thailand), it held consultations with the United States on this matter in November 1996 without success. It now requested the DSB to establish a panel to examine its complaint.

The United States said it was not yet ready to agree to the request, and the DSB agreed to revert to this matter at its next meeting.

US reports on implementation of panel reports

The United States reported that with respect to the adopted Appellate Body and panel reports on its standards for reformulated and conventional gasoline, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) would soon be inviting comments regarding its proposal for compliance with the DSB recommendations. Regarding the DSB recommendations on its restrictions on imports of cotton and man-made fibre underwear, the United States said it would withdraw its safeguard measure by the end of April 1997.

Brazil and Venezuela, the co-complainants in the gasoline dispute, said they looked forward to receiving soon the EPA proposal.

Costa Rica, the complainant in the underwear case, suggested that the United States could let the safeguard measure expire at the end of March.

Desiccated coconut reports adopted

The DSB adopted an Appellate Body report and panel report regarding the Philippines' complaint against Brazil's countervailing duty on desiccated coconut. The Appellate Body upheld the panel's conclusion that the WTO provisions cited by the Philippines were inapplicable to the dispute.

The Philippines expressed serious concern over the interpretation made by the panel and the Appellate Body. □

EC, US criticize "frugality campaign" in Korea

At the Council for Trade in Goods meeting on 11 March, the European Communities, under "Other Business", expressed concern over what it said was the intensification of Korea's "frugality campaign" and what it described as false statements by public figures blaming imported consumer goods for Korea's current account deficit. The EC cited cases of "administrative harassment" by government agencies such as customs slowdown and systematic tax inspection on owners of foreign cars. It added that it very much doubted the compatibility of these actions with Korea's WTO obligations.

The United States said that statements by Korean government officials suggesting that it was a citizen's "patriotic" duty not to consume imports had reinforced the perception of an anti-import bias in that country. It hoped for assurances from Korea that anti-import behaviour was inconsistent with Korea's international trade policy objectives.

Korea said that the EC and the United States seemed to have over-reacted to initiatives by civic groups or non-governmental organizations against increased consumption of luxury goods. It stressed that the Korean government was not involved in such campaigns. □

Concerns over dairy programmes of Canada and the EC

At the meeting of the Committee on Agriculture on 13-14 March, a number of countries, including Argentina, Australia, New Zealand and the United States criticized what they claimed were non-conforming export subsidies being granted by Canada and the European Communities on dairy products and processed cheese, respectively. Canada and the EC maintained that their programmes were consistent with their commitments under the WTO Agriculture Agreement.

These discussions occurred during the Committee's examination of some 60 notifications from WTO members on how they were implementing their commitments under the Agreement to reduce import barriers, domestic support and export subsidies. □

Canada and the EC maintained that their programmes were consistent with their commitments under the WTO Agriculture Agreement.

Complaints on automobile TRIMs

The Committee on Trade-Related Investment Measures (TRIMs), on 17 March, heard complaints by the United States and Japan against the following measures taken in the automotive sector:

- » Local content and trade-balancing requirements that they said Brazil applied in the automotive sector and had expanded in December 1996; and
- » Changes made in January 1996 by Argentina to local content requirements, which they claimed to be inconsistent with the "standstill" obligation of the Agreement.

The United States, Japan and the European Communities expressed concern over what they said was the inconsistency with the TRIMs Agreement of Indonesia's measures in respect of automobiles.

Argentina, Brazil and Indonesia maintained that their measures were consistent with the Agreement, adding that the complaints had been dealt with in bilateral consultations.

Regarding a notification by Colombia of measures that made the granting of import licenses to certain agricultural products conditional upon purchases of domestic products, the United States and the EC said the measures could not benefit from the transition period given to developing countries in the Agreement because Colombia had missed the deadline for notification. Colombia maintained that its notification had met the requirements in the Agreement. □

EC questions Massachusetts' measure

At the meeting of the Committee on Government Procurement, on 24 February, the EC expressed serious concern over legislation passed in Massachusetts in June 1996 that prevents the granting of new state contracts or extension of existing ones to companies that do business in or with Myanmar. The EC claimed this measure reduced the scope of United States' schedule under the Agreement, and violated certain requirements in the Agreement, including on criteria for qualification of tenderers to be based on economic, rather than political considerations. It reserved its rights under the WTO dispute-settlement procedures. Additionally, the EC expressed concern over similar legislation in Connecticut, and another legislation under consideration in Massachusetts concerning companies doing business in Indonesia. The US representative said she would convey the EC concerns to Washington.

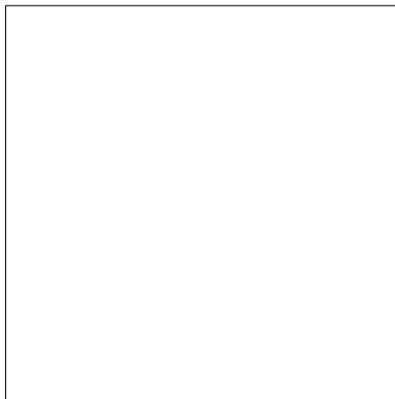
The EC also criticized a recent procurement tender published by Japan's Ministry of Transportation for a satellite navigation system, which it claimed explicitly required interoperability with a United States system, thus effectively excluding procurement based on EC systems. It requested Japan to republish the tender in conformity with the Agreement. Japan said it was reviewing the matter. □

US, New Zealand say PSI problems on the rise

At the first meeting of the Working Party on Preshipment Inspection (PSI), on 28 February, the United States and New Zealand expressed concern that their exporters were experiencing problems with PSI companies, including those related to discrimination, transparency and conflict of interest. They called on the Working Party to discuss on ways to improve the current PSI dispute-settlement mechanism, which they said companies had been reluctant to use.

Switzerland, Ghana and Senegal said they have not encountered problems with PSI. Ghana and Senegal underlined the importance of PSI for developing countries.

The Working Party agreed to develop, based on written submissions of country experiences with PSI, a checklist of issues to be discussed at future meetings. □



The March meeting was the final one as chair of the Agriculture Committee for Mrs. Aspriadi Tantraporn (above) of Thailand. The new chairperson is Ambassador Nestor Osorio Londoño of Colombia. (Photo by Tania Tang/WTO)

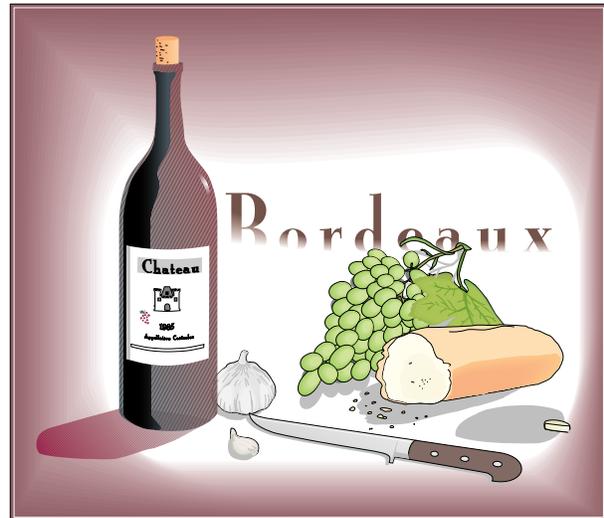
TRIPS Council starts work on geographical indications of wine and spirits

The Council for Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), on 27 February, agreed on the following preparatory steps for negotiations on establishing a multilateral system of notification and registration of geographical indications for wines (as provided for Article 23.4 of the Agreement, *see box*):

- » WTO Members are invited to submit information on any systems for the notification and registration of geographical indications which they operate. The target date for these submissions is end July 1997.
- » The Council will consider this information at its meeting in September 1997 and will, at that time, also revert to the preparation by the Secretariat of an outline of a factual background note on existing international notification and registration systems for geographical indications.

The Council also agreed that issues relevant to such a system for spirits would be part of this preliminary work.

Further deliberations also took place concerning the review (under Article 24.2 of the Agreement) of the application of the Agreement's provisions on geographical indications, in particular the arrangements for carrying out this review. Last autumn, the Council had taken up this review after and taking into account the review of national implementing legislation in the areas of trademarks, geographical indications and industrial designs and had agreed to first consider the questions involved in informal consultations. The European Communities has already made some proposals for discussion in this context while other delegations are still preparing theirs, including India, Switzerland and the Czech Republic.



A basic rule in the TRIPS Agreement is that members must provide protection against the use of geographical indication in a manner which misleads the public or which constitutes an act of unfair competition.

Implementing legislation

Last year, the TRIPS Council started its examination of national implementing legislation as notified under Article 63.2 of the Agreement and the procedures established by the Council. As of 1 January 1996, developed countries (some 30 WTO members) are obliged to fully comply with all

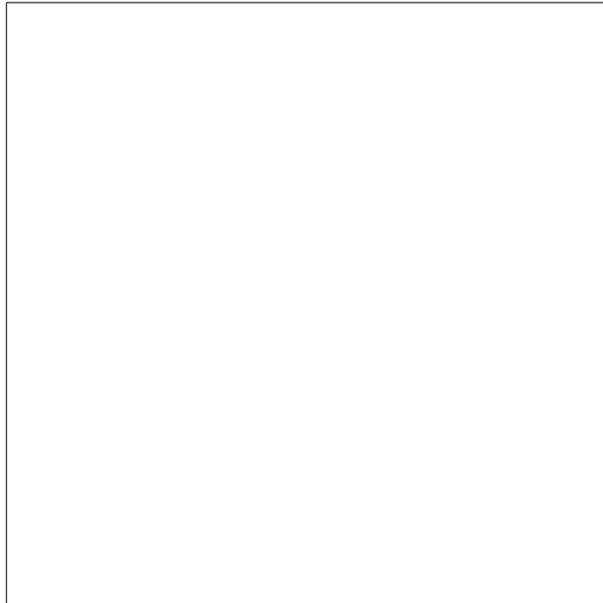
Provisions of the TRIPS Agreement on geographical indications

One of the areas of intellectual property covered by the TRIPS Agreement is geographical indications. This concerns indications which identify goods as coming from a certain area and where a particular characteristic of the good, such as its quality or reputation, is essentially attributable to its geographical origin (Article 22.1). Typical examples would be Champagne and Port. Unlike most other forms of intellectual property where protection is granted only to a single person or company, all producers of the product in question in the designated geographical area may benefit from the protection. The protection of geographical indications is particularly relevant for agricultural and agriculturally-derived products. Given this and that it can serve the interests of small producers, there is widespread interest in this form of protection, in both developed and developing countries.

The basic rule in the TRIPS Agreement is that members must provide protection against the use of a geographical indication in a manner which misleads the public or which constitutes an act of unfair competition (Article 22.2).

A higher standard of protection is required in respect of geographical indications for wines and spirits. They must be protected, in principle, against use on other wines or spirits whether or not such use satisfies the tests of misleading the public or unfair competition (Article 23.1). In addition, a Member is required to provide protection against their registration as a trademark (Article 23.2).

However, there are exceptions which recognize that, for a number of reasons, there are pre-existing situations under which geographical indications have been used in a manner contrary to the new basic obligations referred to above. These relate in particular to situations where an indication has become the generic word in the common language for referring to a type of product (Article 24.6), where there are pre-existing trademark rights acquired in good faith (Article 24.5) and other situations of previous use in a continuous manner (Article 24.4). While allowing members to provide for exceptions in such situations, the Agreement balances this by requiring that members agree to enter into negotiations aimed at increasing the protection of individual geographical indications and not to invoke the exceptions to refuse to conduct such negotiations or conclude bilateral or multilateral agreements (Article 24.1). It also sets up a special mechanism for the review of the applications of the provisions on geographical indications (Article 24.2). □



At the end of the TRIPS Council meeting, the outgoing chairperson Ambassador Wade Armstrong (above) of New Zealand handed over to Ambassador Carmen Luz Guarda of Chile. Ambassador Armstrong has been elected chairman of the Dispute Settlement Body. (Photo by Tania Tang/WTO)

obligations under the TRIPS Agreement and notify the corresponding implementing legislation to the TRIPS Council. Recognizing the magnitude of the task to review all these laws and regulations, the Council has decided to divide the work into four parts. Legislation on copyright and related rights was taken up in July 1996 and legislation in the areas of trademarks, geographical indications and industrial designs in November 1996. In 1997, reviews will be carried out of laws on patents including plant variety protection, layout-designs of integrated circuits, undisclosed information including trade secrets and the control of anti-competitive practices in contractual licences (May 1997); and of enforcement legislation (November 1997). In these reviews, WTO Members respond to questions on their legislation raised by other WTO Members. A follow-up to the reviews that took place in 1996 was on the agenda of the 27 February Council meeting. In the area of copyright and related rights, follow-up questions were asked by the EC, Brazil and the Republic of Korea. In the area of trademarks, geographical indications and industrial designs, follow-up questions were posed to the EC and the US by India, which should also be responded to by the time of the next meeting.

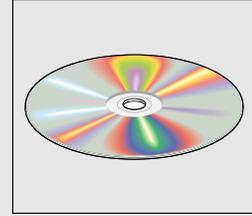
The Council also took up the following:

- » *Notification of legislation implementing the provisions of Article 3, 4 and 5 of the TRIPS Agreement.* These provisions apply as of 1 January 1996 in respect of all WTO Members, i.e. also developing countries and other WTO Members that are entitled to delay their implementation of other TRIPS obligations until a later date. In light of difficulties that had arisen, the Council has developed guidelines for notifications relating to these provisions.
- » *Issues relating to the implementation of Article 70.8 and 70.9, technical cooperation, notifications of MFN exemptions under Article 4(d) and other notifications under provisions of the Agreement.* □

Two TRIPS disputes resolved

The Council at its February meeting took note of mutually-agreed solutions reached in two disputes related to the TRIPS Agreement:

- » Between the United States and Japan regarding a US complaint in February 1996 concerning the protection of past performances and existing sound recordings in Japan under the TRIPS Agreement. The US complaint was based on the belief that the Agreement obligates WTO members to grant protection to past



performances performed in a WTO member state and existing sound recordings for a term of at least 50 years from the end of the calendar year in which the performance took place or the sound recording was made. In December 1996, Japan amended its Copyright Law to provide this 50-year protection to past performances and existing sound recordings. The United States has withdrawn its WTO complaint.

- » Between the United States and Pakistan regarding a dispute on the so-called “mailbox” provisions of the TRIPS Agreement (the obligation to either grant patent protection for pharmaceutical and agricultural chemical products as of the date of entry into



force of WTO Agreement, or to establish systems for filing applications for patents on such inventions and for granting exclusive marketing rights under certain circumstances). To fulfill this obligation, Pakistan President Farooq Ahmad Khan Leghari issued on 4 February 1997 Ordinance No. XXVI of 1997 which states that all applications filed after 1 January 1995 are considered validly filed. Regulations implementing the Ordinance will provide that any person who first files an application for patent protection for pharmaceutical or agricultural chemical product in another WTO member after the date the Ordinance was issued will be able to file an application with Pakistan’s patent authorities and (1) until 1 January 2000 have as their filing date the date the application was received by such authorities, or (2) after 1 January 2000, have the right to claim priority under the rules laid down in Article 4 of the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property.

The Council was also informed that a panel had been established and constituted in the dispute between the US and India on the implementation by India of the so called “mailbox” provisions in Article 70.8 and 70.9 of the TRIPS Agreement. The EC is a third party in this dispute. □

China talks

(Continued from page 1)

draft Protocol of Accession, and the Schedules for market-access commitments in goods and in services.

Ambassador Girard said that among the most notable results were the achievement of basic consensus on sections of the draft Accession Protocol dealing with the right to trade and on judicial review, and substantial progress on draft texts about nondiscrimination and non-tariff measures.

China's Vice Minister for Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation, Mr. Long Yongtu, said that important progress was made "thanks to the political will to push forward this process as well as the flexible and pragmatic approach of many WTO members and China".

Mr. Long pointed out that consensus was reached on many sections of the draft Protocol, and that one issue was especially significant. He said that on the issue of right to trade, China would grant all Chinese enterprises the right to import and export, thus providing the entire foreign business community "an unprecedented opportunity to explore the huge market in China". This "clearly demonstrates the resolute determination of the Chinese government to continue the implementation of policy of reform and opening to the outside world initiated by Mr. Deng Xiaoping", he said.

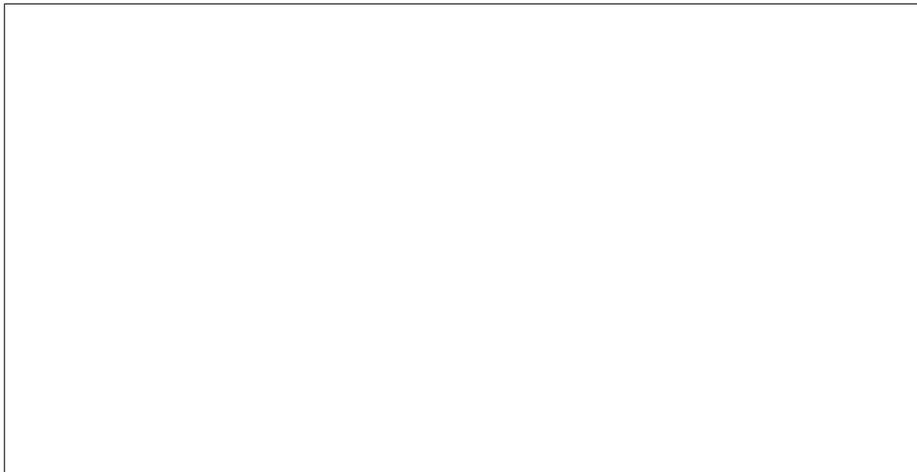


Ambassador Pierre-Louis Girard called on members to build on the momentum of recent progress. (Photo by Tania Tang/WTO)

Mr. Long concluded that "we have finally seen the light at the end of the tunnel and the light is becoming even brighter".

The Working Party will meet again on 23 May.

China was one of the 23 original signatories to the GATT. After China's revolution in 1949, the government in Taiwan announced that China would leave the GATT system. In 1986, China notified the GATT of its wish to resume its GATT membership. The Working Party on China's status established under GATT in 1987 was converted into a WTO Working Party in 1995, and thus its scope was broadened to include trade in services, intellectual property and new rules on non-tariff measures. □



About 70 trade officials participated in the Regional Seminar on the WTO and the Multilateral Trading System for Asian developing countries, held on 18-21 March in Jakarta. Funded by the Government of Japan, this was the fourth such seminar organized by the WTO's Technical Cooperation and Training Division in the region. These regional seminars are aimed at facilitating a more effective participation of Asian developing countries in the work of the WTO. Countries represented in the seminar were Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Korea, Lao, Macau, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Chinese Taipei, Thailand and Viet Nam. Representatives from Japan's Ministries of Foreign Affairs and of Finance, and from ESCAP, participated as observers.

MEETINGS

The following is a tentative schedule of WTO meetings.

MAY	
1	Committee on Anti-Dumping Practices Committee on Subsidies
1-2	Committee on Regional Trade Agreements
2	Committee on Safeguards BOP Committee (Bangladesh)
6-7	Working Party on Ukraine
14	WP on Armenia
15	Committee on Rules of Origin WP on Prof. Services
20	Committee on Trade and Development
20-21	Committee on Trade and Environment
21-23	Textiles Monitoring Body
22	Sub-Committee on Least-Developed Countries
23	Committee on Government Procurement Working Party on China
26	WP on Albania
26-30	Council for TRIPS
28	Dispute Settlement Body
29-30	WP on Saudi Arabia

WTO FOCUS

Newsletter published by the Information and Media Relations Division of the WTO.

*Centre William Rappard,
154 rue de Lausanne,
1211 Geneva 21, Switzerland*

Tel. 7395111
Fax: 7395458
Web Site:
<http://www.wto.org>

ISSN 0256-0119







CHAIRPERSON



CHAIRMAN



CHAIRMAN

REGIONAL SEMINAR ON THE WTO
AND THE MULTILATERAL TRADING SYSTEM
FOR ASIAN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

JAKARTA, INDONESIA 18 - 21 MARCH 2007

