

SECOND SESSION OF THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE OF THE
UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND EMPLOYMENT.

Chairman's Committee
(Heads of Delegations)

Summary Record of the Fourteenth Meeting held on
Monday, 4th August 1947, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Dr. Augenthaler (Czechoslovakia)

1. Programme for Charter Discussions

The CHAIRMAN drew attention to document E/PC/T/DEL/62 containing a revised programme proposed by the Secretariat for the completion of the Charter discussions during the two weeks ending 19th August, and suggested that the proposed date, namely, 8th August, be accepted for the completion of the work of the Sub-Committees, and that if Delegations had any comments to make regarding the programme for Commission and Plenary meetings from 8th to 19th August these should be addressed to the Executive Secretary who could arrange for them to be discussed at a later meeting of the Chairman's Committee.

Dr. COOMBS (Australia) drew attention to the fact that no provision was made in the programme for the discussion of the draft General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, and in reply the Executive Secretary stated that meetings of the proposed Tariff Agreement Committee would be arranged during the week, and in addition a meeting could be held on Saturday, 9th August.

M. BARADUC (France) enquired why no provision had been made, in the programme of meetings distributed on 1 August (E/PC/T/INF/196), for meetings of the Sub-Committees on Articles 15 and 32. To this the Executive Secretary replied that the programme to which M. Baraduc referred covered only those meetings which could be scheduled in advance, but that it was understood that several other Sub-Committees would also meet during the period 4th to 8th August.

2. Progress of Tariff Negotiations.

The CHAIRMAN called on Mr. Wilgress, the Chairman of the Tariff Negotiations Working Party to comment on the Working Party's Fourth Special Report, E/PC/T/S/5 of 1st August.

Mr. WILGRESS (Canada) said that the Working Party had come to the conclusion, after receiving the reports from Delegations on the progress of Tariff Negotiations during the fortnight ending 26th July, that it was not possible to keep to the target date of 15th August for the completion of negotiations. Statement I attached to the Fourth Special Report showed that the negotiations had progressed more slowly instead of more rapidly than in the previous period; the Working Party therefore suggested that the Chairman's Committee should fix a new target date for the completion of the tariff negotiations, and should discuss the procedure to be adopted to ensure that the date would be observed.

The CHAIRMAN then asked the Executive Secretary whether accommodation and technical services could be provided if the negotiations were prolonged beyond the date previously fixed for their termination.

Mr. WYNDHAM-WHITE (Executive Secretary) replied that a reduced number of rooms would be available for delegations, but owing to the meeting of the General Assembly in New York and the Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization there would be some difficulty in supplying interpreters and translators; details of the arrangements for technical services would have to be examined more closely in relation to any new target date that might be selected by the Committee.

The CHAIRMAN then asked Mr. Wilgress whether the Working Party could foresee the end of the negotiations and the conclusion of agreements, and whether he could specify the differences that have caused the delays.

Mr. WILGRESS said that some of the negotiations have been held up pending decisions on important points, whilst others were proceeding steadily but required considerable time on account of the large number of commodities involved; in some large, and also in some small, negotiations one party to the negotiations considered that the offers made by the other party were inadequate, and in these cases he thought that the parties concerned should consider the possibility of revising the offers they had made. Finally, he suggested the negotiators should show more determination in completing their negotiations within the time fixed by the Committee.

Dr. SPENKENBRINK (Netherlands) suggested that the negotiations had proceeded in a haphazard manner, partly because certain issues involved in the revision of the draft Charter had not been resolved and consequently the rules for the tariff negotiations had not been definitely adopted.

Dr. COOMBS (Australia) said that it was very important that the tariff negotiations should be finished at the earliest possible date, as it would in any event be difficult for some Delegations to be ready for the World Conference on 21st November. He expressed the opinion that a new approach must be found to the problem of speeding up the negotiations, and he proposed that Delegations should be asked to make known to the Tariff Negotiations Working Party what were the critical issues resulting in delays, and what had been done to resolve them. The Working Party might examine the issues involved without actually intervening in the conduct of negotiations. Further, Dr. Coombs proposed that several countries whose negotiations were affected by a critical issue might be called together; in this connection he pointed out that it had been the original plan of holding the talks in Geneva that they should be on a multilateral basis.

Dr. HOLLOWAY (South Africa) supported Dr. Coombs. He said that apart from the physical task of completing the examinations of tariff schedules there was the more serious problem of resolving the refractory issues, such as a deadlock of an important rate of duty; he thought that the Delegations concerned should take the Working Party into their confidence.

M. FAIVOVICH (Chile) suggested that it would not be possible for the Chairman's Committee to fix a new target date until the larger countries could indicate when the important outstanding issues would be settled.

Mr. BROWN (United States) suggested that the negotiations could be completed by the first week in September; his Delegation had no objection to the details of the refractory

issues being confided to the Working Party, but he doubted whether this would serve any useful purpose as it was not clear what action the Working Party could take to resolve these issues. His Delegation thought that these issues could be solved and they and other Delegations were constantly striving for their solution.

Dr. HOLLOWAY (South Africa) stated, in explanation, that he had proposed that the Working Party should act as 'honest broker' in settling these difficulties and he thought that, if not the Working Party, then the Chairman of the Working Party might act in that capacity.

Mr. MINOVSKY (Czechoslovakia) stated that his Delegation could finish their negotiations with 12 countries by the 15th August, but the other three would require more time. He suggested that all Delegations should finish as many negotiations as possible by the original target date. A statement should then be issued explaining why certain negotiations were not finished, and the Chairman of the Working Party should consult with the Delegations concerned in an endeavour to obtain their completion by 1st September; if by that time they were still unfinished Dr. Coombs' plan could be introduced in an endeavour to complete them by the middle of September.

Mr. HELMORE (United Kingdom) said that his Delegation could complete its negotiations by 23rd August, on the assumption that certain points of difficulty could be resolved. He proposed that Delegations should be asked to explain fully the situation in respect of each negotiation when submitting their next fortnightly progress reports, and that these statements should be examined by the Working Party.

Secondly, he suggested that Delegations should not allow small items to hold up the progress of negotiations, and finally, he expressed the view that two weeks would prove insufficient time for the translation of the schedules and the preparation of the General Agreement for signature.

The CHAIRMAN stated that there appeared to be three proposals which required decisions by the Committee. Firstly, the target dates of 23rd August, 1st September and 6th September had been proposed; secondly, the next fortnightly report on the progress of negotiations should be accompanied by a detailed statement of the difficulties experienced; thirdly, the Working Party should consult with Delegations on the refractory issues involved.

Dr. WUNSZ KING (China) said his Delegation would prefer 6th September to be fixed as the target date, but the observance of any date that might be fixed depended mainly upon the progress made by the larger countries.

Mr. WILGROSS (Canada) said it would be unfortunate if the date now fixed were not observed, and therefore it should not be too soon; in his opinion the date suggested by the United States Delegate should be accepted and three weeks should be allowed to prepare the Agreement for signature. Therefore, he proposed that the target date for the completion of the negotiations should be 10th September, and the signature of the General Agreement 30th September.

Dr. SPEEKENBRINK (Netherlands) agreed with the dates proposed by Mr. Wilgross, and said that no earlier date should be fixed since the reports of the several Sub-Committees on Chapter V could not be dealt with in Commission until 13th August.

Mr. BROWN (United States) supported 10 September as the new target date.

The CHAIRMAN asked the Executive Secretary whether services could be provided if the negotiations continued until 10 September, and in reply Mr. Wyndham-White (Executive Secretary) stated that he could not at present add anything to his previous remarks, except that he would strongly urge the completion of the work of the Tariff Agreement Committee as soon as possible after 15 August.

Dr. WUNSZ KING (China) proposed that no date should be fixed for the signature of the General Agreement, and that it should be open for signature for a period of one month so that governments might have time to study the provisions of the Agreement.

Dr. COOMBS (Australia) said he would accept the guidance of the Working Party on the fixing of the target date, but he would like the question of the signature of the Agreement treated as a separate issue.

The CHAIRMAN then stated that the Committee appeared to accept 10 September as the new target date, on the understanding that Delegations should be asked for a full report on the difficulties and delays they had encountered in each of their negotiations, and he appealed to the Heads of Delegations to instruct their negotiators to proceed as rapidly as possible.

Mr. WILGRESS (Canada) agreed that the Secretariat should send a circular to Delegations, asking for a full review with their next progress report, so as to enable the Working Party to

study the whole position more thoroughly. Further, he suggested that Heads of the negotiating groups should meet for frank discussion of the settlement of outstanding issues.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m. and the Chairman announced that the first meeting of the Tariff Committee would be held the following morning.