

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

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CONTRACTING PARTIES
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WORKING PARTY 1 ON RESOLUTIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Draft Recommendations on Consular Formalities

The complexity of consular formalities in many areas of the world and the excessive charges accompanying them are among the most serious of the invisible barriers to international trade. Not only must exporters fill and sign [20 to 30/] copies of the documents required, often in the language of the country of destination, but the fee charged is in many cases a high percentage of the value of the C.I.F. goods. For minor errors, moreover, fines are frequently imposed, or the importer is obliged to make out documents again in their entirety. Shipowners and shippers, as well as the ultimate consumers are as much victims of this state of affairs as the exporters.

The Contracting Parties therefore strongly urge the total abolition of consular invoices and of consular visas for commercial invoices, manifests, etc. which appear to serve no useful purpose since a great part, if not most, of the world's trade is, in any case done without them.

Should, however, certain governments find it impossible, for reasons genuinely connected with their customs regulations, to dispense with these documents and visas, the Contracting Parties recommend that the following rules be observed:

1. additional documents such as certificates of origin, should not be required;
2. the consular fee should be a small fixed charge not proportionate to the value of the goods;
3. the consular fee should be payable only by the exporters and in the currency of the exporting country;
4. no fines should be imposed for mistakes made in good faith by the exporter in drawing up the documents, and within reasonable limits corrections should be permitted;
5. no charge or only a nominal charge should be made for supplying the forms to be filled in;
6. not more than [four] copies should be required of each document;
7. delays in dealing with documents at consulates should be reduced to a minimum and no additional charge should be made for overtime.