

# GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

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COUNCIL  
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## MINUTES OF MEETING

Held in the Palais des Nations, Geneva,  
on 22 February 1971

Chairman: Mr. Erik THRANE (Denmark)

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### 1. Committee on Trade in Industrial Products (L/3496)

Mr. Stuyck (Belgium), Chairman of the Committee on Trade in Industrial Products, introduced the second report of the Committee (L/3496), which covered the period since the twenty-sixth session of the CONTRACTING PARTIES. He said that, as concerns non-tariff barriers, the Groups had carried out the assigned task of formulating conclusions on possibilities for concrete action, and the Committee had concluded that the next stage of work should be more selective and be undertaken with a view to elaborating solutions on an ad referendum basis. The subjects chosen as most fruitful for such further effort at this stage were standards and their enforcement, problems connected with existing systems of valuation for customs purposes, and the limitations on trade reviewed by Group 4, beginning with the operation of licensing systems. Work within each of these areas would be undertaken in groups composed of those members of the respective existing Groups who wish to take part. It was hoped that members would send representatives who were officials specialized in the questions to be studied. There was also to be a continuing search for possibilities of adding other questions to this programme of work, taking into account the results of efforts in other GATT bodies. The Groups were to complete their work as soon as possible and report to the Committee. He felt that it might be useful to convene the Committee on Trade in Industrial Products before the summer recess, in order to review progress.

In his view, the Council might well wish to make arrangement to examine the progress which had been made in work on the non-tariff barriers in time to include this subject in its report to the twenty-seventh session. Although it was still too early to foresee when the Groups would be able to finish their tasks, it would be a great advantage if they were in a position to report to the full Committee at a meeting in October, so that a report could be made to the Council in time to permit it to report to the twenty-seventh session of the CONTRACTING PARTIES.

As concerns the Tariff Study, he noted with satisfaction that data for Australia and New Zealand had been added and that agreement had been reached on the terms of reference for the Working Party on the Tariff Study. An important phase of the work programme of the CONTRACTING PARTIES, the analysis itself, would therefore be starting very soon now.

Mr. Stuyck, having had informal consultations with a number of delegations, made certain suggestions as to the future work of the Committee.

The representative of Canada, while agreeing with the suggestions made by the Chairman of the Committee, expressed his understanding that the work envisaged on valuation would not be concerned with the question of a common basing point or adoption of the Brussels Convention, but would deal with the problems associated with existing systems of valuation. Secondly, it was his understanding that the new phase of the work did not involve a commitment to accept or implement solutions which might be elaborated for selected items, since the results achieved might not provide a basis for a balanced negotiation. For this reason his authorities attached major importance to the recommendation that the Committee continuously explore the possibilities of adding other items to the work programme.

The representative of the European Communities considered that the Groups should meet to seek appropriate solutions for the problems with which they were concerned. This examination should not exclude a priori any possibility for solution, it being understood that no delegation would be bound to accept a particular solution.

The Council, in agreement with the suggestions made by the Chairman of the Committee on Trade in Industrial Products, adopted the report of the Committee and decided that

- (i) the Committee and Groups should undertake the work envisaged in this report of the Committee, on the Tariff Study and on the particular non-tariff barrier items indicated in the report, while continuing to explore the possibilities for adding other topics to this work programme;
- (ii) the Committee should report to the Council in time to permit the Council to report on progress made in the field of non-tariff barriers to the twenty-seventh session;
- (iii) the Committee should report to the Council as soon as possible on the progress of the work of the Working Party on the Tariff Study, and in any case in time to permit the Council to report to the twenty-seventh session.

## 2. Meetings of the CONTRACTING PARTIES

The Chairman said that following the discussion at the last meeting of the Council, there had been informal consultations with a considerable number of delegations on this subject. As a result of these consultations he would like to put forward some concrete points in the expectation that it would be possible to reach a broad consensus on them. These points were the following:

1. that the twenty-seventh session of the CONTRACTING PARTIES should be held from 15-26 November 1971;
2. that there should be an informal meeting of the CONTRACTING PARTIES this spring and that 28, 29 and 30 April would be the most convenient time;
3. that the following should be the main topics for discussion at the informal meeting in April:
  - (a) review of the current situation in international trade;
  - (b) review of the work programme, paying particular attention to the trade problems of developing countries and having in mind the forthcoming twenty-seventh session of the CONTRACTING PARTIES;
4. that the informal meeting in April should be organized so that sessions would be held in the mornings, and in the afternoons if necessary, but that adequate time should also be reserved for informal contacts between delegations;
5. that, at the informal meeting in April, contracting parties should be represented at an appropriate senior level, and, where possible, by persons from capitals responsible for trade policy matters.

All representatives who spoke stated that they could support the suggestions put forward by the Chairman. Some representatives, nevertheless, expressed regret that no formal session of the CONTRACTING PARTIES would be held early in the year. Other representatives recognized, however, that an early session would in the circumstances, not lead to meaningful results. Several representatives considered that the annual sessions of the CONTRACTING PARTIES should be put on a regular basis. It was recognized that the question of the timing of the regular sessions of the CONTRACTING PARTIES should be discussed at the forthcoming twenty-seventh session.

Some representatives considered that the informal meeting in April should have been planned for a little longer than three days, so as to ensure that the work would not be inhibited for lack of time. On the other hand, it was recognized that it would be difficult for persons responsible for trade policy matters

in capitals to make themselves available for a longer period. As regards the level of representation, some representatives considered that it would be difficult for their governments to make someone available from their capitals. Several representatives stated their expectation that their governments would send from their capitals persons responsible for trade policy matters, assuming that other countries, in particular the major countries, would be similarly represented. Apart from plenary meetings, ample time should be afforded to such persons for informal contacts amongst themselves.

As regards the topics for discussion at the informal meeting, a number of delegates considered that considerable preparation would be necessary if the meeting were to be successful, and that the subjects to be discussed should be as specific as possible. It was also stated that the informal meeting should not only begin preparations for the twenty-seventh session, but should also attempt to influence and stimulate the work of the various organs of the GATT between April and the session in the autumn. In this connexion the necessity of paying special attention to the problems of developing countries in line with the provisions of Part IV of the General Agreement, was emphasized by several. It was also considered important that the problems of the developing countries should be an essential part of the whole work programme.

The Council agreed with the suggestions put forward by the Chairman as set out above.