

# GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

RESTRICTED

L/631

14 May 1957

Limited Distribution

Original: English/French

## CONSULAR FORMALITIES

### Resolution of the International Chamber of Commerce

The International Chamber of Commerce has forwarded the following Resolution, adopted by its Executive Committee on 20 February 1957, for the information of contracting parties:

"The International Chamber of Commerce has pressed for many years for the simplification of documentary formalities in international trade and in particular for the abolition of consular documents and visas and the excessive charges which in many cases are associated with them. It was therefore, a matter of particular satisfaction to the ICC when the CONTRACTING PARTIES to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade adopted at their Seventh Session in 1952 a Recommendation for the abolition of consular invoices, visas and fees by the end of 1956.

"The ICC observes, however, with regret that the hopes engendered by this Recommendation have not been fulfilled. Although the date prescribed for the abolition of these consular requirements has expired, the progress made in giving effect to the Recommendation has been small and no date can be foreseen by which the requirements of the Recommendation are likely to be fully implemented.

"The ICC remains convinced that complete abolition of consular formalities must continue to be the ultimate objective of all those countries, members or otherwise of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, which require such formalities in one form or another. The ICC, therefore, welcomes the decision of the CONTRACTING PARTIES to GATT to maintain the Recommendation of 1952, to ask all contracting parties to report as soon as further progress is made and to review the matter again at the next Session.

"Nevertheless, in view of the difficulties caused to traders by the continuance of these consular requirements, the ICC considers that more speedy and positive action is essential on the part of those governments which still maintain such formalities, if any early and real improvement is to be made in the present unsatisfactory situation.

The ICC recognizes that genuine difficulties of a financial, economic or administrative character may militate against the immediate abolition of all these requirements. It is of opinion, however, that the ultimate

objective of complete abolition could be approached by stages which would provide substantial relief to exporters and importers and would enable, at the same time, administrative arrangements to be revised by the countries concerned.

"To this end the ICC urges that early action should be taken by the CONTRACTING PARTIES to give effect to the following proposals which would serve as an important first step towards implementing fully the provisions of the 1952 Recommendation:

- a) Consular invoices should be abolished as separate and distinct documents from commercial invoices, and one invoice only (the commercial invoice) should be used, visa'd and/or legalised if necessary.

(This procedure would be fully consistent with Item 2 of the Code of Standard Practices of the 1952 Recommendation, which proposes that governments requiring two or more of the following documents: - commercial invoice, consular invoice, certificate of origin, should alternatively accept at the trader's option either separate documents or a combined form taking their place, provided the combined form incorporates all the information normally contained in the separate documents).

- b) Consular fees should be paid at destination and not in the exporting country.
- c) The large number of copies of documents required by the country of destination should be reduced.

"Lastly, the ICC reiterates its strong appeal to all governments to make a special and energetic effort to reduce at an early date all documentary formalities connected with the movement of goods, and to bring their laws and regulations into line with the requirements laid down in the 1952 GATT Recommendation and Standard Practices."