

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

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REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN¹ OF THE COMMITTEE ON TARIFF CONCESSIONS TO THE COUNCIL ON 8 NOVEMBER 1984

1. The Committee on Tariff Concessions has met three times since the last report to the Council: on 12 December 1983, 30 April and 5 November 1984.
2. The meeting of 12 December 1983 was entirely devoted to the question of the establishment of a common data base in connection with the introduction of the Harmonized System and Article XXVIII negotiations. At that meeting agreement was reached that the secretariat should begin the preliminary work to establish a common data base, and delegations were encouraged to keep in contact with the secretariat in order to facilitate their decision on whether or not to participate in the data base. Interested delegations held several informal meetings during the year to advise the secretariat on the technical needs relating to the data base. The details of the data base are contained in document TAR/W/47 which was recently submitted to the Committee for its consideration. Several delegations stated that they were well advanced in computerizing the information necessary for the Article XXVIII negotiations, while others will be ready to submit computerized information to the secretariat by the beginning of next year. It is hoped that a maximum of countries participate in the common data base. The secretariat stands ready to provide technical assistance, as in the past, to developing country delegations which might not have the technical means to participate in the data base, so that they can fully participate in the Article XXVIII negotiations.
3. Concerning the transposition of schedules into the Harmonized System, it has been noted that several countries have started the work and exchanged with other delegations the agricultural chapters of their schedules. Delegations have also reported that they intend to hold preliminary consultations on those chapters before the end of the year with a view to starting Article XXVIII renegotiations as early as possible in 1985. It will be recalled that the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System is to be implemented on 1 January 1987. Only one country has at present signed the Convention, but other countries are expected to follow in the foreseeable future.

¹ Presented by Mr. D. Bondad, Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

4. The submission of schedules of tariff concessions in loose-leaf form is an item which was discussed both at the April and November meetings of the Tariff Committee. The Council may wish to note that so far thirty-four countries have submitted their loose-leaf schedules, out of a total of sixty-two contracting parties which have a GATT schedule. I regret to have to report that progress in this respect has been slow, not only as far as the submission of schedules is concerned, but also regarding the verification process of schedules submitted years ago.

5. The question of the application of Article XXVIII to new products has been taken up both in the Committee itself as well as in informal consultations between the Chairman and interested delegations. No consensus has so far been reached and further informal consultations will be required before the item can be taken up again in the Committee.

6. At its meeting of 5 November, the Committee considered the possibility of preparing a Sixth Certification of Changes to Schedules which would include not only the various notifications of changes already submitted by delegations since the publication of the Fifth Certification in 1981 as well as loose-leaf schedules which are ready for certification, but also the lists of additional aircraft items to be included in the schedules of the countries signatories of the Aircraft Agreement. Delegations were invited to submit to the secretariat as soon as possible all the changes to their schedules which they want to be certified so that the Sixth Certification of Changes to Schedules could be published in the early part of 1985.

7. At the November meeting the question of the implementation of MTN tariff concessions was placed on the agenda of the Committee at the request of one delegation. A proposal was made that contracting parties would inform the Committee of the status concerning the implementation of the remaining tariff cuts. This proposal will be further considered at the next meeting of the Committee, to be held in the spring of 1985.