

**GENERAL AGREEMENT
ON TARIFFS AND TRADE**

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COUNCIL
10 November 1994
Item No. 17

COUNCIL WORKING PRACTICES - TREATMENT OF "OTHER BUSINESS" ITEMS

Statement by the Chairman of the Council

At the November 1994 Council meeting, the Chairman of the Council made the following statement:

"At the meeting of the Council on 16-17 June 1993, the Chairman made a statement containing certain proposals designed to expedite the conduct of Council business which was duly noted by the Council (C/M/264). One of the matters addressed by those proposals was the conduct of discussions under "Other Business".

In order to avoid unduly long debates under "Other Business" the following was proposed by the Chairman in his statement:

- "(a) the Chairman would remind delegations at each Council meeting that discussions on substantive issues under "Other Business" should be avoided, and that the Council should limit itself to taking note of the announcement by the sponsoring delegation, as well as any reactions to such an announcement by other delegations directly concerned;
- (b) the Council Minutes, unless explicitly requested by the delegations concerned, would not reproduce at length the statements made under "Other Business", but would be limited to an enunciation of the issues raised and a summary of the comments made;
- (c) delegations should provide the Chairman or the Secretary of the Council and other delegations directly concerned, whenever possible, advance notice of "Other Business" items."

Since then certain Council meetings have been unexpectedly delayed because of excessively long discussions under "Other Business". A number of delegations have expressed the view that, while respecting the right of delegations to raise urgent matters of importance under "Other Business", further effort should be made to discipline the conduct of such discussions and to ensure that the Council can conclude its work in an expeditious and timely fashion. Therefore while maintaining the proposals mentioned above which were accepted by the Council last year, I wish to propose that the following additional procedures be adopted:

- (i) the first item of business at a Council meeting would be statements by the Chairman which currently are made under "Other Business";

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- (ii) statements by delegations under "Other Business" should be limited to very short announcements;
- (iii) exceptionally, when a delegation considers it must raise an extremely urgent matter of importance, the Chairman will allow a substantive statement to be made on the matter, which should nevertheless be limited to no more than five minutes; the delegation raising the matter, if it so wishes, may circulate for the record a longer statement in document form;
- (iv) all efforts should be made to avoid an extensive debate on any question under "Other Business";
- (v) if the regular Agenda of the Council is exceptionally long and the meeting runs out of time before "Other Business" items have been taken up, the Chairman may defer consideration of these items to the next meeting of the Council, unless a delegation requests otherwise.

These procedures, if accepted, will be applied on an experimental basis and may be revised as necessary."

At its meeting, the Council took note of the statement.