

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

152

RESTRICTED

IC/W/31
22 June 1955

Special Distribution

Intersessional Committee
Agenda Item 5

SCHEDULING OF INTERSESSIONAL MEETINGS

Note by the Executive Secretary

As the timing of certain meetings that should be held before the Tenth Session raises a number of difficulties, the Chairman and the Executive Secretary have suggested that the Committee consider the question of how these meetings should be scheduled.

(a) Working Party on Plans for Tariff Reduction

If another round of tariff reductions is to be undertaken and concluded during the first half of 1956 a great deal of the preliminary work will need to be accomplished before the end of 1955, and it seems essential that consideration be given promptly to the form and timing of the preparation and negotiations involved. It has already been suggested that delegations be prepared to discuss these questions, at least informally, around the time of the present meeting of the Committee and that the Committee itself should consider whether a meeting of the Working Party should be convened next week. After the Executive Secretary circulated these suggestions he received a request from the United States that a meeting of the Working Party be convened before 1 July. The Committee will also want to take this request into consideration. If such a meeting is desirable it is important that a decision be taken promptly.

(b) Working Party on Commodity Problems

The Working Party on Commodity Problems in its Interim Report to the CONTRACTING PARTIES during the Ninth Session stated its intention of reconvening at a time to be determined by the Executive Secretary. It suggested that the date chosen should allow the maximum time for consideration by governments of the draft agreements drawn up by the CONTRACTING PARTIES during the Ninth Session, but still permit the Working Party to complete its work before the Tenth Session.

On 21 April 1955 a letter was sent to members of the Working Party asking for expressions of view as to whether the Working Party should be convened during the summer session of the Economic and Social Council. The replies received from contracting parties were not sufficiently complete to be conclusive, but they revealed a wide divergence of view. Three governments

favoured holding the meeting before the Council session, three during that session and five after the session. One of those which favoured holding the meeting after the Council session strongly urged that it not be held in any event before the Council had dealt with Item 5 on its own agenda, "International Commodity Problems". (The secretariat is now informed by the secretariat of the United Nations that this item will probably be taken up toward the end of the session, which is scheduled to close on 6 August.) Finally, one of the governments which had preferred the meeting during the Council session and two whose views were not previously recorded have strongly urged that August be avoided and that the meeting, if not convened by 15 July be postponed until 15 September.

In considering this problem the Committee will undoubtedly want to take into consideration the problem of available hotel and other facilities in Geneva during the summer months. This subject is discussed separately below.

(c) Next Meeting of Intersessional Committee

The Committee is required to meet four to six weeks before the opening of each ordinary session to consider what matters are likely to arise at that session and to examine the adequacy of the documentation available. The Tenth Session will open on 27 October and the relevant dates are, therefore, 15 and 29 September.

Special Session of the CONTRACTING PARTIES

The Executive Secretary has already notified the contracting parties of the necessity for holding a special session on 7 July to consider the recommendations of the Committee concerning the requests of Belgium and Luxembourg for waivers on the maintenance of certain quantitative import restrictions.

Hotel and Office Space

As members of the Committee will be aware, several major conferences are being held in Geneva during the summer. Those that will put the greatest strain on facilities are the meeting of the Economic and Social Council from 5 July to 6 August, the Four Power Political Conference, opening on 18 July, and the International Conference on the Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy, 8 to 20 August.

The secretariat has attempted to obtain information as to the availability of hotel and other facilities in Geneva during the summer with the following results:

Hotel space

July : Extremely restricted throughout the month and quite impossible (1-31) during the Four Power Conference.

August: "No space whatever" due to tourist commitments and the (1-24) International Conference on the Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy.

August-

September: Limited space available if reserved now.
(25 August-
20 September)

Conference rooms

Limited conference room facilities will be available in the Palais des Nations during July, August and September.

Office space

Office space for delegations in the Palais des Nations will be available only in late August and in September.