

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

RESTRICTED

C/W/76
6 July 1964

Limited Distribution

COUNCIL
6-7 July 1964

APPLICATIONS FOR ACCESSION

Note by the Executive Secretary

Article XXXIII provides that a government may accede to the General Agreement "on terms to be agreed between such governments and the CONTRACTING PARTIES". When an application for accession has been received the CONTRACTING PARTIES have arranged for tariff negotiations to take place between the applicant government and those contracting parties wishing to participate in such negotiations, and for a working party to prepare the terms of accession in consultation with the applicant government. Before the protocol containing the terms of accession is opened for acceptance, a decision approving the terms is submitted to a vote by the contracting parties. In accordance with Article XXXIII this decision must be adopted by a two-thirds majority. Provided the decision has been adopted, the accession becomes effective following acceptance of the protocol by the acceding government.

At present six governments have indicated their desire to accede to the GATT. Argentina, Iceland, Tunisia, the United Arab Republic and Yugoslavia have acceded provisionally pending their full accession pursuant to Article XXXIII, and of these Argentina and Iceland have announced their intention to participate in the current trade negotiations with a view to achieving full accession. In addition, the Government of Ireland has expressed its desire to renew, during the course of the current trade negotiations, the discussions begun in 1960, of the terms on which it might accede.

At the seventeenth session the CONTRACTING PARTIES decided to entrust to the Council the task of processing applications for accession when the CONTRACTING PARTIES are not in session. Therefore the Council may wish to consider questions of timing and procedures related to accessions during the current negotiations, and to make whatever arrangements may be appropriate. As there is at present no legal basis for the participation of non-contracting parties in the current trade negotiations, these arrangements might include, firstly, a formal invitation to the six governments mentioned above to participate in the negotiations, and secondly, an instruction to the Trade Negotiations Committee to draw up, at an appropriate stage, the protocols for accession. Any other applications for accession which may be received would

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be referred in the first instance to the Council. In this connexion the Trade Negotiations Committee might be asked to review the text, in the light of later developments, of the model protocol for accession which was drawn up by the CONTRACTING PARTIES in 1950 (BISD, Vol.1, p.111).

As for the contribution which less-developed countries applying for accession might make to the reduction and stabilization of tariffs, the Trade Negotiations Committee would no doubt wish to bear in mind the principle adopted at the meeting of Ministers in May 1963 that "the developed countries cannot expect to receive reciprocity from the less-developed countries".

