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**Committee of Participants on the Expansion of  
Trade in Information Technology Products**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 17 DECEMBER 1999**

Chairman: Mr. Y. Shiran (Israel)

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## **Introduction**

The Chairman stated that the proposed agenda for this meeting was circulated in WTO/AIR/1222 on 7 December 1999. He asked if there were any other matters to be raised under "Other Business". Hearing no requests, he stated he would take up the date of the next meeting of the Committee under this agenda item. The agenda was adopted.

### **1. Review of the Status of Implementation of the Ministerial Declaration on Trade in Information Technology Products (G/IT/1/Rev.12)**

1.1 The Chairman pointed out to participants that an overview of the implementation of the Ministerial Declaration on Trade in Information Technology Products was contained in G/IT/1/Rev.12. As shown in this document, implementation seemed to be proceeding as envisioned under the Declaration. He asked if any delegations had any information to share or comments to make. Hearing no requests from the floor, the Committee took note of the Chairman's statement.

### **2. Consultations on Non-tariff Barriers**

2.1 The Chairman recalled that at the last meeting of the Committee delegations had expressed their interest in pursuing work on non-tariff measures. Furthermore, he noted that to contribute to the work in this area, an Australian proposal, as well as Australian and Swiss national experience papers, and a Secretariat document containing a summary of the survey responses (G/IT/SPEC/Q1/25) had been circulated.

2.2 The delegate of Australia stated that his delegation attached great importance to this matter. He reminded the Committee that it was a mandate of the Committee to examine non-tariff barriers to trade in IT products. He noted that Australia, as well as Switzerland, had submitted national experience papers and encouraged others to contribute similar-type work. As a way forward, he urged others to examine the

paper Australia submitted as a basis for a work programme. He believed it contained the necessary mix of elements reflecting the issues at stake for both developed and developing countries alike, and he hoped that after the Christmas break, delegations could adopt an official work programme, and perhaps go one step further in attaching a timeframe to the work programme, and identify the non-tariff barriers. He suggested that the Chairman could hold informal consultations on the next steps to be taken in the adoption of a work programme.

2.3 The delegate of the United States supported the statement made by Australia, as his delegation agreed that non-tariff measures were an important part of the Committee's work. The papers put forth by Australia and Switzerland were a useful tool in advancing the work of the Committee. He stated that a work programme was necessary, the proposal on the table was a good one and he looked forward to returning to it in the coming year.

2.4 The delegate of Canada supported the statements of Australia and the United States, noting the importance Canada attached to this issue. He looked forward to informal consultations and developing a work programme in the coming year. A Canadian paper on the subject was likely to be submitted in the new year.

2.5 The delegate of Switzerland stated, like other delegations, that work on non-tariff measures was important and hoped that delegations would examine the Australian proposal for a work programme. Her delegation looked forward to coming back to this topic early next year and to participating in informal consultations on the matter.

2.6 The delegate of New Zealand supported the other statements made as New Zealand attached great importance to this matter and looked forward to informal consultations early in the new year.

2.7 The delegate of the European Communities stated their support for the Australian initiative on non-tariff measures and encouraged Members to examine the Australian proposal for a work programme. At this time, the European Communities were not able to provide a national experience paper but they agreed to study this matter extensively.

2.8 The delegate of Singapore supported the work undertaken by Australia and Switzerland on this matter and especially appreciated their national experience papers. She agreed that non-tariff measures should be examined closely and looked forward to being part of the informal consultations. Furthermore she noted that the TBT triennial review was coming up and that the Committee should see how its work could feed into this review.

2.9 The delegate of Norway stated his delegations' support for taking the non-tariff measures work programme forward. Like Canada, Norway was examining the possibility of submitting a national experience paper early next year. His delegation looked forward to the informal consultations.

2.10 The delegate of Malaysia stated the importance his delegation attached to this matter and noted that his capital was studying the Australian proposal on a work programme and looked forward to being a part of the informal consultations to allow this work to go forward. He supported the statement of Singapore concerning the TBT review.

2.11 The delegate of India confirmed the importance of non-tariff measures in the work of the Committee and her delegation looked forward to participating in the informal consultations early next year. She supported the statement of Australia concerning the issue of "securing an outcome from the work programme" as well as the statement of Singapore on how the work of this Committee could feed into the TBT triennial review; these were both important elements to be discussed in the informal consultations.

2.12 The delegate of Hong Kong, China agreed that work needed to be done in this Committee on the issue of non-tariff measures. His delegation also attached great importance to the interface of the work to be done in this Committee and that with other WTO bodies, in particular the TBT Committee. He anticipated that Hong Kong, China would submit a national experience paper before the next formal meeting of the Committee.

2.13 The Chairman stated that he would hold informal consultations on this matter early next year. It was so agreed and the Committee took note of the statements made.

### **3. Divergences in Classifying Information Technology Products (G/IT/2/Add.1/Rev.1)**

3.1 The Chairman recalled that the Committee had proceeded with its work on this agenda item, as an updated document, G/IT/2/Add.1/Rev.1, had been circulated and informal consultations of customs experts were held in October. This group of customs experts had done some significant work in this area in order to narrow down classification divergences. As an outcome of this work, a package of material had been forwarded to all participants. He hoped that all participants could examine the material so that work could continue in this important area.

3.2 The delegate of the European Communities was glad about the spirit of cooperation that was apparent in the work of the customs experts. The work carried out by the customs experts was very important and useful. He thanked the delegates for their participation in this exercise and encouraged others that were not able to participate, to associate themselves with the conclusions, or alternatively in the future, to join in on this work. The aim of the process was to include as many participants as possible, either to participate effectively or to inform their capitals of this work, so that the classification systems in the various countries could be harmonized, particularly as concerned Attachment B. He asked that this matter be placed on the agenda in the coming year so that the Committee could convene another meeting of experts. It would, however, be useful to get the reaction of participants that could not join in the work, beforehand, so that this could be taken into account in the subsequent work.

3.3 The delegate of Panama supported the statement of the European Communities which encouraged all countries to participate in these discussions of experts, so that in the future all countries could be associated with this work and its conclusions. He noted the efforts of the Secretariat to make it possible for those countries that were not English speaking to participate in the discussions. However, his delegation, which spoke exclusively Spanish, had already made the decision not to attend when initially translation could not be provided. However, he noted the assurance that this situation would be taken into account in the future so that all countries, not only Panama, could participate. On the subject of the conclusions reached by the customs experts, he reserved his delegations' position as the discussions were very technical.

3.4 The Committee took note of statements made.

### **4. New Participants**

4.1 The Chairman noted that at the last meeting of the Committee, the schedule of Croatia was approved pursuant to a written communication from that delegation concerning implementation. Subsequently, written confirmation had been received, and thus Croatia could be considered an ITA participant. Secondly, he noted that there had been one new schedule, from Jordan, submitted to the Committee for consideration at this meeting. He noted that the Secretariat had performed the electronic verification of this schedule and there had been no discrepancies noted. Furthermore, he noted that in a communication to the Secretariat, the delegation of Jordan had indicated that the implementation of this schedule would start in March 2000 regardless of Jordan's status of accession to the WTO. He noted, furthermore, that early today the General Council had approved Jordan's accession to the WTO. He believed the Committee was in a position to approve the schedule of Jordan.

4.2 The delegate of Jordan thanked the Committee, the Chairman, and the Members of the WTO for their cooperation and understanding as earlier today Jordan was approved for membership in this organization. In line with its bilateral, plurilateral, and multilateral negotiations, Jordan submitted its ITA schedule to the Chairman of the Committee on 15 November 1999 for the consideration of participants. The Chairman circulated a note on 17 November, whereby he suggested that all participants examine the ITA schedule of Jordan and raise any concerns directly with the delegation of Jordan. His delegation did not receive any communications of concerns, therefore he asked the Chairman and the Committee to approve Jordan's request for participation in the ITA.

4.3 The Committee approved the schedule of Jordan.

4.4 The delegate of Australia welcomed Jordan not only to this Committee, but also to the WTO. He encouraged Jordan to submit a national experience paper on non-tariff barriers.

## **5. Review of Product Coverage**

5.1 The Chairman stated that the Committee had devoted time and effort last year trying to reach agreement on a package of products to expand the existing product coverage. He noted that consultations were continuing on this matter and he encouraged delegations to continue their efforts. The Committee took note of the Chairman's statement.

## **6. Other Business**

6.1 The Chairman proposed that the Committee's next regular meeting be held on 9 March 2000, subject to confirmation. It was so agreed.

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