

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

G/L/331
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(99-4265)

REPORT (1999) OF THE COMMITTEE ON MARKET ACCESS

1. The Committee on Market Access held four formal meetings in 1999: on 11 March, 31 May, 22 June and 5 October. The minutes of these meetings are contained in documents G/MA/M/17 to G/MA/M/20. In addition, three periodic reports giving an overview of the issues discussed in the Committee and providing factual information related to the requests for waivers and waiver extensions, both for the introduction of HS96 changes and for the transposition of schedules into the Harmonized System are contained in documents G/MA/61, 62 and 71.

2. At its meeting of 31 May 1999, the Committee took note of the nomination of Mr. Pedro Miguel da Costa e Silva (Brazil) as Chairman of the Committee for the current year and elected him by acclamation. On 22 June 1999, the Committee elected as Vice-Chairperson for the current year, Mr. Christophe Kiener (Switzerland).

A. WAIVERS AND SUBMISSION OF HS96 DOCUMENTATION

3. As concerned the introduction on 1 January 1996 of the changes to the nomenclature of the Harmonized System and the submission of documentation related to these changes, the Committee examined the situation at its meetings of 11 March 1999 and 5 October 1999 on the basis of updated documents prepared by the Secretariat.

4. On 13 December 1995, several Members were granted individual waivers, for operational reasons grouped into one single decision, for the introduction of HS96 changes into their schedules. These waivers have been extended by successive decisions of the General Council until 31 October 1999 (WT/L/303). In addition to these waivers four Members obtained an extension until 31 October 1999 of their waivers in connection with the transposition of their pre-Uruguay Round schedules into the Harmonized System. As concerns the submission of the required documentation related to the introduction of HS96 changes in the respective WTO schedules of concessions on goods, as of 5 October 1999, the Committee noted that out of the 31 Members currently under waivers, 7 Members had not yet submitted the required documentation, the submission of one Member was finalized, and the submissions of 23 Members were still pending due to ongoing consultations and/or negotiations. The submissions of two Members, which had not requested an extension of their waivers, were also pending.

5. At its meeting of 5 October 1999, Japan informed the Committee of a proposal that it intended to make to the Council for Trade in Goods concerning waiver extensions. The Committee took note of the views expressed by Members on the proposal and agreed that the Chairman consult on this subject.

B. INTEGRATED DATA BASE

6. With reference to the modalities and operation of the Integrated Data Base (IDB), the Committee examined the status of IDB submissions at its meetings of 11 March, 22 June and 5 October 1999 on the basis of documents G/MA>IDB/2/Rev.4, G/MA>IDB/2/Rev.5 and

G/MA/IDB/2/Rev.6. As of 27 September 1999, 65 Members and 3 acceding countries have provided IDB submissions.

7. Pursuant to the agreement reached by the Committee at its meeting of 27 November 1998, the Chairman held four open-ended informal consultations of the Committee (23 February, 10 March, 5 May and 21 May 1999) to address the question of the operation and modalities of the IDB, in particular submission to and dissemination of the IDB. These discussions provided a basis for agreement on guidelines concerning the dissemination of the IDB, which were adopted by the Committee at its meeting of 31 May 1999 (G/MA/IDB/3).

8. The Committee was also updated periodically by the Secretariat on the status of processing of IDB submissions, the status of software development and the technical assistance activities that had been carried out.

C. CONSOLIDATED TARIFF SCHEDULES DATABASE

9. At its meeting of 11 March 1999, the Committee was informed that the Loose-Leaf Schedule pilot project which was undertaken to analyse the feasibility of constructing a Consolidated Tariff Schedules (CTS) Database had been finalized. At its meeting of 31 May 1999, the Committee was informed that the United Kingdom had made available the necessary funds to carry out the project. At its meeting of 22 June 1999, the Committee took note of document G/MA/63 prepared by the Secretariat entitled the "Consolidated Tariff Schedules Database Technical Co-operation Project" which provided technical information on the project and the status of Members' schedules. At its meeting of 5 October 1999, the Committee took note of the report by the Secretariat on work undertaken so far on this project.

D. OTHER ACTIVITIES

10. At its meeting of 11 March 1999, the Committee took note of the tariff information available in the Secretariat as contained in document G/MA/TAR/3/Rev.4.

11. At the meetings of 11 March 1999 and 22 June 1999, New Zealand updated the Committee of developments concerning the APEC Accelerated Tariff Liberalization Initiative.

12. At the meeting of 22 June 1999, Singapore as Coordinator of APEC introduced a request by the APEC Market Access Group (MAG) for an Internet Mirror Site of the Integrated Data Base. At the meeting of 5 October 1999, Singapore, on behalf of APEC MAG, informed the Committee that the MAG had reversed its decision and that there was no need anymore to request a mirror site of the IDB.

13. At its meeting of 5 October 1999, the Committee took note of the status of quantitative restriction notifications contained in document G/MA/NTM/QR/1/Add.6.
