



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

**REPORT ON THE CURRENT FUNCTIONING OF THE COMMITTEE OF PARTICIPANTS
ON THE EXPANSION OF TRADE IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY PRODUCTS**

REPORT OF THE CHAIRPERSON

The following report is being submitted by the Chairperson of the Committee of Participants on the Expansion of Trade in Information Technology Products (ITA Committee), Mr Hazrul Imran AZAHAR, under his own responsibility and at the request of the Chairperson of the Council for Trade in Goods.¹ The report was prepared with the assistance of the Secretariat.

1 MANDATE OF COMMITTEE WORK

1.1. The Ministerial Declaration on Trade in Information Technology Products (WT/MIN(96)/16) was adopted on 13 December 1996 and came into effect on 26 March 1997. The ITA Agreement is a plurilateral agreement that is open for acceptance to all WTO Members and States or separate customs territories in the process of acceding to the WTO. The Committee of Participants on the Expansion of Trade in Information Technology Products (ITA Committee) was established pursuant to paragraph 3 of the *"Implementation of the Ministerial Declaration on Trade in Information Technology Products"* (document G/L/160).

1.2. As required under the Committee's procedures, the ITA Committee oversees the functioning of the Agreement and serves as the forum for meetings and collective consultations among the participants. It holds regular meetings to review developments relating to the implementation of the Declaration and holds special meetings at the request of any participant or by invitation of the Chairperson.

1.3. This report describes the practices that the ITA Committee has adopted over the years, with data based on the years 2019-2021.

2 CURRENT STATUS OF COMMITTEE PRACTICES

2.1 Assistance to delegates

2.1. There is no standard training programme for Geneva-based delegates. Geneva-based delegates who assume responsibility for the Committee usually hold bilateral meetings with the Secretariat on an *ad hoc* basis to clarify any questions they may have. On occasion, the Secretariat has organized briefing sessions for capital and Geneva-based officials to explain processes and the conduct of work. These have sometimes been general in nature, or else focussed on a particular aspect of the Committee's agenda.

2.2. The Secretariat provides technical assistance support to any WTO Member or acceding government in the process of joining the WTO that expresses its interest to join the ITA or the ITA Expansion Agreements, including (i) explaining the process of becoming a participant; (ii) helping the government to establish its ITA/ITA Expansion Schedule; (iii) undertaking the technical verification of the government's ITA Schedule and circulating the draft ITA Schedule to the Committee for its review and approval; (iv) coordinating bilateral meetings between the acceding government and ITA participants; (v) providing support and advice on classification divergence and

¹ See document JOB/CTG/18.

other technical issues during the consultation process; (vi) assisting governments to complete the Schedule modification and certification process. For example, in 2021, the Secretariat provided technical support to Lao PDR when it was in the process of its ITA and ITA2 participation. Similarly, in 2022, upon request, the Secretariat held two working sessions with Timor-Leste, explaining the procedural steps in relation to its potential participation to the ITA.

2.3. With a view to acquainting new Geneva-based delegates and capital-based officials with the Committee's work, the Secretariat made a presentation on the ITA Agreement at the Committee's meeting held on 11 October 2022.

2.2 Planning and Organization of Committee work

2.2.1 Digital tools used for Committee work

2.4. The ITA Committee uses the WTO-wide digital tools, such as [e-registration](#) and the "e-subscription" option in [Documents online](#). E-registration allows Members to indicate their contact information as well as the different Committees for which they are responsible. The Secretariat relies on the information provided in this system, as well as any additional contact information provided by delegations, to identify delegates covering the Committee in order to send communications and other documents to them by email, as necessary.

2.2.2 Formal meetings

2.5. The ITA Committee generally holds two formal meetings each year, one meeting in the spring, and the other in the autumn. To the extent possible, these formal meetings are organized in coordination with the meetings of other subsidiary bodies of the Council for Trade in Goods in order to avoid meetings taking place on the same date.

2.2.3 Number of meetings

2.6. Formal and informal meetings held by the ITA Committee during 2019-2022 are summarized in Table 1, below.

Table 1: Number of formal and informal meetings

Year	Formal meeting (date and duration)	Informal meetings (date and duration)	Other (e.g. workshops, symposia, etc.)
2019	14 May (0.5 days) 31 October (0.5 days)	-	
2020	30 October (0.5 days)		
2021	15 April (0.5 days) 17 September (0.5 days) 17 November 2021 (0.5 days)	30 July (0.5 days)	16-17 September 2021: ITA Symposium: 25 Years of the Information Technology Agreement
2022	6 April (0.5 days) 11 October (0.5 days)	20 September (0.5 days)	28 September 2022: Information and Dialogue Session with IT Industry Representatives

2.2.4 Preparation of Airgrams and Agendas

2.7. The tentative date of each formal meeting of the Committee is announced by the Chairperson at the previous Committee meeting, approximately six months in advance.

2.8. The Chairperson and the Secretariat send a convening notice to all Participants, around four weeks prior to the formal meeting. The purpose of this convening notice is to remind delegations of the date of the upcoming Committee meeting, to indicate the date when the Airgram will be issued, and to provide the closing date for inclusion of any agenda item in the Airgram.

2.9. The Airgram is circulated 10 days prior to the meeting (see Table 2). An annotated agenda, which contains more detailed information regarding each agenda item is circulated by the Secretariat (in document JOB/IT/*) around one week prior to the meeting.

Table 2: Preparation of Airgrams and Agendas

Year	Date of formal meeting	Date of circulation of Airgram	No. of days before the meeting
2019	14 May	3 May	11 days
	31 October	21 October	10 days
2020	30 October	10 October	20 days
2021	15 April	1 April	14 days
	17 September	7 September	10 days
	17 November	5 November	12 days
	(Special Session)		
2022	6 April	25 March	12 days
	11 October	30 September	11 days

2.2.5 Distribution of documents prior to meetings

2.10. Formal documents are circulated in the order in which they are received by the Secretariat. All documents relevant to a meeting are added under the Documents for Meetings section in Documents Online and under the link for the meeting in the WTO calendar of the WTO webpage. Presentations or other documents received in advance are circulated as room documents (**RD/IT/-** series).

2.2.6 Communication after meetings

2.11. The Chairperson does not normally send any follow-up communication after formal meetings. A news item for each regular meeting is prepared by the WTO Information and External Relations Division in consultation with the Secretary to the ITA Committee.

2.2.7 Preparation of the minutes

2.12. The Secretariat prepares minutes after every formal meeting, which capture all of the relevant information from the meeting, including reports by the Chairperson and Members' statements. In the period 2019-2022, it took on average 81 days to circulate the minutes of the Committee's regular formal meetings. The average length of these minutes has been 13 pages (see Table 3).

2.13. The minutes of a formal meeting of the Committee also contain information on informal meeting(s) held since the previous formal meeting. This is generally done by means of a summary report under the responsibility of the Chairperson. The Chairperson also reports to the formal meeting on any consultations that he/she has held since the Committee's previous formal meeting.

Table 3: Preparation of the Minutes

Year	Last date of the formal meeting	Date of circulation of the minutes	No. of pages	No. of days
2019	14 May 2019	8 October 2019	12	147
	31 October 2019	30 January 2020	13	91
2020	30 October 2020	20 November 2020	11	21
2021	15 April 2021	29 June 2021	13	75
	17 September 2021	14 December 2021	14	88
	17 November 2021	14 December 2021	4	27
2022	6 April 2022	2 August 2022	16	118
	11 October 2022	-	-	-

2.14. Once the minutes are circulated, and pursuant to paragraph 2(c) of the WTO's Procedures for Circulation and Derestriction of WTO Documents (WT/L/452), they remain restricted in documents online (DOL) for 45 days. The minutes become automatically derestricted 45 days after the date of their circulation.

2.2.8 Informal meetings

2.15. Informal meetings are held at the request of any participant or at the invitation of the Chairperson on an *ad hoc* basis. Informal meetings are convened through a communication sent to the official email addresses of ITA participants, or to all WTO Members, as appropriate.

2.16. The convening email contains information on the meeting date, time, location, purpose of the meeting, and proposed agenda. The convening email has been sent on average 12.5 days in advance (Table 4).

Table 4: Convening of informal meetings

Year	Date of informal meeting	Date of communication convening the informal meeting	No. of days
2019	-	-	-
2020	-	-	-
2021	30 July 2021	19 July 2021	11
2022	20 September 2022	6 September 2022	14

3 SUBSTANTIVE WORK

3.1. The regular and substantive work of the ITA Committee includes: (i) the review of product coverage; (ii) discussions on non-tariff measures; (iii) addressing divergences in classification; (iv) reviewing and approving acceding participations; and (v) reviewing trade concerns raised by ITA participants.

3.1 Thematic sessions

3.2. The ITA Committee organizes an ITA Symposium once every five years. During the reporting period (2019 to 2022), an ITA Symposium celebrating 25 years of the Information Technology Agreement was held in Geneva on 16-17 September 2022. Due to COVID-related restrictions, the Symposium had been organized in a hybrid format and was attended in person by a limited number of Geneva-based delegates. Most speakers, capital-based officials, global IT industry representatives, as well as representatives from other international organizations, participated in the event online.

3.2 Notifications

3.3. There is no regular notification obligation under the ITA.

3.3 Reports by the Secretariat

3.4. The Secretariat prepares an annual report to the Council for Trade in Goods (CTG) that is first circulated to the Committee as a draft, for its approval at the autumn meeting (G/IT/W/- document series). Upon its approval, the annual report to the CTG is issued as a G/L/ document.

3.4 Participation by external stakeholders

3.5. The International Trade Centre (ITC) and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) have been granted observer status to the ITA Committee, and the World Customs Organization (WCO) has been granted observer status to meetings where issues of HS classification and HS amendments are included on the agenda.

3.6. To better understand the fast-changing global ICT industry, and to strengthen synergies between rule-making and business practices, the Committee has agreed to enhance its communication and dialogue with IT industry representatives. During the ITA Symposium held on 16-17 September 2021, over 25 senior IT industry representatives made presentations at different sessions. On 28 September 2022, the Committee held its first Information and Dialogue Session with IT industry representations during the Public Forum, during which four representatives from the semiconductor industry introduced the global value chain operations of the ICT sector.

3.5 Work with other Committees or WTO bodies

3.7. The ITA Committee interacts with other Committees or WTO bodies on an *ad hoc* basis. WTO Secretariat staff covering related technical subjects in other Committees have been invited to make presentations at meetings of the Committee.
