

REPORT (2004) OF THE COMMITTEE ON MARKET ACCESS

1. Since the last review¹, the Committee on Market Access has held four formal meetings (5 December 2003 (resumed meeting) 2 April 2004, 2 July 2004 and 22 September 2004), and one informal meeting (5 December 2003). The minutes of the formal meetings are contained in documents G/MA/M/35, G/MA/M/36, G/MA/M/37 and G/MA/M/38². In addition, two periodic reports giving an overview of the issues discussed in the Committee and providing factual information related to waiver requests concerning the introduction of HS96 changes are contained in documents G/MA/153 and G/MA/154.

2. At its meeting of 2 July 2004, the Committee took note of the nomination of Dr Magdi Farahat (Egypt) as Chairman of the Committee for the current year and elected him by acclamation. At that meeting, it was agreed that informal consultations would be carried out in order to elect a Vice-Chair for the current year. At its meeting of 22 September 2004, the Committee elected Mr. William Tagliani (US) as Vice-Chair for the Committee.

A. INTRODUCTION OF HS96 CHANGES TO SCHEDULES OF CONCESSIONS

3. At its formal meetings in 2004, the Committee examined the situation related to the submission of HS96 documentation set out in documents G/MA/TAR/2/Rev.32-34. At its meeting of 22 September 2004, the Committee noted that the submissions of five Members remained pending due to ongoing consultations and/or negotiations.

B. INTRODUCTION OF HS2002 CHANGES TO SCHEDULES OF CONCESSIONS

4. At its formal meetings in 2004, the Committee took note of documents G/MA/TAR/4/Rev.5-7 containing information on documents circulated in connection with the procedures to introduce HS2002 changes to schedules of concessions. At its meeting of 2 July 2004, the Committee agreed to hold informal consultations on the Chairman's proposal for the Secretariat to update the schedules in the CTS database into the HS2002 nomenclature. At its meeting of 22 September 2004, the Committee took note of the Chairman's report on those informal consultations. On this subject the Committee agreed that: (1) the Chairman would hold informal consultations with key donor Members to see to what extent such a project could be funded by them and other sources; (2) the Secretariat should prepare a first draft of simplified procedures based on a flow chart which was circulated at the informal consultations regarding this transposition exercise; (3) an informal briefing would be provided by the Secretariat to Geneva-based delegations on the technical aspects of this exercise as laid out in JOB(04)/95; (4) a workshop on the same subject would be organized for capital-based representatives if funding could be found. It was agreed to suspend the meeting on this sub-agenda item.

5. On the HS2002 "collective waiver", and at its meeting of 22 September 2004, the Committee agreed that a draft decision extending this waiver should be prepared and circulated to Members for comments. One delegation indicated that it was not in favour of "collective" waivers, and was concerned by a third renewal of this waiver. It intended to look carefully at the draft decision to be circulated by the Secretariat.

¹ G/L/658 (dated 13 November 2003).

² To be issued.

C. DATABASES

6. With reference to the modalities and operation of the Integrated Data Base (IDB), the Committee, at its formal meetings in 2004, examined the status of IDB submissions on the basis of documents G/MA/IDB/2/Rev.18-20. At these meetings, the Secretariat presented an oral report on the status of IDB dissemination, use of IDB information, IDB technical assistance, status of submissions, and the status of software development (IDB reporting tools and internet analysis facility). At its meeting of 22 September 2004, at the request of a delegation, the Secretariat agreed to organize a hands-on workshop on the IDB internet analysis facility.

7. At its formal meetings in 2004, the Committee took note of the Secretariat's reports on the status of the Consolidated Tariff Schedules Database Project which included the status of CTS files for both the tariff and agricultural commitments for Members. The software development status for dissemination and analytical facilities was also presented.

8. At its meeting of 2 April 2004, the Committee noted that the document entitled "Tariff Line of information contained in the Consolidated Tariff Schedules Database with Information contained in the Integrated Data Base – Some technical and procedural issues for discussion" (JOB(03)/217/Rev.1) was considered approved as no objections had been received concerning that document by the deadline of 19 March 2004.

9. During 2004, the Committee agreed to the requests for access to the IDB and CTS databases from the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) (G/MA/W/53), the Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery (G/MA/W/54) and the CARICOM Secretariat (G/MA/W/55), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (G/MA/W/57), the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (G/MA/W/59), the ANDEAN Community Secretariat (G/MA/W/61) and the Commonwealth Secretariat (G/MA/W/63). All organizations had undertaken to use and publish the information contained in these databases in accordance with the terms and conditions laid out in the document G/MA/115.

D. PARAGRAPH 18 OF THE PROTOCOL OF ACCESSION OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA – CHINA'S TRANSITIONAL REVIEW MECHANISM

10. The Committee completed the transitional review under Paragraph 18 of the Protocol of Accession of the People's Republic of China. China submitted information pursuant to Annex 1 of the Protocol (G/MA/W/64) and submitted questions to the EC and Turkey (G/MA/W/62 and Add.1, respectively). Questions/comments were submitted to China by the European Communities (G/MA/W/56), Japan (G/MA/W/60, Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1) and the United States (G/MA/W/58). The Committee's report to the Council for Trade in Goods on the review was circulated as document G/MA/155.

E. STATUS OF NOTIFICATIONS ON QUANTITATIVE RESTRICTIONS AND REVERSE NOTIFICATIONS OF NON-TARIFF MEASURES

11. At its meeting of 2 April 2004, the Committee took note of the status of notifications made under the "Decision on Notification Procedures for Quantitative Restrictions" (G/L/59) and the Decision on Reverse Notifications of Non-Tariff Measures (G/L/60) on the basis of Secretariat documents G/MA/NTM/QR/3 and G/MA/NTM/W/3/Rev.1, respectively. The Committee agreed to conduct the review foreseen in the former Decision based on a summary document to be prepared by the Secretariat. At its meeting of 2 July 2004, the Committee took note of the Secretariat document entitled "Summary Tables of Notified Quantitative Restrictions" (JOB(04)/92). At its meeting of 22 September 2004, a delegation pointed out that as not all Members had complied with their notification obligations under the decision G/L/59, the Secretariat document could be misconstrued.

In light of such concerns, the Committee agreed that once a comparable and representative set of notifications was received the document would be re-issued. Another Member stated that this might be the appropriate time to re-energize the process of notifications under the decision G/L/59.

F. OTHER ACTIVITIES

12. At its meeting of 2 April 2004, the Committee took note of document G/MA/TAR/3/Rev.9 which contained a revised and updated list of tariffs available to the Secretariat.

13. At that meeting, the EC provided information on the Expanding Exports Helpdesk which is an online resource set up by the Commission to supply relevant information required by developing country exporters interested in exporting to the EU market.
