

REPORT (2005) OF THE COMMITTEE OF PARTICIPANTS ON THE EXPANSION OF TRADE IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY PRODUCTS

1. The Committee of Participants on the Expansion of Trade in Information Technology Products, hereinafter referred to as "the Committee", was established pursuant to the provisions of the Ministerial Declaration on Trade in Information Technology Products (WT/MIN(96)/16), hereinafter referred to as "the Ministerial Declaration", and the provisions for the Implementation of the Ministerial Declaration on Trade in Information Technology Products (G/L/160), in order to carry out the provisions of paragraphs 3, 5, 6 and 7 of the Annex to the Declaration.
2. The Committee has held three formal meetings thus far in 2005: on 24 February, 25 May, and 20 October. The minutes of these meetings are contained in documents G/IT/M/42 to G/IT/M/44. Mr. Simon Chan (Hong Kong, China) was elected Chairman of the Committee for 2005.
3. The total number of participants to the Ministerial Declaration is sixty-six. In the past year, the schedules of Honduras, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and Nicaragua were circulated and approved by the Committee. The Committee noted that the concessions contained in the schedule of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia would come into effect upon the date of the Kingdom's accession to the WTO. At the Committee's meeting on 20 October 2005, Guatemala requested to join the ITA by the end of this year. The Committee suggested the Secretariat to verify the schedule of Guatemala soon after receiving it and then circulate it to participants for approval. The Committee also agreed that the schedule of Guatemala will be deemed to be approved unless any participants would notify its objection in writing to the Secretariat within two weeks from date of circulation of the schedule. The Committee's rules of procedure provide for observer status in the Committee for WTO Members which are not participants to the Ministerial Declaration and Governments that are observers to the Council for Trade in Goods. Requests for observer status by international intergovernmental organizations are considered on a case-by-case basis. The International Trade Centre (ITC) and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) have been granted observer status; and the World Customs Organization (WCO) has been granted observer status to meetings where the issues of HS classification and HS amendments are included in the agenda.
4. The Committee continued work on the Non-Tariff Measures (NTMs) Work Programme. It took note of the Secretariat's papers on the subject (G/IT/SPEC/Q2/11/Rev.1 and G/IT/SPEC/Q4/19/Rev.2) which provided an overview of the submissions and an overview of the survey responses. The Committee noted that the Chairman of the Committee, as agreed by the participants on 2005, sent a letter to the Chairman of the NGMA, informing them of the Committee's work on NTMs by providing factual information on the work done in the ITA Committee, and also the accomplishments that had been realized. The Committee proceeded with its work on the EMC/EMI Pilot Project and approved the "Guidelines for EMC/EMI Conformity Assessment Procedures" (G/IT/25) on an *ad referendum* basis. It also took note of the Secretariat's note of the "Draft List of the Types of Conformity Assessment Procedures for EMC/EMI Used by ITA Participants" (G/IT/W/17).

5. The Committee continued its work on classification divergences. In this respect, the Committee continued with the last report from the customs experts (G/IT/14/Rev.1/Add.1) and the compilation document, as revised by the Secretariat (G/IT/W/6/Rev.3), as the basis for its discussions. In the past year, the Committee focused its discussions on List V (G/IT/W15). It conducted two rounds of discussions on the first 11 items of List V (G/IT/W/16 and G/IT/W/16/Rev.1). It also had initial discussions on the remaining 9 items of List V (G/IT/W/18/Rev.1).

6. As a follow-up to the IT Symposium organized by the Committee in October 2004, a number of elements were taken up for discussions in the past year (G/IT/W/14). Discussions are expected to continue on these matters in the course of its future work.

7. The Committee has consistently reviewed the status of implementation, a summary of which is provided in document G/IT/1 and its revisions. The document noted that most participants had submitted the formal documentation for rectification and modification of their WTO schedules in order to incorporate the commitments arising from the Ministerial Declaration and most had been certified by the Director-General. Three participants were still awaiting the completion of domestic procedural requirements or had not yet submitted the necessary documentation. During the year, three implementation/classification matters were raised under this agenda item by two participants in respect of the practices of three other participants.

8. The Chairman regularly informed the Committee under "other business" that participants continued to consult among themselves on review of product coverage. He encouraged delegations to continue their efforts.
