

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

G/L/159
2 April 1997

(97-1355)

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MINISTERIAL DECLARATION ON TRADE IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY PRODUCTS

Note by the Secretariat

Informal Meeting of 26 March 1997

At the beginning of the meeting the Chairman made the following observations:

"At the Ministerial Meeting in Singapore, 29 WTO Members and States or separate customs territories in the process of acceding to the WTO agreed on a Ministerial Declaration on Trade in Information Technology Products (WT/MIN(96)/16) envisaging elimination of customs duties and other duties and charges on these products by January, 2000.

The following steps were agreed for implementation of the Declaration:

- (i) The finalization of plurilateral technical discussions by 31 January 1997 on, *inter alia*, extended staging of reduction and expansion of product coverage in limited circumstances.
- (ii) Submission by participants of proposed schedules of concessions no later than 1 March 1997.
- (iii) Review and approval of schedules on a consensus basis no later than 1 April 1997.
- (iv) Notification to the Director-General of acceptance of the annex on the modalities and product coverage.
- (v) Meeting of participants no later than 1 April 1997 to review the state of acceptances and the conclusions to be drawn therefrom.

It was agreed that participants would implement the actions foreseen in the Declaration provided that participants representing approximately 90 per cent of world trade in information technology products had by then notified their acceptance and provided that staging had been agreed to the participants' satisfaction.

In the plurilateral technical discussions held before 31 January 1997, it was agreed to amend the description of the products in attachment B and this amendment is already reflected in the schedules of participants. The proposals in respect of some of the products were found to be a classification issue and were solved in this context. These products are enumerated in the conference room document number 2 dated 31 January 1997 and there is an understanding that these products should be deemed

to be included. Four requests for extended staging were agreed on 31 January 1997 and six more were agreed thereafter.

Participants have met yesterday and today and reviewed and approved 25 schedules on a consensus basis.

The Director-General has received the notifications of acceptance of 21¹ participants and these have been circulated and are before you.

Today we are meeting to review the state of acceptances and to assess the conclusions to be drawn therefrom. According to the calculations made by the Secretariat, the share of world trade in information technology products of the 25 schedules that have been approved is more than 92 per cent. Thus I think that the participants are in a position to establish that the criterion of share of world trade laid down in paragraph 4 of the annex of the Ministerial Declaration has been met. In approving the 25 schedules you have also approved the extended staging reflected in these schedules.

I have another point to raise. There is a general desire among participants that the schedule of concessions finalized in these negotiations should be released to the public through the internet. Some participants have expressed difficulties in this regard. In view of this, the Secretariat will be ready to put the schedules of individual participants on the internet if they send a communication to the Secretariat to this effect.

With these observations I would like to ask if participants are in a position to approve the draft implementation text that was distributed last night.

After the circulation of the text the Secretariat has received some more comments which have been incorporated in the text.

The names of the 25 participants will be listed at the appropriate place in the text."

The participants took note of the observations by the Chairman.

¹ For notifications of acceptance were received during the course of the meeting.