

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

G/L/659
14 November 2003

(03-6108)

REPORT (2003) 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 four formal meetings in 2003: on 28 January, 24 April, 16 July, and 5 November. The minutes of these meetings are contained in documents G/IT/M/34 to G/IT/M/37. Mr. H. Yoshikawa (Japan) was elected Chairman of the Committee for 2003.

3. The total number of participants to the Ministerial Declaration is sixty.¹ In the past year, the schedules of Bahrain, the People's Republic of China, and Egypt were circulated and approved by the Committee. 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 revised paper (G/IT/SPEC/Q2/11/Rev.1) which provided an overview of the submissions to the NTMs Work Programme. The Committee proceeded with its work on the pilot project on EMC/EMI by holding a Workshop in April. The Chairman's summary report from the workshop was well received. As part of this work on the pilot project, it was noted that 24 responses to the survey on EMC/EMI had been received and the Secretariat had updated its overview of the survey responses (G/IT/SPEC/Q4/19/Rev.2). The Committee took note of the submissions made under Phase II of the Work Programme and agreed to have an informal meeting in order to discuss how to proceed.

5. The Committee continued work on classification divergences. In this respect the Committee noted the work of the customs experts and began to examine the most recent report (G/IT/14/Rev.1/Add.1). In addition, the Secretariat updated its compilation of the divergences (G/IT/W/6/Rev.2) so that the Committee could have a clearer understanding of the situation as it took up this work. Discussions continued on the subject matter during the year and the Committee agreed to send one item to the WCO for its classification opinion and to take up two other parts of the

¹ The schedule of Morocco was in the process of being formally approved assuming there were no comments received by 14 November 2003. Thus, the total number of participants would then be sixty-one.

classification work at the next Committee meeting in 2004. Ways of addressing the other matters would be discussed at an upcoming informal meeting.

6. 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. The Committee noted that a number of participants had not submitted letters of acceptance and some discussions took place as to the importance of these letters. Furthermore, it was noted that two participants were still awaiting the completion of domestic procedural requirements or had not yet submitted the necessary documentation. The Committee asked the Chairman to follow-up with the delegations concerned about these two outstanding matters.

7. 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. Also under "other business", it was noted that Japan had raised three matters concerning IT products during the year.
