



27 October 2021

(21-8137)

Page: 1/2

**REPORT (2021) OF THE COMMITTEE OF PARTICIPANTS ON THE EXPANSION
OF TRADE IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY PRODUCTS**

1.1. 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.

1.2. The Committee's rules of procedure provide for observer status to WTO Members that 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 the Organisation 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 issues of HS classification and HS amendments are included on the agenda.

1.3. The Committee has held two formal meetings and one informal meeting in 2021. The Committee's formal meetings were held on 15 April and 17 September and their minutes are contained in documents G/IT/M/73 and G/IT/M/74, respectively. The Committee's informal meeting was held on 30 July 2021 regarding Lao PDR's draft ITA Schedule.

1.4. Ms Uma Muniandy (Singapore) (Chairperson of the Committee for 2020) chaired the Committee's work until 30 July 2021. On 2 August 2021, through a written procedure, the Committee elected by acclamation Ms Katarzyna Stecz (Poland) as Chairperson for the period of 2021-2022.

1.5. As of 17 September, the total number of WTO Members that are participants to the Ministerial Declaration is 82. The Committee has consistently reviewed the status of implementation, a summary of which is provided in document G/IT/1 and its revisions. One participant had not yet submitted its ITA Schedule for the rectification and modification of its WTO Schedule in order to incorporate the commitments arising from the Ministerial Declaration.

1.6. At the Committee's meeting of 15 April, the Committee reviewed document G/IT/W/52, which had been circulated on 4 January 2021 at the request of the United Kingdom. In this document, the United Kingdom had undertaken to continue implementing, in its own right, all tariff liberalization commitments with respect to products annexed to both the 1996 ITA and the 2015 ITA Expansion from the expiration of the transition period relating to its withdrawal from the European Union. The United Kingdom indicated that it had replicated all ITA and ITA Expansion tariff liberalization commitments in Schedule XIX-United Kingdom, which could be found in document G/MA/TAR/RS/570. Two participants raised concerns regarding the completeness of the information that the United Kingdom had provided on its ITA commitments in the document submitted and sought bilateral consultations with the United Kingdom for clarification. At the Committee's meeting of 17 September, the relevant parties informed the Committee on the outcome of their bilateral discussions. Technical discussions will continue regarding the United Kingdom's ITA Schedule.

1.7. Three implementation issues, concerning India, Indonesia, and China, were raised at the Committee's meeting in April. The implementation issue concerning Indonesia was reiterated at the Committee's meeting in September.

1.8. The Committee continued its deliberations on the Non-Tariff Measures (NTMs) Work Programme in 2021. Regarding its work on the EMC/EMI Pilot Project, the Committee took note that, among current participants, 43 had provided survey responses, and the Committee encouraged those that had not yet done so to provide the information without any further delay.

1.9. On classification divergences, with regard to the possible HS2007 classification for the remaining 22 "Attachment B" items, the Secretariat had so far received comments from 21 delegations, which were compiled in document G/IT/W/40 and its Addenda and Supplements. The Committee encouraged delegations that had not yet provided their comments to do so as soon as possible in order to arrive at a common classification for these products within the existing HS nomenclature.

1.10. On product coverage, the Committee took note of the reports and updates from those participants that were engaged in the 2015 ITA Expansion (WT/L/956 and WT/MIN(15)/25) and its implementation.

1.11. Regarding new participants, Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) had sent a Note Verbale to the WTO on 28 June expressing its intention to join the ITA and the ITA Expansion Agreements. Lao PDR's draft ITA and ITA Expansion Schedules and other related documents were circulated to ITA Participants for review on 13 July. An informal Committee meeting was held on 30 July, to listen to Participants' preliminary feedback on Lao PDR's draft Schedule. At its meeting of 17 September, the Committee reviewed the progress made in bilateral consultations. Lao PDR reiterated its commitment to join the ITA and ITA Expansion before or at MC12. A number of participants appreciated the efforts made by Lao PDR in its accession process and looked forward to welcoming it in the ITA in the near future.

1.12. "The ITA Symposium: 25 Years of the Information Technology Agreement" was held on 16-17 September in hybrid format in Geneva. Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Director-General of the WTO, gave the opening remarks, and Ambassador Michael Punke, Vice President of Amazon, delivered the keynote address. Twenty-six business leaders, scholars, senior government officials, and representatives of international organizations made presentations around five themes, namely: (i) trade liberalization under the ITA and the evolution of global trade in ICT products; (ii) the role of ITA products, ICT and digital solutions in combatting the COVID-19 pandemic; (iii) latest advances in technologies and the ICT sector; (iv) the role of ICT as an economic development tool; and (v) the future of the ITA. Around 150 people registered and participated in the event online and a few Geneva-based delegates attended the Symposium in person. At its meeting of 17 September, the Committee listened to the feedback of Participants on the Symposium. Participants applauded the success of the Symposium and expressed their appreciation to the Secretariat for the event's preparation and organization.
