REPORT (2024) 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. As of 15 October, the ITA has 56 Participants, covering 84 WTO Members. The Committee has consistently reviewed the status of implementation, a summary of which is provided in document G/IT/1 and its revisions.

1.4. The Committee has held two formal meetings and one informal meeting in 2024. The Committee's formal meetings were held on 11 April and 1 November, and their minutes are contained in documents G/IT/M/80 and G/IT/M/81[1], respectively. The Committee also held one informal meeting, on 17 September, and the Chairperson's summary of that meeting was circulated in document JOB/IT/40.

1.5. On 31 May 2024, through a written procedure, the Committee elected by acclamation Mr Ta-Lin (Peter) SHIH (Chinese Taipei) as Chairperson for the period of 2024-2025.

1.6. Trade concerns over ITA implementation in Indonesia and Egypt were raised at the Committee's meeting in April and reiterated at its meeting in November.

1.7. The Committee continued its deliberations on the Non-Tariff Measures (NTMs) Work Programme in 2024. In February and March, a round of informal consultations were held on the NTMs Work Programme under the chairpersonship of the ITA Committee's Chairperson during 2023-2024, Mr Don Spedding. At the Committee's formal meeting of 11 April, the Secretariat (Dr Xiaodong Wang) presented an overview of NTB discussions in the Committee.[2] At that same meeting, in response to the calls of some participants, and with a view to enhancing synergies between the ITA Committee and other relevant WTO bodies, the Secretariat staff responsible for TBT issues (Mr Lauro Locks) was invited to deliver a presentation and share information on the relevant discussions on this issue in the TBT Committee.[3]

1.8. Regarding its work on the Electromagnetic Compatibility/Electromagnetic Interference (EMC/EMI) Pilot Project, the Committee noted that no new submission had been received in 2024. Among current participants, 46 had provided survey responses. The consolidated list of conformity assessment procedures for EMC/EMI used by ITA Participants had been updated in document

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[1] To be circulated.

[2] The background note prepared by the Secretariat was circulated in document G/IT/W/59.

[3] The presentation was circulated in document RD/IT/56.

G/IT/W/17/Rev.30. 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. In addition, a few delegations requested the Secretariat to provide technical inputs regarding the 22 "Attachment B" items in the context of the latest HS nomenclature (HS 2022). At the Committee's formal meeting of 1 November, the Secretariat made a presentation on the subject, providing a review of the relevant discussions and decisions made by the Committee.[4]

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. One delegation emphasized the importance of addressing non-tariff measures while exploring the possibility of further expanding product coverage.

1.11. To identify priorities for the possible future work of the Committee, a series of informal consultations were held by the Chairperson (Mr Ta-Lin SHIH) before the summer break, and a summary of those discussions was provided in his report to the Committee at its formal meeting held on 1 November. During the informal consultations, ITA Participants had exchanged views on a number of key issues, including the following: how to address remaining classification divergences; how to improve transparency in the agreement's implementation; and how to expand participation to the Agreement. The reflections and ideas suggested by Participants established a good basis for further discussions in the Committee. In the same connection, at the ITA Committee's formal meeting in April, the delegation of China had submitted a written proposal on enhancing the functioning and relevance of the Committee[5], and the delegation of Japan had introduced a relevant APEC study. Japan also provided a further update on the APEC study at the November formal meeting.

1.12. To improve WTO Members' understanding of the ITA and ITA Expansion Agreements, and building on the success of the first such ITA workshop, in 2023, the Secretariat organized the second Geneva-based Workshop on the ITA, which ran from 28 October to 1 November 2024. 26 government officials from 26 WTO developing Members and governments in the process of WTO accession participated in the workshop.

1.13. In addition, to advocate the importance of the ITA and to encourage wider participation by developing economies, the Secretariat actively engaged in various technical assistance (TA) activities organized by the WTO during the course of the year, including the Regional Trade Policy Course (RTPC) for the Asia-Pacific region, held in May; the Introductory Trade Policy Course for LDCs, held from 16 September to 4 October; the Advanced Trade Policy Course (ATPC), held in October; as well as the 2024 Training Course on Market Access Negotiations on Goods for WTO Accession, held from 7 to 11 October. The presentations on the ITA were highly appreciated by the participating government officials from developing countries. The Secretariat reported on the above-mentioned technical assistance activities to the Committee at its November formal meeting. ITA Participants encouraged the Secretariat to continue to organize such activities in the future with a view to improving non-participants' understanding of the ITA Agreement.

1.14. At its formal meeting of 12 September 2023, the Committee had adopted two proposals to improve the functioning of the ITA Committee.[6] One of the two adopted proposals had been to introduce an eAgenda on a trial basis. To implement the Committee's decision, the Secretariat introduced the new eAgenda platform at the Committee's formal meeting of 11 April 2024. A guideline on how to use the ITA Committee's eAgenda was prepared and circulated in document JOB/IT/39. The eAgenda was used, on a trial basis, for the Committee's formal meeting held on 1 November 2024.

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[4] The Secretariat presentation was circulated in document RD/IT/57.
[5] The written proposal from China was circulated in document G/IT/W/58.
[6] The proposals adopted by the Committee were circulated in document G/IT/34.