

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

G/L/577
22 October 2002

(02-5770)

REPORT (2002) 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 2002: on 15 February, 3 May, 5 July, and 14 October. A fifth meeting is envisaged for the end of the year. The minutes of these meetings are contained in documents G/IT/M/30 to G/IT/M/33 (to be issued). Mr. P. Gregersen (Denmark) was elected Chairman of the Committee for 2002.
3. The total number of participants to the Ministerial Declaration is fifty-seven. In the past year, the schedule of the People's Republic of China was circulated to all participants. However, its approval by the Committee remained pending as consultations were still taking place between China and the US on certain issues. 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 paper which provided an overview of the submissions to the NTMs Work Programme. The Committee agreed to the first phase of the pilot project as proposed by Canada, and in this connection, a factual survey on Electromagnetic Compatibility (EMC) and Electromagnetic Interference (EMI) of information technology products was carried out. Nineteen responses were received to this survey and the Secretariat prepared an overview of the survey responses as well as a bibliography on these two matters. Concerning the second phase of Canada's pilot project, Canada circulated a detailed proposal of a workshop on EMC/EMI which was adopted by the Committee, subject to financing being available to enable the attendance to the Workshop of at least one regulator from each developing country participant. One Member stated that the scope of the products covered in the context of the Workshop should be clarified. The Committee took note of the additional submissions made under Phase II of the Work Programme.
5. The Committee continued work on classification divergences. The Committee noted that an official reply had been received from the WCO Harmonized System Committee regarding the list of classification issues sent to it by the Committee. Canada made a submission on the existing listing of classifications. Following agreement in the Committee, an informal meeting of customs experts was held on 6-8 May 2002. The Committee took note of the summary provided by the Chairman on the

outcome of the work undertaken by the customs experts. The Chairman indicated that a report of this meeting was under preparation by the Secretariat and once finalized would need to be examined by the Committee.

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. A few countries were still awaiting the completion of domestic procedural requirements or had not yet submitted the necessary documentation.

7. The Committee also addressed the issue of circulation and derestriction of documents as the new policy adopted by the General Council (WT/L/452) specifically excluded the documents of the Committee. The Committee agreed to follow the General Council decision with respect to the policy for circulation and derestriction of documents of this Committee. In relation to documents which had been issued thus far in the G/IT/SPEC/- series as restricted and which pertained to the NTMs Work Programme, the Committee agreed that these documents should be derestricted.

8. The Chairman regularly informed the Committee under "other business" that various participants continued to consult among themselves on review of product coverage. He encouraged delegations to continue consultations. Also under "other business", the Committee took note of the response that the Chairman had provided to a request by the Chairman of the Committee on Trade and Development for information on the Committee's work with respect to special and differential treatment.
