

REPORT (2004) 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 three formal meetings thus far in 2004: on 26 February, 4 June¹, and 19 October. The minutes of these meetings are contained in documents G/IT/M/38 to G/IT/M/40². It is foreseen that a fourth formal meeting would be convened on 9 December 2004. Mr. F. Seppey (Canada) was elected Chairman of the Committee for 2004.
3. The total number of participants to the Ministerial Declaration is sixty-three. After the issuance of the last report at the end of last year, the schedule of Morocco was circulated and approved by the Committee. Furthermore, as a result of the EU Enlargement on 1 May 2004, Hungary and Malta became participants to the Ministerial Declaration upon joining the European Union. 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 papers on the subject (G/IT/SPEC/Q2/11/Rev.1 and G/IT/SPEC/Q4/19/Rev.2) which provided an overview of the submissions and an overview of the survey responses. The Committee proceeded with its work on the EMC/EMI Pilot Project with a contribution by one participant concerning 'best practices' for EMC/EMI conformity assessment procedures (G/IT/24 + Corr.1³). As part of this work, the Committee examined the draft "Guidelines" for EMC/EMI conformity assessment procedures, which it took up at its meeting of 19 October 2004. It is expected that work would continue on the Guidelines later this year.
5. The Committee continued its work on classification divergences. In this respect, the Committee continued with the last report from the customs experts (G/IT/14/Rev.1/Add.1) and the compilation document, as revised by the Secretariat (G/IT/W/6/Rev.2), as the basis for its discussions. In particular, the Committee focused on Lists I(A) and I(B) of this document as the first stage, and

¹ One agenda item carried forward to 28 June 2004.

² To be issued.

³ In English only.

progress was made in that the Committee was able to endorse the classifications listed in List I(A) on an ad referendum basis. Furthermore, initial discussions commenced on List V of this document, which was further expanded upon in G/IT/W/11. Discussions were expected to continue on this subject matter in the Committee later this year.

6. At its meeting in June, the Committee agreed to hold an IT Symposium in order to update ITA and other WTO Members on developments in information technology, to elicit updated information on the nature of non-tariff barriers to trade in IT products, and to assess the role of IT trade in supporting development in those markets where liberalization has occurred. After some funding was secured for 2004, the Symposium was held for a day and a half on 18-19 October 2004. The Symposium was well appreciated by the attendees and a number of elements that the Committee may take forward and integrate into its work programme were noted.

7. 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. Three participants were still awaiting the completion of domestic legal procedural requirements or had not yet submitted the necessary documentation. During the year, two implementation/classification matters were raised under this agenda item by two participants in respect of the practices of two other participants.

8. 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.
