

REPORT (2012) 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 two formal meetings in 2012: on 15 May and 1 November. The minutes of these meetings are contained in documents G/IT/M/55 and G/IT/M/56. Mr. Aaron Fowler (Canada) was elected Chairman of the Committee for 2012.
3. The total number of participants to the Ministerial Declaration is 75. The Russian Federation's draft ITA schedule together with the Secretariat's verification sheet, were circulated to Participants for their review and approval on 1 August 2012. On 16 August 2012, the Chairman of the Committee transmitted the comments received from delegations to the Russian Federation. At the Committee meeting of 1 November 2012, the Russian Federation stated that work was on-going to address comments received. Several delegations urged Russia to complete its procedures as soon as possible in order to become a full Participant to the ITA at an early date. On 25 September 2012, the Secretariat received a communication from the Republic of Tajikistan confirming its commitment to become an ITA participant upon its accession to the WTO. On the same day, the Secretariat also received Tajikistan's draft ITA schedule and performed the electronic verification of the schedule which showed no discrepancies. On 26 September 2012, Tajikistan's draft ITA schedule and the verification sheet were distributed to Participants for their review and approval by 19 October. Only one delegation submitted some technical comments. At the meeting of 1 November 2012, the Committee agreed that once any necessary technical changes had been incorporated, a fax relating to these changes will be circulated to Participants giving one week for comments. Tajikistan would become a full participant to the ITA and its ITA schedule would come into effect upon the date of Tajikistan's accession to the WTO. 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 the 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 issues of HS classification and HS amendments are included in the agenda.
4. The Committee continued its deliberations on the Non-Tariff Measures (NTMs) Work Programme in 2012. With regard to its work on the EMC/EMI Pilot Project, the Committee took note

that among the 48¹ participants, 28 have provided survey responses and the Committee encouraged those that had not provided the information to do so without any further delay. In considering ways to advance and expand its work on NTMs other than EMC/EMI, the Committee also heard reports and updates by participants on their contributions to work on NTMs, including in other bodies of the WTO and informally

5. On classification divergences, the Committee, at the meetings of 15 May and 1 November 2012, further considered the draft decision proposed by the Chair for the endorsement of List I-A items (G/IT/W/34). The Committee also discussed how to advance its work on classification divergences for other items.

6. At the meeting of 15 May 2012, the Committee agreed to close its discussions on the European Union proposal for a review of the Information Technology Agreement (G/IT/W/28).

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. One participant still had not yet submitted the necessary documentation.

8. As agreed at the Committee meeting on 24 October 2011, an ITA Symposium was organized on 14-15 May 2012 on occasion of the 15th anniversary of the ITA and with the participation of the private sector. The purpose of the Symposium was to conduct a review of trade liberalization and the evolution of global trade in ICT products since 1996, and their impact, including on developing countries; to have an overview of the latest developments in the ICT sector (new technology, technological innovation, and the growth of global supply chains), the socio-economic benefits, including as an enabler of sustainable development; and to look towards the future, including prospects for, and challenges to, the continued expansion of trade in ICT products. Statements and presentations of all speakers are available on the WTO website.

9. At the meeting of 15 May 2012, as suggested by some delegations, the review of product coverage was included as a regular agenda item of the Committee. At the meetings of 15 May and 1 November 2012, Participants reported on the bilateral and plurilateral technical consultations initiated by some delegations on product expansion. They also agreed to revert on this matter at future meetings.

¹ The European Union counts as one.