

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

G/L/797
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REPORT (2006) 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 2006: on 4 February, 21 July, and 31 October. The minutes of these meetings are contained in documents G/IT/M/45 to G/IT/M/47. Mr. Martin Pospíšil (Czech Republic) was elected Chairman of the Committee for 2006.

3. The total number of participants to the Ministerial Declaration is sixty-nine. Since the last report, the schedules of Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam were circulated and approved by the Committee. The Committee noted that the concessions contained in the schedule of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam would come into effect upon the date of its accession to the WTO and the duty-free treatment for all ITA products will be achieved within seven years from the date of Viet Nam'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 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 and approved the "Guidelines for EMC/EMI Conformity Assessment Procedures" (G/IT/25) on an *ad referendum* basis. It also took note of the Secretariat's note of the "Draft List of the Types of Conformity Assessment Procedures for EMC/EMI Used by ITA Participants" (G/IT/W/17/Rev.3).

5. The Committee further 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.3), as the basis for its discussions. In the past year, the Committee focused its discussions on List V (G/IT/W15). It conducted further discussions on List V (G/IT/W/20). Communications were also received from the World Customs Organization (WCO) concerning List III (G/IT/26 and G/IT/26/Add.1).

6. As a follow-up to the IT Symposium organized by the Committee in October 2004, a number of elements were taken up for discussions in the past year (G/IT/W/14), and in particular on the issue of classification related to the transposition of HS96 to HS2002 (G/IT/W/22). Discussions are expected to continue on these matters in the course of its future work.

7. At the meeting of 21 July, the Committee discussed the suggestion by the Chairman regarding the preparation to organize another event, such as a workshop or a symposium next year to commemorate the 10-year anniversary of the ITA. At the meeting of 31 October 2006, the Committee agreed to hold the symposium in March 2007.

8. At the meetings of 21 July and 31 October 2006, the Committee discussed the proposals by the United States concerning product coverage of the current ITA.

9. 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 was still awaiting the completion of domestic procedural requirements or had not yet submitted the necessary documentation. During the year, one implementation/classification matter was raised under this agenda item by one participant in respect of the practices of another participant.

10. The Committee, under "other business", considered a request from the Global ICT industry associations and agreed with the Chairman that he will initiate a workshop outside the context of the Committee on 7 December 2006, as an opportunity for the Committee Participants, to meet all interested IT industry associations from the ITA Participants.

11. 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.
