

Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

SUMMARY OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21-22 JUNE 2000

Note by the Secretariat

I. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1. The Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (the "Committee") held its eighteenth meeting on 21-22 June 2000. In the absence of the Chairman of the Committee, Mr. Attie Swart (South Africa), the meeting was opened by the Chairman of the Council for Trade in Goods, Ambassador Carlos Perez del Castillo (Uruguay). The agenda proposed in WTO/AIR/1330 was adopted with amendments.

II. ELECTION OF CHAIRPERSON

2. The Committee elected Mr. S.I.M. Nayyar (Pakistan) as its new Chairman, and thanked the previous Chairman for his contributions and personal engagement in the work of the Committee.

III. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGREEMENT

(a) Information from Members

(i) *Activities of Members*

European Communities - SPS seminar organized by Italy

3. The representative of the European Communities provided information regarding a seminar organized by Italy in February 2000, in Lithuania. The seminar focussed on various aspects of the SPS Agreement as part of the Lithuanian Government's negotiations for WTO accession.

Brazil - Areas free from foot-and-mouth disease (FMD)

4. The representative of Brazil reported that the Office International des Epizooties (OIE) declared several states in Brazil to be "FMD-free with vaccination" during its 68th General Session.¹ The FMD-free with vaccination zone in Brazil now comprised the following states: Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, "Distrito Federal", Goiás, Mato Grosso, Minas Gerais, Paraná and São Paulo. The representative of Brazil described the OIE declaration as a positive development which should lead Members to revise sanitary barriers imposed on Brazilian meat.

¹ G/SPS/GEN/184, page 2.

European Communities – Third Asia-Europe Meeting/Trade Facilitation Action Plan (ASEM-TFAP) meeting on quarantine and SPS measures

5. The representative of the European Communities reported that the second ASEM-TFAP workshop was held in Beijing on 23-26 November 1999. He noted that the third ASEM-TFAP workshop would be held in The Hague on 11-14 September 2000, in advance of the third ASEM summit on 20-21 October 2000. The main topic of the third workshop would be risk analysis (including risk assessment, risk management and risk communication). Officials from the relevant standard-setting bodies, the WTO Secretariat, as well as all ASEM parties were expected to attend the seminar, which the European Communities believed would further the ASEM-TFAP goals of enhancing transparency and reducing non-tariff trade barriers.

Chile – Activities since the last Committee meeting

6. The representative of Chile noted that the European Communities, Mexico and the United States were in the final stages of recognizing areas in Chile as free from classical swine fever. In addition, he reported that Chile and Australia had entered into a bilateral agreement on cooperation and coordination in sanitary and phytosanitary measures. Chile had also participated in the May 2000 OIE meeting and various meetings of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

(ii) Follow-up to issues previously raised

7. Referring to a July 1999 agreement by the Committee (G/SPS/R/15, paragraph 15), the Chairman invited Members to provide information regarding the status of previously raised issues, in particular those dealing with specific trade concerns and specific notifications. Given that a number of Members had stressed the importance of being informed about the present situation of previously raised issues, the Chairman commented that it was somewhat disappointing that only a few Members were providing such information.

8. The Secretariat reported that it was in the process of preparing a document identifying all of the trade issues that had been raised in meetings of the Committee since 1995, indicating both when the issues had been discussed and what had been their outcome as reported to the Committee. This document would be available before the next meeting of the Committee.

European Communities – Measures taken in response to dioxin

9. With reference to the 1999 dioxin contamination event in Belgium, the representative of the European Communities explained that all previously restricted products could now be circulated and exported without any additional certification. The representative of the European Communities acknowledged a general acceptance among Members that EC and Belgian products no longer represented a health risk. However, some Members had neither lifted their measures nor responded to the January 2000 letter requesting that they remove them. He emphasized that the European Communities reserved its right to any necessary action with regard to unjustified trade barriers. G/SPS/GEN/123/Add.4 was the final document in a series of publications informing the Committee of issues related to the dioxin contamination.

Argentina – Citrus exports to the United States

10. The representative of Argentina reported that after six years of negotiations with the United States regarding citrus produced in northwest Argentina, a favourable conclusion had been reached.

European Communities – Measures affecting the trade of bovine semen

11. The representative of the European Communities reminded the Committee that since the inception of the 1996 BSE crisis, several countries had banned imports of a range of bovine products, including milk, milk products and bovine semen. To his knowledge, no Member was still maintaining restrictions on milk and milk products due to BSE. However, several Members were still applying import restrictions on EC bovine semen. The European Communities was very concerned about the legitimacy of the restrictions and reserved the right to take any necessary action with regards to unjustified trade barriers. The nature of the EC concerns were detailed in G/SPS/GEN/187.

(b) Specific trade concerns

(i) *New issues*

Hungary - Turkey's ban on imports of live cattle and beef meat

12. The representative of Hungary expressed concerns about Turkey's ongoing restrictions on imports of live cattle and beef meat, which had been in place since 1996. The representative recalled that several Members had previously questioned the WTO-consistency of such measures. Although he appreciated the policy objective of the Turkish measures (i.e. to prevent the spread of FMD), he questioned Turkey's decision to extend its FMD-related measures to countries known to be free from FMD. According to the OIE, Hungary had been free from FMD for nearly 20 years, and had pursued FMD control policies which made vaccination redundant. The representative of Hungary suggested that the Turkish import ban was in violation of Article 2.2 of the Agreement. Finally, on the basis of Articles 5.1 and 5.8 of the Agreement, he requested Turkey to provide the risk assessment carried out by the relevant Turkish authority regarding the importation of live cattle and beef from FMD-free countries.

13. The representative of the European Communities indicated that they were monitoring this issue between Hungary and Turkey. The representative of New Zealand also voiced concerns about the Turkish measures and requested Turkey to provide information to the Committee on whether or not there was a ban on live cattle imports, and on beef meat. He also asked if Turkey had an import licensing system and if so, how risk was assessed and how licenses were issued.

14. The representative of Turkey thanked the Hungarian delegation for bringing the issue to his attention before placing it on the Committee agenda. He regretted that an expert from the Turkish Ministry of Agriculture, who had been scheduled to attend this meeting to explain Turkey's measures, had at the last moment been unable to come. Turkey would soon provide a report on an interdepartmental review of the sanitary measures. He was confident that the Turkish authorities would take all necessary decisions to settle this matter.

Philippines – Statement on behalf of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) regarding Australian restrictions on tropical fresh fruits

15. The representative of the Philippines pointed out that major ASEAN exports, which were widely accepted by other importing countries, faced restrictions in the Australian market. He suggested that for some fruits, Australia's stringent SPS measures were being applied without an accompanying risk assessment and that many Australian measures were more trade restrictive than necessary (G/SPS/GEN/194). Emphasizing that such restrictions should be reviewed within a reasonable period of time, the representative expressed concern that Australia seemed to regard this provision as a matter of scheduling and not as an objective standard of "reasonable period of time." The representative of Malaysia suggested that Australia conduct ASEAN-wide risk analyses, given ASEAN countries' similar pest profiles.

16. The representative of Australia offered initial detailed comments on each of the points raised by the Philippines (G/SPS/GEN/189), and noted that a formal response would be provided in due course. He further stressed that Australia fully accepted its obligations under the Agreement, and considered the "reasonable period of time" provision as a substantive commitment. In response to the Malaysian suggestion, the representative of Australia explained that a pest risk analysis was by definition specific to any two trading partners and that the results of such analyses would differ between exporting countries according to their pest status. Nevertheless, he indicated a willingness to conduct ASEAN-wide risk analyses if it was the most efficient way of evaluating the pest and disease risks.

17. The representative of the United States also expressed concerns with Australia's decision-making process. The US delegation noted that decisions to adopt SPS measures, based on risk assessment, must be completed in a responsive manner. He urged Australia to expedite its decisions regarding US applications for market access for Florida citrus and California table grapes. The representative of Australia replied that an import risk analysis for Florida citrus was underway but that it had been stalled several times because the relevant pest area had been unstable. With reference to the US application regarding California table grapes, he noted that an import risk analysis (including draft and final risk analyses) had been completed, that there had been several appeals, and that the Australian government had addressed the appeals and was about to release relevant information.

18. Korea, Brazil, India and the European Communities also expressed interest in Australia's SPS policies. In response to Brazil's comments regarding its market access applications for mango and papaya, the representative of Australia confirmed that these were on the list of matters to be considered by Australian risk analysts. With reference to India's concern about market access for mangoes, he reported that Indian authorities had provided helpful information to Australia regarding the efficacy of treatment for pests in mangoes, and that Australia was currently evaluating that information. Regarding EC concerns, he confirmed that an import risk analysis was being conducted on bulbs but he was unaware when the analysis might be completed.

19. The representative of Australia further commented on some issues which arose during the Risk Analysis Workshop that had preceded the Committee's meeting. Regarding the time it takes to conduct an import risk analysis, particularly in view of the number of access requests that many countries received, he noted that in the dispute resolution cases regarding application of the Agreement, importing Members were found to have an obligation to prepare risk assessments and, at least in Australia's experience with the salmon case, the expected standard for risk assessment was extraordinarily high. The representative noted that Australia had about 40 staff working on SPS-related matters, which required a lot of financial and management resources. He questioned whether other Members were capable of providing similar resources for carrying out risk analysis to a standard that would survive scrutiny in a WTO dispute.

20. The representative of Australia also addressed the issue of assigning priorities to market access requests. Recognizing that Members are obliged to deal with requests in a reasonable period of time, while taking into consideration all of the obligations embodied in the Agreement (in particular Articles 2, 3, 5 and especially 5.7), he noted that many Members were faced with far more access requests than could be dealt with instantaneously. In the case of Australia, although it was dealing with access requests from Members as fairly and quickly as possible, it was not possible to satisfy every Member instantaneously. Finally, the representative reminded the Committee that Australia had suggested in the past that the Committee discuss the subject of priority-setting.

(ii) *Issues previously raised*

Philippines – Australian restrictions on sauces containing benzoic acid

21. The representative of the Philippines noted that this item was first introduced in the Committee in October 1998, and was now well-known. He requested an update on the situation from Australia. The representative of Australia reported that the relevant part of the Australian Food Standards Code had been undergoing a revision process. The present restrictions on benzoic acid would be removed and replaced on 22 June 2000 with a 1,000 milligrams per kilogram tolerance level for benzoates in sauces. The new tolerance level, as part of the Australian Food Standards Code, would apply to all food sold in the Australian market, whether produced in Australia or imported from any other country, including benzoic acid in sauces from the Philippines.

Thailand – Mexico's prohibition of Thai milled rice

22. The Chairman noted that this item had been raised at several meetings of the Committee since October 1997. Document G/SPS/GEN/172, contained a summary of Thailand's concerns. The representative of Thailand reported that his delegation had held bilateral consultations with Mexico on 20 June 2000. Thailand had posed the following questions and comments with respect to the notification G/SPS/N/MEX/153:

- Was the requirement for an international phytosanitary certificate specifying that milled rice was free of Khapra Beetle being applied to all countries which export rice to Mexico?
- If the purpose of fumigation treatment requirements was to kill Khapra Beetle, then a certificate indicating freedom from Khapra Beetle should be sufficient.
- Why was the fumigation treatment required to be done at the port of entry? This provision was impractical given that Thai milled rice was packed in sacks prior to exportation.
- Would Mexico accept a fumigation treatment if it was done in a country of origin before packing and exporting?
- It was doubtful that fumigation treatment was required for all countries exporting rice to Mexico, particularly countries which exported rice overland.
- When would the amendment to the Mexican Official Standard NOM-028-FITO-1995 be officially adopted?

23. The representative of Mexico explained that the questions and comments from Thailand on its notification were being reviewed by the competent Mexican authorities. The sub-committee considering this matter would meet next month, and responses to each of the comments would be published in the Official Journal before the final standard was published.

Canada – Indian restrictions on bovine semen

24. The representative of Canada informed the Committee that bilateral consultations had failed to resolve this matter, and that the issue would remain on Canada's agenda until it was resolved. He noted that India continued to restrict Canadian exports of bovine semen despite (1) Canada being BSE-free; (2) the OIE and veterinary communities agreeing that BSE was not transmissible through semen; (3) OIE Article 3.2.13.3 specifically not calling for restrictions on trade in bovine semen; and (4) the absence of a risk assessment to justify India's ban on bovine semen. The delegate requested that India remove this restriction. The representative of the European Communities also expressed concerns about India's measures on bovine semen.

25. The representative of India noted that recent bilateral consultations had been helpful and that efforts were being made to find a solution to the dispute.

(c) Consideration of specific notifications received

26. No matters were raised under this agenda item.

(d) Any other matters related to the operation of transparency provisions

27. The Chairman noted that notifications received since the last meeting of the Committee were summarized, on a monthly basis, in G/SPS/GEN/173, G/SPS/GEN/175 and G/SPS/GEN/180. The most recent list of Enquiry Points had been circulated as G/SPS/ENQ/10 and G/SPS/ENQ/10/Add.1, and the latest list of National Notification Authorities could be found in G/SPS/GEN/167 and G/SPS/GEN/167Add.1. The list of Members which had identified both a National Notification Authority and an Enquiry Point was in G/SPS/GEN/27/Rev.6. The Secretariat reminded the Committee that the handbook *How to Apply the Transparency Provisions of the SPS Agreement* was available in English, French, and Spanish, and noted that all three language-versions would be available via the WTO home page.

28. The Chairman noted that additional responses to the questionnaire on SPS-related websites were found in G/SPS/GEN/144/Rev.1/Add.1. The Secretariat indicated that soon there would be links from the WTO home page to the various SPS-related websites of Member countries. As one example of the usefulness of these links, the Secretariat noted that several countries, such as Australia, made their risk assessments available to the public via their websites, which would now be directly reachable from the WTO website. The Secretariat urged all Members who had not yet responded to the website questionnaire to do so.

29. The Secretariat also announced the availability of a self-subscribing electronic mail list for all unrestricted SPS documents. The directions for subscribing were included in the handbook *How to Apply the Transparency Provisions of the SPS Agreement* (page 24). The Secretariat noted that it was sending documents to this list in the language received, normally twice a week.

30. Finally, the Secretariat emphasized that Members should *not* send their SPS notifications to the Agriculture and Commodities Division but rather to the WTO Central Registry of Notifications. Document WT/INF/25 provided information on how to submit notifications.

IV. THE SPS AGREEMENT AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

(a) Implementation of the provisions for special and differential treatment

31. The Chairman recalled that at the last Committee meeting Members agreed to focus discussion on issues of concern to developing countries, by identifying specific issues for consideration at each meeting of the Committee. The Committee had agreed to examine the issue of implementation of the special and differential treatment provisions of the Agreement at this meeting.

32. The Secretariat introduced a background paper summarizing discussions to date on the provisions for special and differential treatment (G/SPS/W/105). This document addressed only issues related to special and differential treatment as provided for in Article 10 of the Agreement, as other matters of concern to developing countries would be addressed at subsequent meetings.

33. The representative of Egypt noted that there were a number of special and differential treatment provisions that warranted closer attention and more effective application. Article 10 provided that developed countries should take into account the special needs of developing countries

in the preparation and application of SPS measures, allowing for a reasonable period of time to pass before the entry into force of a regulation, in particular those regulations affecting producers in developing countries. However, Egyptian potato exports were being subjected to another Member's requirements that potato imports be derived from certified disease-free areas. The requirements were harsh and unjustified. The Egyptian Government had submitted information indicating 133 pest-free areas, but only five were approved as meeting the import requirements. At the peak of the growing season, only a handful of exporters had access to potatoes from disease-free areas, with at least 41 exporters not able to meet contractual obligations for deliveries in that Member's market. In view of this dilemma, the delegate stated that it was all the more important that notification procedures give developing countries the opportunity to identify where they may have potential problems meeting new requirements affecting their exports so they could request a phased-in introduction of the proposed measures. Longer time frames for compliance with requirements on products of interest to developing countries should be accorded, and she noted that a number of developing countries had suggested a time period of 12 months.²

34. The representative of Egypt further noted that developing countries' representation in the international standard-setting organizations remained inadequate. She supported the Jamaican proposal to establish a fund for assisting developing countries to participate in the work of the SPS Committee and in the international standard-setting bodies.³

35. In Egypt's view, the special and differential treatment provisions would be effective only if they were complemented by sufficient technical assistance to strengthen developing countries' ability to deal with scientific issues, especially risk assessment, and to improve laboratory facilities and technologies needed to comply with SPS obligations.

36. The representative of Thailand urged developed country Members to provide documents in WTO working languages. In addition, he supported the proposals regarding Articles 10.1, 10.2, 10.3, and 10.4 as indicated in the Secretariat's document (G/SPS/GEN/190).

37. The representative of Jamaica repeated the proposal for the establishment of a joint fund to assist developing countries in participating in the work of the Committee and the international standard-setting bodies. Acknowledging that the WTO was not an international finance organization, she nonetheless encouraged the WTO to collaborate with the relevant bodies to set up such a fund, and was pleased with the apparent interest of the World Bank in this regard.

38. Pakistan, Mauritius, Bolivia and Chile expressed their desire to be associated with the issues raised by Egypt and Jamaica and particularly with the proposal for the establishment of a trust fund to help developing countries participate in standard-setting.

39. The representative of Cameroon emphasized that ongoing structural adjustment and accompanying problems related to production had hindered growth potential in Africa. He highlighted Central Africa's incapacity to regulate trade-related risks due to a lack of risk assessment expertise and suggested that developing countries be permitted to restrict, on the basis of the precautionary principle, the importation of foodstuffs which other Members presumed to present a health risk. In these circumstances, he suggested the developing country should not be required to conduct a risk assessment, but rather the exporting country should provide evidence that the risk had been entirely eliminated (G/SPS/GEN/192).

40. The representative of India endorsed many of the comments already made regarding the needs of developing countries, including the need to establish a trust fund to assist them. He emphasized

² G/SPS/W/105, para. 7.

³ G/SPS/W/105, para. 10.

that the provisions for special and differential treatment should be given the same legal status that other WTO provisions are accorded. The full text of his statement is contained in G/SPS/GEN/197.

41. The representative of Chile stated that developing countries should provide concrete examples of the need for special and differential treatment, especially in cases in which standards had been raised due to new technologies.

42. The representative of Canada also indicated that the Committee needed concrete examples of how existing special and differential treatment provisions had failed to meet the expectations of governments and producers in developing and least-developed countries. Canada imported fruits, vegetables and other food products from scores of countries that were unimaginable ten years ago, demonstrating that there was indeed an increasingly diverse trade in agriculture and food products between developing countries and developed countries. At the same time, he acknowledged that developing countries faced difficulties in meeting the obligations of the Agreement and stressed that Canadian regulators needed specific examples of how Article 10 could be made more economically beneficial to developing countries.

43. The representative of the United States also stressed the importance of identifying specific problems encountered by Members in their implementation of the Agreement. He noted that the Committee had facilitated efforts to see that technical assistance was provided to meet the needs of developing and least-developed countries, through cataloguing individual technical assistance requests and documenting past and current technical assistance activities of Members. The representative of the United States stated that developing country Members must be realistic in their expectations of what an importing Member could do to facilitate compliance with their regulations, noting that governments were not willing to compromise public health. At the same time, governments were willing to be flexible in finalizing regulations, and he noted implementation dates were commonly extended. Finally, he stressed that the WTO notification process was an important factor in this regard and that the United States was always interested in receiving comments on the regulations it notified.

44. The representative of the Philippines informed the Committee that ASEAN and India had requested a guideline be developed to facilitate the application of Article 10.2. Noting that the Philippines had experienced difficulties in the application of new methodologies such as Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) systems, she expressed hope that guidelines on Article 10.2 could address the concerns of developing countries in specific areas such as HACCP.

45. The representative of the European Communities posed questions regarding how long technical assistance must be maintained, under what conditions, and how the effects of technical assistance could be evaluated to ensure that it was efficient. He queried also whether extensive special treatment might give rise to concerns about discrimination.

(b) Statement by the World Bank – Development challenges in standards and agricultural trade

46. The representative of the World Bank highlighted several items in a paper submitted by the World Bank (G/SPS/GEN/195). A new World Bank programme on standards, development and trade began in November 1999, with three objectives:

- empirical research and analysis to identify, from a development perspective, the specific trade effects of standards and mandatory technical regulations;
- policy research studies, addressing questions such as the impact of harmonization of international standards, the relationship between mutual recognition agreements and trade, and standards- and trade-related technical assistance priorities for developing countries;

- capacity-building as it related to work associated with the World Bank Institute and other World Bank divisions. The representative noted two such capacity-building projects: (1) a seminar in Panama City for six Central American countries, focussed on identifying the specific links between standards and development and trade in the region, and (2) an examination of trade and standards as they related to development in the Asia Pacific, with a particular focus on least developed countries.

47. The second part of the World Bank paper summarized some of the key development challenges relating to SPS standards, including the operation of National Notification Authorities and Enquiry Points, costs of modernization of infrastructure related to standards and technical regulations, and the need for enhanced involvement by developing countries in the development of international standards. On this subject, the US Government was in the process of establishing a trust fund at the Bank to focus specifically on sub-Saharan Africa and international standards relating to development and trade objectives in that area. This fund would also support the design of a delivery mechanism to transmit to sub-Saharan Africa relevant information on trade and standards.

48. The third topic of the paper was a review of World Bank trade-related adjustment assistance during fiscal year 1999, with a specific focus on the Bank's support of development assistance in standards. World Bank trade-related assistance totalled approximately US\$28.9 billion in FY1999, of which US\$93 million was directly related to standards and SPS measures, and US\$319 million was related to indirect support of standards and SPS measures. Finally, the representative noted two FY1999 World Bank projects, outlined in the submission: a project in Brazil related to animal and plant health protection, and another in Morocco related to fisheries development.

49. The representative of Panama welcomed the World Bank's efforts to strengthen fundamental elements which impacted on agriculture production and compliance with the WTO agreements, and expressed hope that the World Bank's initiatives would be copied by other international organizations. The representative of Jamaica expressed appreciation for the World Bank's efforts to develop a trust fund for developing country assistance.

50. The representative of Australia observed that the process of conforming with SPS obligations placed a heavy burden on developing and least-developed countries. SPS activities such as providing information on pest and disease status, maintaining systems for providing valid inspection certification, providing valid lab test results and keeping up with technology so that treatments for pests and diseases were efficacious required an infrastructure of laboratories, legislation, institutions and professional expertise. In light of these requirements, substantial increased investment was necessary if Members were to reap the benefits of the SPS Agreement. He asked if these concerns were taken up in the World Bank programme, and if not, if there was a prospect of expanding the programme to address them. The representative of the World Bank noted that issues of practical investment in the areas of inspection and quarantine had been discussed at the Bank, within the units focussing on agriculture and in the context of the Integrated Framework.

51. The Chairman, acknowledging the desires stated by several Members, indicated that at the next meeting discussions would continue on the issue of special and differential treatment and also on equivalence. He invited Members to submit papers or non-papers on the subject of special and differential treatment, and requested that Members bring to the Committee's attention equivalence agreements reached with trading partners and specific examples of problems encountered in seeking equivalence agreements. The Chairman requested that the observer organizations provide any relevant information regarding their work on equivalence.

52. The Chairman acknowledged a general consensus that informal discussions would allow for in-depth and freer discussion of the issues. He would then report on these discussions to the formal

meeting. The Chairman also noted that there was no opposition to the participation of the observer organizations in the informal meetings.

V. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND COOPERATION

53. The Chairman recalled that at the July 1999 meeting of the Committee, the Secretariat was requested to prepare a questionnaire addressed to both developed and developing countries with the objective of identifying assistance that had been provided to developing countries in the context of Article 9 of the Agreement. The Chairman noted that responses to this questionnaire were included in G/SPS/GEN/143/Rev.1, with responses received since the last meeting of the Committee included in G/SPS/GEN/143/Rev.1/Add.1.

54. The representative of the United States introduced a document regarding its technical assistance programmes (G/SPS/GEN/181). The US Government recognized (1) the great need for technical assistance and (2) the benefits of implementing SPS measures, and had therefore provided a substantial amount of technical assistance over the last five years.

55. The representative of Cameroon explained that many problems experienced by developing countries stemmed from a lack of information and training. Central African countries were not adequately informed about WTO and SPS issues, and he requested the Secretariat to provide training in those technical areas taken up by the Committee, including risk analysis, transparency and mutual recognition.

56. The representative of the European Communities reported on the EC's involvement in technical assistance. For example, Spain had prepared a CD-rom containing international legislation on pesticide residues which was updated every year. Copies were available through the Secretariat. He also indicated that the comments made by Cameroon would be passed on to the relevant EC officials dealing with development in African, Caribbean and Pacific countries.

57. The representative of the European Communities requested that the Secretariat outline a typology of technical assistance needs and that Members be given the opportunity to decide which types of technical assistance action were most important. The representative of Canada added that such guidance should also be given to the World Bank as it begins to establish a fund for technical assistance. The Secretariat encouraged additional Members to respond to the questionnaire on technical assistance needs (G/SPS/W/101). It would be helpful if Members could identify areas of technical assistance that had been the most beneficial to them.

58. The representative of Chile expressed gratitude to the US Food and Drug Administration regarding two SPS training programmes. The representative of Jamaica noted bilateral cooperation and technical assistance activities between Jamaica and the United States which had led to the US lifting of a ban on ackee, a traditional Jamaican product. The representative of India thanked both the United States and Canada for technical assistance in food safety, animal and plant health. On behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the representative of South Africa thanked the United States for several SPS-related courses.

59. The representative of Egypt indicated that individual countries often had concerns which were best addressed in national as opposed to regional seminars. If regional seminars were to be held, they should involve countries with similar levels of development and of technical expertise. The Secretariat explained that it responded to technical assistance requests on a case-by-case basis, and while acknowledging that national seminars might allow for more in-depth discussions, the limited staff resources of the Secretariat were often put to better use in regional seminars where several countries could gather at once. The Secretariat further noted that regional seminars offered the unique

advantage of providing an occasion for similar countries, often with strong trade relations amongst themselves, to meet and discuss their obligations and rights under the Agreement.

60. The Secretariat reported on the WTO Workshop on Risk Analysis held 19-20 June 2000. The workshop demonstrated the fundamentals of risk analysis, described the links between risk analysis and the disciplines of the Agreement, identified work in this area by the three sister organizations and shared what WTO Members were doing with regard to risk analysis. Six case studies or specific examples of risk analyses were presented. Of the approximately 150 participants in the workshop, about 100 were capital-based officials who came for the workshop and then stayed to attend this Committee meeting, which had been the desired outcome of such scheduling. The Secretariat expressed appreciation to the United States for its provision of funds to enable six officials from least-developed countries to attend the week's meetings. The workshop provided a forum in which Members, the Secretariat and the three sister organizations exchanged helpful information about a complex topic.

61. The Secretariat then described its past and upcoming technical assistance activities. The technical assistance events held since the March meeting of the Committee included:

- A national workshop held with national authorities in Malaysia
- An SPS training course for Gulf countries, held in Dubai
- National seminars regarding SPS- and agriculture-related issues, held in Mali
- A regional seminar held in Côte d'Ivoire, with Mali and Burkina Faso also involved
- A training session held in Budapest, Hungary
- A national seminar in Jamaica, with participation of Codex officials
- A national seminar in Cuba, with participation of Codex officials.

62. The Secretariat further noted upcoming technical assistance events, including workshops in Africa, Panama and Brazil. In addition, the Secretariat had participated in a technical explanation session with European officials of the Credit Agricole, held in Paris; and in a briefing for representatives of the meat processing industry, held in Stockholm.

63. The representative of the Organismo Internacional Regional de Sanidad Agropecuaria (OIRSA) reported that the first three modules of its technical SPS training programme had been completed. He indicated that all OIRSA member countries had also participated in a seminar to promote the implementation of Annex C of the SPS Agreement in the Region. This workshop was specifically devoted to inspection, control, and approval measures in the area of agriculture. The representative of OIRSA pointed out that it also provided technical assistance for risk analysis and disease control regarding animals diseases and animal products. OIRSA preferred to use regional seminars, as opposed to national, because they promoted the important goal of harmonization. Finally, he noted the OIRSA website <http://www.oirsa.org.sv>, which maintained and updated regional guidelines for establishing sanitary requirements for fish, cattle, poultry, horses and pigs.

64. The representative of Codex noted that there was recognition within Codex of the needs of developing countries, particularly in the areas of policy principles related to risk management, general principles and procedures, equivalence, mutual recognition, quality assurance, and food production and processing systems. Recommendations for many of these issues were made at the FAO Conference on International Food Trade Beyond 2000: Science-Based Decisions, Harmonization, Equivalence and Mutual Recognition, held in Melbourne in October 1999. The Codex Committee on General Principles was also discussing developing countries' concerns. The representative noted several specific initiatives which came out of these discussions: the creation of the Codex Coordinating Committee for the Near East, formed to identify issues specific to this region, which

would hold its first meeting in Cairo 29 January–1 February 2001; a decision to expand the languages of some of the Codex committees to include Arabic and Chinese; the hosting of externally-funded workshops, often scheduled prior to Codex committee meetings; the holding of Codex committee meetings in developing countries, an example of which was the Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants being held in Beijing in March 2000.

65. The representative of Codex emphasized that Members could request technical assistance from FAO and the World Health Organization (WHO). Other international organizations also provided funding through the FAO Technical Cooperation Programme, national and regional seminars (e.g. establishment/administration of national Codex Contact Points/Committees, risk analysis and equivalence) and externally funded FAO projects. Examples of such projects included workshops on strengthening national Codex committees (Syria in May 2000, Tanzania in June 2000), technical cooperation efforts to help establish a national Codex committee (Tunisia, ongoing), training in HACCP (India, ongoing) and WTO national seminars on the SPS Agreement (Jamaica and Cuba in May 2000).

66. The representative of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) recalled that the Interim Commission on Phytosanitary Measures, with assistance from the Government of New Zealand, had developed a survey questionnaire designed to help governments identify key technical capacities in phytosanitary systems. Its purpose was to assist with the development of national strategies for technical assistance. He noted that this initiative was advancing with implementation beyond the first six pilot countries, the translation of the survey into French and Spanish, and the development of analytical tools to help interpret and evaluate raw data.

67. The representative of the IPPC also mentioned that participation of the IPPC secretariat in the International Seed Congress (May 2000, in Rome) had resulted in industry pledges to provide specific types of technical assistance to developing countries. He noted that although the SPS Agreement and the IPPC place the obligation for technical assistance on Members, opportunities for help from the private sector should not be overlooked. In addition, the IPPC was organizing a regional consultation for Asia on draft international standards, to be held 16-18 August in Bangkok.

68. The representative of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) noted that Andean countries had expressed interest in the establishment of a center for risk analysis and equivalence, which would conduct studies, train professionals, and serve as a reference center for Andean countries. A formal feasibility analysis was now underway. The representative also reported that two conferences would be held in Montevideo, Uruguay, during the week of 4-7 July 2000. The first conference would focus on international regional standards and negotiations related to food safety norms for milk and milk-related products, while the second would be devoted to international trade negotiations in agriculture. In addition, at a western hemisphere conference on "Food Safety Through Dynamic Leadership" (Washington, DC, 20-22 September 2000), food safety, leadership, and trade issues would be discussed. Finally, he noted that the Pan-American Veterinary Congress would be held in Panama City on 11-15 September 2000, on the occasion of the organization's 50th Anniversary.

VI. MONITORING THE USE OF INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

(a) New issues

69. The Chairman recalled that Members were invited to submit, at least 30 days in advance of each regular meeting, examples of what they considered to be trade-significant problems related to the use or non-use of relevant international standards, guidelines or recommendations. No Member had submitted new examples for consideration at this meeting.

70. The representative of the United States noted that the Committee's previous report (G/SPS/13) had been of use to the international standard-setting bodies, as was evident from the responses from the standard-setting bodies which were included in the draft Second Annual Report (G/SPS/W/107). By not identifying new concerns, Members were missing an opportunity to inform the standard-setting bodies of their needs.

71. The Secretariat reminded the Committee that at the end of each meeting, the Chairman informed Members of the various deadlines for submissions, including the deadline for identifying new issues for consideration under the monitoring procedure. This deadline was always one month in advance of the next meeting. The Secretariat also sent a reminder of all deadlines to Members.

(b) Draft Second Annual Report

72. The Chairman noted that according to agreed procedures (G/SPS/11, paragraph 10), the Secretariat had prepared an annual report on the list of standards, guidelines or recommendations which had been identified by Members and considered by the Committee (G/SPS/W/107). The Secretariat noted that no new issues had been raised since the first annual report. Nevertheless, the second draft annual report did include an update on the issues which were raised in the first report and which had been brought to the attention of the three standard-setting bodies. It was noted that the standard-setting bodies' responses to the nine issues were included in the report. The Secretariat also pointed out that the heading above paragraph 5 should be described as a response from the OIE - not from Codex.

73. The representative of Chile agreed that there had been good response by the standard-setting bodies to the concerns raised by the Committee and encouraged all Members to continue to raise issues of concern so that they might be addressed. He also expressed appreciation for the updated lists of international standards which had been provided by OIE and IPPC.

74. With regard to requirements for the control of Infectious Bursal Virus (IBDV) in cooked chicken meat, the representative of Thailand recalled that his country had first informed the Committee about its concerns two years ago, however, these had not yet been resolved. He pointed out that Australia, a developed country, had better knowledge and technology regarding cooked chicken meat and IBDV, while Thailand, a developing country, did not. He thanked OIE for its assistance to developing countries and asked for an update on the OIE plan to develop IBDV standards for the trade of cooked chicken meat.

75. The representative of India also requested an update of the scientific research being conducted on IBDV and cooked chicken meat. Second, he asked for a progress report on the establishment of an expert group to develop a definition for "quarantine pests", as referred to in paragraph 6 of the draft Second Annual Report. Third, regarding the request for comments on a draft standard for benzoic acid as a preservative in sauces (paragraph 10), he requested that Codex provide an updated list of government comments. Finally, regarding paragraph 11 and certification requirements for origin of animals, the delegate asked if OIE had yet established a time-frame for completing traceability-related articles in its *Scientific and Technical Review*.

76. With regard to IBDV, the representative of OIE noted that G/SPS/W/107 provided a clear picture of the situation facing the OIE, namely that the International Animal Health Code Commission, which only meets once a year, was involved in the lengthy business of posing a list of questions to the OIE reference laboratories and analyzing the various responses. He reported that there seemed thus far to be a lack of scientific knowledge on IBDV and it was not likely that a draft standard could be developed at this time. Nevertheless, the OIE Bureau of the Code Commission would address this issue at its September meeting. He also stressed that the OIE did not undertake research itself, but rather relied on the will of its Member countries to do so. In reference to the

question posed by India regarding a time-frame for the completion of traceability-related articles in its *Scientific and Technical Review*, the representative of OIE indicated that the Animal Health Code Commission would, over the next few months, prepare a draft on this complex and difficult subject.

77. The representative of Codex indicated that the March 2000 Beijing meeting of the Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants had produced a draft standard of 1,000 milligrams per kilogram for benzoic acid approved for use in sauces and like products. He reminded the Committee of Australia's announcement earlier that it was adopting an identical standard for benzoic acid. The representative of Codex encouraged Members to submit their comments regarding this draft standard and, for that matter, any other draft standards being reviewed by the Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants.

78. The representative of the IPPC noted that the definition for quarantine pests contained the term "officially controlled", which in the past had been a source of concern for some Members. Work on a definition for the term "official control" had resulted in a draft definition and guidelines for the interpretation and application of the concept, which had been approved by the IPPC's Interim Standards Committee in May 2000 and was now being distributed to governments for consultation (G/SPS/GEN/183). The IPPC Secretariat was accepting comments on the proposed definition and guidelines until the end of October 2000. The document would then be reviewed again by the Interim Standards Committee in light of the comments received from governments and would be modified if necessary and approved for submission to the Interim Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (ICPM). The ICPM could adopt the definition and guidelines at its 3rd Session in April 2001.

79. The Secretariat was requested to revise the draft report to take into account the most recent relevant information provided by the standard-setting organizations. The updated report would then be circulated for adoption on an ad referendum basis.

VII. ADOPTION OF ARTICLE 5.5 GUIDELINES

80. The Chairman noted that at its last meeting the Committee had made rapid progress and had achieved practical guidelines for the implementation of Article 5.5 which most Members had been prepared to accept. However, some Members had needed more time to consider the proposed guidelines, and it was agreed that the adoption of the guidelines would be on the agenda of this meeting. The Chairman expressed his appreciation for the contributions of past Committee Chairmen, Kari Bergholm, Alex Thiermann and Attie Swart, as well as the Secretariat, to the guidelines now proposed for adoption (G/SPS/W/104).

81. The representative of Egypt explained the reasoning behind her country's proposed modifications to the draft guidelines (G/SPS/W/106). With regards to the proposed amendment to guideline A.1, Egypt wished to draw attention to "social values and consumption patterns" because such aspects did not lend themselves to quantitative evaluation. The delegate suggested that the wording could be modified to read: "Recognizing that there may be certain aspects relating to the risks and risk consequences which may be difficult to quantify ..." if this would be more acceptable to other Members. Regarding the proposed additions to guideline A.2, Egypt had concerns with the term "cumulative occurrence" of warning signals and wondered to what extent this term could be used as an indication of future discrimination in trade. Egypt was proposing the addition of "in the face of similar risks" to improve the precision and validity of the warning signals by making clear that countries could not maintain different appropriate levels of protection (ALOP) in the face of similar risks in different situations. Regarding the proposed amendments to guideline A.4, Egypt considered the assessment of the degree of similarity between risks to be a highly complicated matter, which should be subject to the investigation of an independent advisory body of experts.

82. The delegations of Malaysia, Japan, Canada, Argentina, Chile, Australia, Mexico, the European Communities, the United States and New Zealand indicated their support for adoption of the Article 5.5 Guidelines as proposed in G/SPS/W/104, emphasizing that they were only guidelines and did not impinge upon the legal obligations of Members.

83. Regarding Egypt's proposed amendment to guideline A.1, the delegations of Malaysia, Argentina, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the European Communities, the United States and Chile deemed it unnecessary, with the delegations of Malaysia and Canada specifically objecting to the inclusion of terms such as "social values". The delegation of Japan expressed a willingness to support the proposed amendment.

84. Regarding Egypt's proposed amendment to guideline A.2, the delegations of Malaysia, Japan and Mexico expressed a willingness to consider the proposed changes. The delegations of Canada, Argentina, Australia, New Zealand, the European Communities, the United States and Chile felt that the amendment could be helpful but was not necessary and should not be added at this late stage of the development of the Article 5.5 Guidelines.

85. The delegations of Malaysia, Japan, Canada, Argentina, Mexico, Chile, New Zealand, the European Communities, the United States and Australia raised concerns and objections to Egypt's proposed addition to guideline A.4, with the Japanese delegation noting that an element of expert advice was already included in guideline A.7.

86. The Committee adopted the guidelines as proposed in G/SPS/W/104 on an ad referendum basis, providing until 14 July for any Member who was not able to join the consensus to so indicate to the Secretariat.

VIII. MATTERS OF INTEREST ARISING FROM THE WORK OF OBSERVER ORGANIZATIONS

(a) OIE (G/SPS/GEN/176)

87. The representative of the OIE summarized the results of discussions that took place at the 68th General Session of the OIE International Committee (G/SPS/GEN/184). He drew the Committee's attention to WTO document G/SPS/GEN/185, an up-to-date summary of the OIE International Animal Health Code, which had been requested by Committee Members. The representative noted that many of the chapter numbers for the OIE International Animal Health Code had recently been changed.

(b) IPPC (G/SPS/GEN/177)

88. The representative of the IPPC reminded the Committee that the IPPC had undertaken an ambitious work programme with emphasis on expanding and accelerating standard setting. Although the present work programme far exceeded the resources provided to the IPPC Secretariat by FAO, the generosity of several governments had helped greatly to support the goals set by the Interim Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (ICPM). He noted in particular the possibility for five new standards to be adopted by the ICPM at its next meeting: *Pest risk analysis for quarantine pests; Guidelines for phytosanitary certificates; Guidelines for regulated pest lists; Guidelines for the notification of non-compliance; and Guidelines for the interpretation and application of official control*. These documents had been circulated to governments for consultation, and he encouraged Members to ensure that the documents were considered in their capitals and comments provided to the IPPC before November 2000.

89. The representative of the IPPC further reported on the results of the ICPM's Open-ended Working Group on the Phytosanitary Aspects of GMOs, Biosafety and Invasive Species. He recalled that the topics emanated from the Convention on Biological Diversity and had increased importance due to the completion of the Cartagena (Biosafety) Protocol. He noted that the Working Group agreed on a number of statements regarding the scope and role of the IPPC in the identified areas. The meeting also recommended that the IPPC undertake to develop a standard or standards for risk analysis as it applied to environmental hazards. Statements from the meeting would be submitted to the Interim Commission for its review and decision regarding further steps.

90. The representative of the United States acknowledged the efforts of IPPC Members to clarify the scope of the IPPC as it applied to cultivated or commercial plant systems as well as natural flora. Clarification regarding pest risks associated with transgenic plants and the development of harmonized risk assessment tools would ensure that IPPC remained responsive in the face of new and emerging issues in this area. He also commended the IPPC for its collaboration with other relevant international organizations to help ensure that science-based standards were supportive of the IPPC's broad plant protection goals as well as the plant health objectives promoted in other organizations. The representative of Canada also commended the IPPC for its collaborative efforts on issues of invasive species and work plans identified under the Convention on Biological Diversity.

(c) Codex

91. The representative of Codex reported that at its first session, the Codex *Ad Hoc* Intergovernmental Task Force on Foods Derived from Biotechnology (Chiba, Japan, 14-17 March 2000) agreed to elaborate several texts related to foods derived from biotechnology, including general principles for risk analysis; specific guidelines for risk assessment; and a list of available methods of analysis used for the detection or identification of these foods. The second session of the Task Force was planned for Tokyo, 26-30 March 2001. To provide support on the technical aspects of the work undertaken by this task force, a Joint FAO/WHO Expert Consultation on Foods Derived from Biotechnology was held in Geneva at WHO Headquarters from 29 May-2 June 2000.

92. The Codex *Ad Hoc* Task Force on Animal Feeding, at its first meeting (Copenhagen, Denmark, 13-15 June 2000) primarily focussed on the revision of the current Codex Code of Practice on Animal Feeding, including the potential addition of other provisions regarding food safety into the Code. The Task Force agreed that the Code should be revised and circulated for additional comments and considered at its next session, which was tentatively scheduled to be held in Copenhagen on 19-21 March 2001.

93. At the 15th Session of the Codex Committee on General Principles, which met in Paris, France from 10-14 April 2000, a decision was taken to circulate an amended draft version of Working Principles for Risk Analysis for further comment and consideration. These draft principles included proposed provisions for the consideration of other legitimate factors relevant to health protection and fair trade practices, as well as the application of precaution in the context of risk analysis. The forthcoming 47th Session of the Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, to be held in Geneva from 28-30 June 2000, would be considering, among other issues, recommendations arising from the FAO Conference on International Food Trade Beyond 2000 (Melbourne, Australia, 11-15 October 1999); developments in other international organizations having implications for Codex work; and the implementation of the Commission's Programme of Work.

94. Other subsidiary bodies of Codex which had met subsequent to the last meeting of the Committee included the Codex Committees on Food Additives and Contaminants (Beijing, 20-24 March), Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods (Washington, D.C., 28-31 March), and Food Labelling (Ottawa, 10-14 April). A Joint FAO/WHO Expert Consultation on Risk Assessment of

Microbiological Hazards in Foods would be held at FAO Headquarters in Rome from 17-21 July 2000. Information concerning both the Joint FAO/WHO Consultations as well as the Codex Committees, including the final reports of their sessions, was already available, or would shortly be available, on the FAO website.

(d) WHO

95. The representative of the WHO reported that the 53rd Session of the World Health Assembly, the governing body of the WHO had identified food safety as one of its seven future priority areas. A resolution adopted by the Assembly detailed the WHO's food safety priorities: microbiological risk assessment, biotechnology, food borne disease surveillance, the use of antimicrobials in food production, and technical cooperation (G/SPS/GEN/193). On 29 June 2000, there would be a meeting at WHO Headquarters to discuss the WHO's future food safety plan. A joint consultation, involving FAO and OIE, focussed on the development of global principles for the containment of antimicrobial resistance related to the use of antimicrobials in animals intended for food (5-9 June 2000). In addition, a joint FAO/WHO workshop on the development of a methodology for exposure assessment for chemicals in food was held in June 2000. The conclusions from these joint meetings would be posted on the WHO website. Finally, the representative reminded the Committee of the informal consultations to be held after the regular meeting of the Committee on the WHO's Revised International Health Regulations (G/SPS/GEN/179).

(e) OIRSA

96. The representative of OIRSA reported that in compliance with a Ministerial mandate, an enquiry was carried out regarding food safety in the eight OIRSA Member countries. The analysis of the enquiry would soon be concluded and serve as the basis for a presentation to the OIRSA Technical Committee. He also emphasized the need for extending knowledge of the SPS Agreement to agriculture producers, so they could differentiate between genuine SPS issues and issues which should be addressed in other fora.

IX. OBSERVERS - REQUESTS FOR OBSERVER STATUS (G/SPS/W/78/REV.1, G/SPS/GEN/178)

97. The Chairman recalled the Committee's decision to grant ad hoc observer status for only one meeting at a time to a number of observer organizations. The Committee agreed to invite the ACP Group, EFTA, IICA, OECD, OIRSA, and SELA TO its next regular meeting.

98. The representative of Argentina noted that OIRSA was an IPPC regional organization and questioned if the eight other such regional organizations might also seek ad hoc observer status. The Secretariat recalled that the Committee had agreed that the various regional plant-protection organizations were welcome to come as part of the IPPC delegation. However, OIRSA was unique in that it was not only a regional plant protection organization but also a regional animal health organization, and in view of its larger mandate it had independently requested ad hoc observer status.

99. The Chairman also brought to the Committee's attention a request for observer status from the Asian and Pacific Coconut Community (APCC). The APCC had responded to the Committee's request for additional information regarding its activities in the area of plant health protection (G/SPS/GEN/178). Several delegations indicated they needed more time to review the request and the summary of information about the APCC (G/SPS/GEN/121/Add.1). The Committee agreed to revert to this at its next meeting.

100. The Chairman recalled that the request from the Office International de la Vigne et du Vin (OIV) was still on the table. He noted that no further progress had been made on this issue since the last Committee meeting and suggested that this be considered again at the next meeting.

X. OTHER BUSINESS

(a) Brazil – Statement regarding measures against beetles and wood pallets

101. The representative of Brazil reported that her authorities had found long-horned beetles in wood pallets and packaging used to send goods to Brazil. This pest posed serious economic risks to Brazilian forests and agriculture resources, and new sanitary requirements had been imposed and notified (G/SPS/N/BRA/53 and G/SPS/N/BRA/53/Add.1). The regulation required that wood packaging materials be heat-treated, fumigated, or treated with preservatives prior to departure from the country of origin. The complete text of the regulation was available from Brazil's Enquiry Point.

102. The representative of the European Communities noted that the Brazilian measures would in fact affect international trade and reported that the IPPC was working on a much-needed standard for wood packaging materials. The European Communities had previously notified similar measures being adopted by Finland.

(b) Thailand – Statement regarding Egyptian restrictions on canned tuna

103. The representative of Thailand acknowledged Egypt's decision to restrict food imports containing genetically modified organisms (GMOs), but insisted that Thai canned tuna did not contain soybean oil produced from genetically modified plants. He noted that it was not possible to identify the origin of soybean oil since the final processing stages destroyed genetic material. Thailand continued to export canned tuna in soy oil to the European Communities, the United States, Japan, and Switzerland, countries which were generally very strict in terms of food safety. Thailand considered the Egyptian restrictions on Thai canned tuna to be discriminatory, and asked the Egyptian Government to lift the restrictions as soon as possible.

104. The representative of Egypt took note of the concerns of Thailand and said she would refer the matter to the competent officials in Cairo, and report back to Thailand and the Committee in due course.

(c) Argentina – Statement regarding FMD-free status

105. The representative of Argentina requested that Members note that Argentina was now an FMD-free (without vaccination) country, as recorded in OIE Resolution XII.⁴ Noting that veterinary experts from Mexico and the United States would soon be visiting Argentina, he expressed hope that other Members would also appropriately react to this new status.

(d) Argentina – Statement regarding Japanese measures on citrus fruits

106. The representative of Argentina also expressed gratitude to the Japanese authorities for enabling satisfactory progress in resolving differences on Japanese restrictions on citrus fruit from northwest Argentina.

⁴ G/SPS/GEN/184, page 2.

(e) United States – Paper on biotechnology-related measures

107. The representative of the United States drew the Committee's attention to G/SPS/GEN/186, "National Regulatory Measures Related to Trade in Agricultural and Food Products Modified by Modern Biotechnology". He noted that between 1 January 1995 and 10 June 2000, there had been 48 notifications to the WTO regarding regulatory initiatives related to biotechnology. Transparency in this particular area, including opportunities to comment on or request clarification about national decision-making processes was vital for ensuring that international trade and public health were appropriately addressed. He also expressed support for Codex and IPPC efforts to develop international standards on agriculture and foods derived from biotechnology and urged all Members to actively contribute to these efforts.

XI. ADOPTION OF TENTATIVE CALENDAR OF MEETINGS IN 2001

108. The Committee agreed on the following dates for its regular meetings during 2001, recognizing that the dates were tentative, and may be changed if necessary to avoid unforeseen conflicts or other difficulties (G/SPS/GEN/188). Normally, the regular meetings of the Committee will begin in the afternoon of the first day, and continue as long as necessary on the second day:

14-15 March 2001
10-11 July 2001
31 October-1 November 2001

XII. DATE AND AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING

109. The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled for 8-9 November 2000. The Committee agreed on the following tentative agenda:

1. Adoption of agenda
2. Implementation of the Agreement
 - (a) Information from Members
 - (i) Activities of Members
 - (b) Specific trade concerns
 - (i) New issues
 - (ii) Issues previously raised
 - (c) Consideration of specific notifications received
 - (d) Any other matters related to the operation of transparency provisions
3. SPS Agreement and developing countries
 - (a) Implementation of the provisions for special and differential treatment
 - (b) Equivalence – Article 4
4. Technical assistance and cooperation
5. Monitoring the use of international standards
6. Matters of interest arising from the work of observer organizations
7. Observers – Requests for observer status
8. Other business
9. Date and agenda of next meeting

110. The Chairman reminded delegates of the following deadlines:

- for identifying new issues for consideration under the monitoring procedure: **Monday, 9 October;**
- for requesting that items be put on the agenda: **Thursday, 26 October 2000;**
- for distribution of the airgram: **Friday, 27 October 2000.**

111. The Chairman reminded the Committee of the informal consultation with the World Health Organization regarding the revision of the International Health Regulations. The background document for the informal meeting had been circulated as G/SPS/GEN/179.

112. The Committee meeting was adjourned.
