

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

RESTRICTED

S/NGBT/11

22 December 1995

(95-4125)

Negotiating Group on Basic Telecommunications

REPORT ON THE MEETING OF 15 DECEMBER 1995

1. The Negotiating Group on Basic Telecommunications held its eleventh meeting on 15 December 1995. The agenda for the meeting was contained in airgram WTO/AIR/232 of 28 November 1995.
2. Regarding requests for participation and observer status, the Chairman announced that the Philippines had taken a decision to join negotiations as a full participant. As a result, the number of full participants in the negotiations stood at 32¹ and the number of participants with observer status was 27². The Chairman thanked the Philippines for its decision and encouraged other governments participating as observers also to consider joining in the negotiations as full participants as soon as possible.
3. Under the agenda item on introduction of draft offers, new offers were introduced to the Group by Korea and Chile. The representative of Hungary also announced that its draft offer would be formally submitted during the day. This brought the total number of draft offers submitted by participants thus far to 17.³
4. The Chairman invited delegations to comment on the progress of bilateral discussions held during the week. Many participants characterized the bilateral meetings undertaken as positive and said that they had seen a willingness on the part of many participants to make improvements in their offers. Some participants noted, however, that there was not much time left for participants who had not yet made offers to do so or for observers to reach a decision to join in the negotiations. One participant expressed the hope that, in a spirit of cooperation, observers would also agree to requests for bilateral consultations. Other participants reaffirmed that they hoped to see the negotiations conclude successfully and on an m.f.n. basis.

¹Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Cuba, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Dominican Republic, Egypt, the European Communities and their Member States (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom), Hong Kong, Hungary, Iceland, India, Israel, Japan, Korea, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, New Zealand, Norway, the Philippines, Poland, Singapore, Slovak Republic, Switzerland, Tunisia, Turkey, the United States and Venezuela.

²Bulgaria, Brunei Darussalam, the Republic of China, Chinese Taipei, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Jamaica, Latvia, Madagascar, Malaysia, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovenia, South Africa, Thailand, Trinidad & Tobago, and United Arab Emirates, Uruguay.

³Australia, Canada, Chile, Czech Republic, the European Communities and its Member States, Hong Kong, Hungary, Japan, Korea, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Singapore, Slovak Republic, Switzerland, the United States and Venezuela

5. Under the agenda item on outstanding technical and conceptual issues, a non-paper on regulatory principles was circulated. Participants generally welcomed the paper as a possible basis for focusing broader discussion. It was noted that the extent to which some aspects of the regulatory concerns, such as interconnection rights, were already addressed by existing disciplines of the GATS and the Telecommunications Annex should be carefully considered. It was also suggested that the value of market access and national treatment commitments would be enhanced by specific clarifications such as those in the non-paper. One participant suggested that such principles should focus on outcomes rather than processes. It was agreed that participants would reflect further on the contents of the non-paper and discuss it further under this agenda item at its next meeting.

6. Under the agenda item on the review of participants' responses to the questionnaire on basic telecommunications, the representative of Peru, an observer government, introduced its response. The Chairman also invited any remaining questions on the responses submitted at previous meetings or the presentation of any outstanding answers to earlier queries. He thanked Peru for its submission and encouraged other participants and observers to respond to the questionnaire.

7. In discussion on future work, the Chairman noted that the next meeting of the Group was scheduled for 26 January and that bilateral negotiations would be conducted during that week. He emphasized the importance of submitting draft offers by the January meeting by participants that had not yet done so and recalled that the timetable for negotiations also called for participants to submit revised offers in January.