

# WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

RESTRICTED

**S/NGBT/15**

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## **Negotiating Group on Basic Telecommunications**

### REPORT ON THE MEETING OF 17 APRIL 1996

1. The Negotiating Group on Basic Telecommunications held its fifteenth meeting on 17 April 1996. The agenda for the meeting was contained in airgram WTO/AIR/308 of 3 April 1996.

2. Under the agenda item on presentation of latest offers, revisions and schedules, the Chairman noted that no new requests for participation or observer status had been received. Therefore, the number of full participants in the negotiations remained at thirty-seven<sup>1</sup> while the number of participants with observer status stood at twenty-six<sup>2</sup>. The Chairman announced that Peru and Ecuador had submitted draft offers bringing the total number of draft offers submitted by participants thus far to twenty-six.<sup>3</sup> In addition, Australia, Canada, Japan, the Philippines, Korea, Hong Kong, New Zealand, the Slovak Republic, and Mexico had submitted revisions to their draft offers. Taking into account that three of the previously mentioned revised offers constituted second revisions, the number of revised offers was now thirteen. These delegations then provided a brief introduction of their new and revised draft offers. Finally, Argentina, Iceland, Thailand, Colombia, and Poland notified the Group of their intentions to table new revised offers shortly. The Chairman welcomed these encouraging developments and thanked the delegations for their decisions. Furthermore, he urged other governments to intensify their efforts and contribute positively with additional new and revised offers.

3. The Chairman invited delegations to comment on the progress of bilateral negotiations held during the week. In an assessment made of the state of the negotiations, the majority of the delegations characterized the bilaterals conducted so far as generally positive in terms of the increased number of new and revised offers submitted. Participants recognized that notable improvements had taken place and welcomed the intentions expressed by several delegations at the meeting to present new and revised offers which further confirmed this promising trend. Nevertheless, an urgent appeal was made to major trading partners to assume a leadership role by tabling substantive and meaningful commitments in order to provide impetus in the final phase of the negotiating process. Several delegations stressed the need to include regulatory principles based on the reference paper as additional commitments. Participants agreed upon the need to expand participation and to improve the quality and the quantity of new and revised offers submitted. The Chairman noted that participants had demonstrated a strong determination to advance the negotiations successfully within the specified timetable and that significant progress

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<sup>1</sup>Argentina, Australia, Barbados, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, 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, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, Singapore, Slovak Republic, Switzerland, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, the United States and Venezuela.

<sup>2</sup> Bolivia, Bulgaria, Brunei Darussalam, the Republic of China, Chinese Taipei, Côte d'Ivoire, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Jamaica, Latvia, Madagascar, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Panama, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovenia, South Africa, Trinidad & Tobago, United Arab Emirates, and Uruguay.

<sup>3</sup> Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Czech Republic, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, the European Communities and its Member States, Hong Kong, Hungary, Israel, Japan, Korea, Mauritius, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, Singapore, Slovak Republic, Switzerland, Turkey, the United States and Venezuela.

had been accomplished. Finally, he urged other delegations to follow this example and submit outstanding, new and revised draft offers as soon as possible.

4. Under the agenda item on the draft Protocol and the draft Decision of the Council, participants approved the indicative dates proposed by the Chairman, agreed at Monday's informal meeting, of 30 June 1997 as the deadline for acceptance of the Protocol and 1 January 1998 as the date of entry into force of the Protocol and its attached schedules of commitments. The Committee then considering the draft Decision of the Council for Trade in Services to adopt this Protocol. A proposal was put forward regarding the establishment of a Telecommunications Committee to oversee the Protocol. The Group agreed to take this into consideration as an issue for future discussion.

5. In discussion of future work, the Group then revised the timetable for the completion of the negotiations. The Chairman announced that the next formal NGBT meeting was scheduled for 26 April, possibly preceded by an informal meeting in the first half of the week. The Chairman also reminded the Group that the deadline for the submission of schedules would be 25 April.