

General Council

GENERAL COUNCIL

Annual Report (1997)

The present report has been prepared in pursuance of the Procedures for an Annual Overview of WTO Activities and for Reporting under the WTO (WT/L/105), and sets out the actions taken by the General Council in the period since its previous annual report.¹

In carrying out its tasks, the General Council has held 8 meetings since the period covered by the previous report. The minutes of these meetings, which remain the record of the General Council's work, are contained in documents WT/GC/M/17-WT/GC/M/25.

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¹The annual report of the General Council for 1996 was circulated as WT/GC/7.

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| 1. | <u>WTO Logo</u> (WT/GC/M/19) | |

At the General Council meeting on 24 April 1997, the Chairman recalled that Singapore had offered to hand over to the WTO for its use the logo used at the 1996 Ministerial Conference, together with the copyright thereon, and that this offer -- the only one on the table -- had received widespread support. He proposed that the General Council agree to accept Singapore's offer, and authorize the Secretariat to work out the necessary arrangements with Singapore.

The General Council so agreed (WT/L/214).²

2. Preparations for the 1998 Ministerial Conference and the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the multilateral trading system (WT/GC/M/18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 25)

At the Ministerial Conference in December 1996, Ministers had agreed that the next Ministerial Conference would be held in Geneva and had invited the General Council to determine its dates and duration (WT/MIN(96)/SR/9). Ministers had also noted that the 50th anniversary of the multilateral trading system would occur early in 1998 and had instructed the General Council to consider how this historic event could best be commemorated (WT/MIN(96)/DEC, paragraph 23).

²The Logo of the WTO, as adapted from the original commissioned by the Government of Singapore for the first Ministerial Conference, was officially unveiled by the Director-General at a ceremony on 9 October 1997.

At the General Council meeting on 7 February 1997, the representative of Canada proposed a short one-to-two day meeting at Ministerial level to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the multilateral trading system, and suggested that this meeting could be held back-to-back with an equally short meeting of the Ministerial Conference in 1998.

The representatives of Morocco, Cuba and New Zealand, and the Director-General and the Chairman spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements and authorized its Chairman to hold consultations on this matter.

At the General Council meeting on 24 April 1997, the Chairman announced that he had raised the question of dates of the next Ministerial Conference at an informal consultation with delegations, and that there appeared to be a widespread view that the next Conference should be held in the first semester of 1998. He intended to intensify his consultations in the near future, and invited delegations to reflect on the matter in the meantime to help expedite the consultations.

The representatives of Canada, Switzerland, Norway, Morocco, Pakistan, Japan, Korea and Cuba, and the Chairman and the Director of the Finance and General Services Division spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements and agreed that the Chairman should hold consultations on this matter.

At the General Council meeting on 30 June - 1 July 1997, the Chairman proposed, on the basis of consultations he had been holding, that the 1998 Ministerial Conference and the meeting to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the multilateral trading system be held in the period 18-20 May 1998.

The General Council so agreed.

At its meeting on 16 July 1997, the Director-General informed the General Council of points that had been raised in the many multilateral and bilateral meetings he had had in the past three months regarding the organization of the 50th anniversary commemoration meeting and the 1998 Ministerial Conference.

The Chairman spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements.

At its meeting on 22 October 1997, the Chairman informed the General Council of consultations he had been holding recently concerning preparations for the Ministerial Conference and the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the multilateral trading system, on the basis of which he proposed that the General Council agree that the Ministerial Conference be held on 18-19 May, followed on 20 May by the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the multilateral trading system. He further proposed that the General Council invite the Director-General to prepare a paper on the organization of the commemoration of the 50th anniversary.

The General Council took note of the statement and so agreed.

At the General Council meeting on 10 December 1997, the Chairman reported on consultations recently held on the paper prepared by the Director-General regarding the organization of the 50th anniversary commemoration event (document 6410), and on preparations for the Ministerial Conference.

On the basis of the consultations, he proposed that the General Council agree as follows: (i) that it would be desirable and important for Members to indicate to the Secretariat, by a target date of 31 January 1998, the level of their representation at the commemoration of the 50th anniversary in order to allow sufficient time for the preparation of this event; and (ii) that the report of the General Council to the 1998 Ministerial Conference consist of the 1997 Annual Reports of the General Council and its subsidiary bodies together with a brief update report of the General Council concerning developments in the first months of 1998, and that Chairpersons of subsidiary bodies be invited to report orally to the General Council on work done since December 1997.

The representatives of Argentina, Jamaica, Korea, Paraguay, Pakistan and Hong Kong, China spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements, also took note that further consultations would be resumed at an appropriate time in the following year, and agreed to the Chairman's proposals.

3. Arrangements for convening the High-Level Meeting on integrated initiatives for least-developed countries' trade development (WT/GC/M/22)

At the Ministerial Conference in December 1996, Ministers had agreed to "organize a meeting with UNCTAD and the International Trade Centre as soon as possible in 1997, with the participation of aid agencies, multilateral financial institutions and least-developed countries to foster an integrated approach to assisting these countries in enhancing their trading opportunities" (WT/MIN(96)/DEC, paragraph 14).

At its meeting on 7 October 1997, the General Council considered arrangements for convening the High-Level Meeting on integrated initiatives for least-developed countries' trade development.

The Chairman proposed that the General Council, as the WTO body instructed to conduct the functions of the Ministerial Conference in the intervals between meetings of the latter, and following the mandate given by WTO Ministers in Singapore, invite the WTO Director-General to convene the High-Level Meeting for Least-Developed Countries' Trade Development on 27-28 October in the WTO, to which would be invited WTO Members and observer governments, and all least-developed countries. Special invitations to participate should be extended to the UNCTAD and ITC secretariats, in view of the key role that they were playing in preparations for the High-Level Meeting and the importance that WTO Members, and the least-developed countries in particular, attached to UNCTAD's and ITC's full and active participation in the implementation of trade-related technical assistance activities under the Integrated Framework that would result from the High-Level Meeting. Invitations should similarly be extended to the IMF, UNDP, and World Bank which, along with the WTO, ITC and UNCTAD secretariats, were directly involved in the preparation and follow-up to the High-Level Meeting.

The representatives of the European Communities, Bangladesh and Pakistan, and the Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD and the Chairman spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements and agreed to the Chairman's proposal regarding the organization of the High-Level Meeting.

The Chairman then proposed that the intergovernmental organizations that had observer status in the WTO and, upon request, other intergovernmental organizations that had responsibilities related to the purposes of the High-Level Meeting should be invited to attend the High-Level Meeting as observers. Furthermore, non-governmental organizations might be invited to participate in country-specific roundtables at the High-Level Meeting by those least-developed countries that were responsible

for organizing their own country-specific roundtables, and in the thematic roundtables upon invitation from the Chairpersons of those roundtables.

The General Council agreed to the Chairman's proposals regarding the attendance of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations at the High-Level Meeting.

4. Working Groups on the relationship between trade and investment, the interaction between trade and competition policy, and transparency in government procurement practices (WT/GC/M/18, 19)

At the Ministerial Conference in December 1996, Ministers had agreed to establish working groups on the relationship between trade and investment, the interaction between trade and competition policy, and transparency in government procurement practices (WT/MIN(96)/DEC, paragraphs 20 and 21).

At the General Council meeting on 7 February 1997, the Chairman said that since the three working groups came within the purview of the General Council, it was important for the General Council to take the necessary steps to enable them to start their work as soon as possible.

The representatives of Pakistan, Jamaica, Morocco, Uruguay, Egypt and Hong Kong spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements and agreed to authorize its Chairman to hold consultations and to propose to the General Council the names of chairpersons for the three working groups.

The representatives of Morocco, Singapore, the United States and India, and the Chairman spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements.

At the General Council meeting on 24 April 1997, the Chairman announced that in the light of his extensive consultations there appeared to be consensus on the following appointments: Mr. Krirk-Krai Jirapaet (Thailand) for the Working Group on the Relationship between Trade and Investment; Mr. Frédéric Jenny (France) for the Working Group on the Interaction between Trade and Competition Policy; and Mr. Werner Corrales Leal (Venezuela) for the Working Group on Transparency in Government Procurement. The term of office of these Chairpersons would be the calendar year of 1997, with the possibility of reappointment for another year as appropriate. The question of possible reappointment, or the appointment of new chairpersons, would be taken up on the context of consultations on the appointment of chairpersons of WTO bodies for 1998.

The General Council took note of the statement and agreed to the appointments (WT/L/215).

5. Committee on Balance-of-Payments Restrictions

(a) Consultations (WT/GC/M/18, 19, 23)

At the General Council meeting on 7 February 1997, the Chairman of the Committee on Balance-of-Payments Restrictions made an oral report on the Committee's consultation with India.

The representatives of the European Communities, the United States, Switzerland, Japan, India and Korea spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements.

At the General Council meeting on 24 April 1997, the Chairman of the Committee on Balance-of-Payments Restrictions introduced the Committee's reports on its consultations with India (WT/BOP/R/22) and Nigeria (WT/BOP/R/25).

The representatives of the United States, Australia, the European Communities, Japan, New Zealand, India and Nigeria spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements and adopted the reports in WT/BOP/R/22 and WT/BOP/R/25.

At the General Council meeting on 22 October 1997, the Chairman of the Committee on Balance-of-Payments Restrictions introduced the Committee's reports on its consultations with Pakistan (WT/BOP/R/27), India (WT/BOP/R/32), Tunisia (WT/BOP/R/31), the Czech Republic (WT/BOP/R/33), Bulgaria (WT/BOP/R/34) and Nigeria (WT/BOP/R/35), and on the simplified consultation with Bangladesh (WT/BOP/R/28).

The representatives of the European Communities, the United States, India, Egypt, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Cuba, Sri Lanka, Colombia, Brazil, Canada, Japan, Australia, Switzerland, Argentina and New Zealand spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements and that it would be desirable to hold full consultations with Bangladesh in the autumn of 1998 or in any case before May 1999, agreed that Bulgaria and Tunisia be deemed to be in compliance with their obligations, and adopted the reports in WT/BOP/R/27, WT/BOP/R/28 and WT/BOP/R/31-35.

(b) Notes on meetings (WT/GC/M/19, 23, 25)

At the General Council meeting on 24 April 1997, the Chairman of the Committee on Balance-of-Payments Restrictions drew attention to the Committee's discussion of its ongoing business reported in WT/BOP/R/23 and WT/BOP/R/24.

The General Council took note of the statement and of the information in WT/BOP/R/23 and WT/BOP/R/24.

At the General Council meeting on 22 October 1997, the Chairman of the Committee on Balance-of-Payments Restrictions drew attention to the Committee's discussion of its ongoing business reported in WT/BOP/R/26 and WT/BOP/R/29-30.

The General Council took note of the statement and of the information in WT/BOP/R/26 and WT/BOP/R/29-30

At the General Council Meeting on 10 December 1997, the Chairman of the Committee on Balance-of-Payments Restrictions drew attention to the Committee's discussion of its ongoing business reported in WT/BOP/R/36 and WT/BOP/R/38.

The General Council took note of the statement and of the information in WT/BOP/R/36 and WT/BOP/R/38.

6. Committee on Budget, Finance and Administration
- Reports (WT/GC/M/17, 19, 21, 23, 25)

At the General Council meeting on 26 November 1996, the Chairman of the Committee on Budget, Finance and Administration introduced the Committee's report in WT/BFA/28.

The General Council took note of the statement, approved the Committee's specific recommendations in paragraphs 4, 20, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29 and 30 of its report in WT/BFA/28, and also approved the draft Resolution referred to in paragraph 20. The General Council then adopted the Budget Committee's report in WT/BFA/28, including the recommendations contained therein and the Resolution on the revised expenditure of the WTO in 1997 and the ways and means to meet that expenditure.

At the General Council meeting on 24 April 1997, the Chairman of the Committee on Budget, Finance and Administration introduced the Committee's report in WT/BFA/30.

The General Council took note of the statement, approved the Committee's specific recommendations in paragraphs 8 and 10 of its report in WT/BFA/30, and adopted the report.

At the General Council meeting on 16 July 1997, the Chairman of the Committee on Budget, Finance and Administration introduced the Committee's report in WT/BFA/31.

The representatives of Morocco and Bangladesh spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements, approved the Committee's specific recommendations in paragraphs 12, 13, 17 and 20 of its report in WT/BFA/31, and adopted the report.

At the General Council meeting on 22 October 1997, the Chairman of the Committee on Budget, Finance and Administration introduced the Committee's report in WT/BFA/32.

The representatives of Morocco and the United States spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements, approved the Committee's specific recommendations in paragraphs 4, 5, 19, 32, 33 and 38 of its report in WT/BFA/32, as well as the contents of paragraph 41, and also approved the draft Resolution referred to in paragraph 19. The General Council then adopted the Budget Committee's report in WT/BFA/32, including the recommendations contained therein and the Resolution on the revised expenditure of the WTO in 1998 and the ways and means to meet that expenditure.

At the General Council meeting on 10 December 1997, the Chairman of the Committee on Budget, Finance and Administration introduced the Committee's report in WT/BFA/33.

The representative of Egypt referred to the text in the second sentence of paragraph 7 of the Committee's report, which he said had been added after the initial agreed text had been circulated to Committee Members. His delegation had not previously been aware of this modification and suggested that the text in question be deleted from the Committee's report to the General Council.

The representatives of Jamaica and Germany, and the Budget Committee Chairman and the Chairman spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements and of the wish of Committee Members that the text in the second sentence of paragraph 7 be considered deleted from the Committee's report before the General Council in WT/BFA/33. The General Council then approved the Budget Committee's specific recommendations in paragraph 6 of its report, and adopted the report as amended (WT/BFA/33 and Corr. 1).

7. Agreement on Preshipment Inspection - Review under Article 6 of the Agreement (WT/GC/M/25)

In November 1996, the General Council, on the basis of a recommendation from the Council for Trade in Goods, had established a working party under the Goods Council to conduct the review provided for under Article 6 of the Agreement on Preshipment Inspection, and to report to the General Council in December 1997 through the Goods Council.

At its meeting on 10 December 1997, the General Council considered the Working Party's report (G/L/214).

The representative of Jamaica and the Chairman of the Working Party spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements, approved the recommendations of the Working Party in paragraphs 1 - 9 of section B of its report, and adopted the report. The General Council agreed that the life of the Working Party be extended for one year for the purposes described in paragraph 8 of section B of its report.

8. Waivers under Article IX of the WTO Agreement (WT/GC/M/23)

At the General Council meeting on 22 October 1997, the Chairman of the Council for Trade in Goods addressed the general question of requests for waivers submitted for initial consideration to the Goods Council.

The General Council took note of the statement.

(a) EC/France - Trading arrangements with Morocco (WT/GC/M/25)

At its meeting on 10 December 1997, the General Council considered a request by EC/France (G/L/196) for an extension of a waiver previously granted for France's trading arrangements with Morocco, and a draft decision to this effect (G/C/W/96).

The Chairman of the Council for Trade in Goods reported on the consideration of this request by the Council.

The representatives of Australia and the European Communities spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements and, in accordance with the Decision-Making Procedures Under Articles IX and XII of the WTO Agreement (WT/L/93), adopted the draft decision (WT/L/250).

(b) Hungary - Agricultural export subsidies (WT/GC/M/23)

At its meeting on 22 October 1997, the General Council considered a request by Hungary (G/L/183) for a waiver from its obligations under paragraph 3 of Article 3, Article 8, and paragraph 2 of Article 9 of the Agreement on Agriculture, and a draft decision to this effect (G/C/W/86).

The Chairman of the Council for Trade in Goods reported on the consideration of this request by the Council.

The representative of Mexico, and the Chairman spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements³ and, in accordance with the Decision-Making Procedures Under Articles IX and XII of the WTO Agreement (WT/L/93), adopted the draft decision (WT/L/238).

(c) Harmonized System

(i) Bangladesh, Bolivia and Nicaragua (WT/GC/M/19)

At its meeting on 24 April 1997, the General Council considered requests by Bangladesh (G/L/163), Bolivia (G/L/161) and Nicaragua (G/L/166) for extensions of waivers previously granted in connection with their implementation of the Harmonized System, and draft decisions to this effect (Bangladesh - G/C/W/74; Bolivia - G/C/W/72; Nicaragua - G/C/W/77).

The Chairman of the Council for Trade in Goods reported on the consideration of these requests by the Council.

The General Council took note of the report and, in accordance with the Decision-Making Procedures Under Articles IX and XII of the WTO Agreement (WT/L/93), adopted the draft decisions (WT/L/209 - Bangladesh; WT/L/212 - Bolivia; and WT/L/211 - Nicaragua).

(ii) Sri Lanka (WT/GC/M/21)

At its meeting on 16 July 1997, the General Council considered a request by Sri Lanka (G/L/164) for an extension of a waiver previously granted in connection with its implementation of the Harmonized System, and a draft decision to this effect (G/C/W/73/Rev.1).

The Chairman of the Council for Trade in Goods reported on the consideration of this request by the Council.

The General Council took note of the report and, in accordance with the Decision-Making Procedures Under Articles IX and XII of the WTO Agreement (WT/L/93), adopted the draft decision (WT/L/224).

³Including the statement by Hungary on this matter at the meeting of the Council for Trade in Goods on 6 October 1997 (G/C/M/23, item 4).

(iii) Bangladesh, Nicaragua and Sri Lanka (WT/GC/M/23)

At its meeting on 22 October 1997, the General Council considered requests by Bangladesh (G/L/186), Nicaragua (G/L/187) and Sri Lanka (G/L/188) for extensions of waivers previously granted in connection with their implementation of the Harmonized System, and draft decisions to this effect (Bangladesh - G/C/W/89; Nicaragua - G/C/W/87; Sri Lanka - G/C/W/90).

The Chairman of the Council for Trade in Goods reported on the consideration of these requests by the Council, and the representative of Bangladesh spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements and, in accordance with the Decision-Making Procedures Under Articles IX and XII of the WTO Agreement (WT/L/93), adopted the draft decisions (Bangladesh - WT/L/239; Nicaragua - WT/L/240; Sri Lanka - WT/L/241).

(d) Renegotiations of Schedules

(i) Senegal - Renegotiation of Schedule XLIX (WT/GC/M/19)

At its meeting on 24 April 1997, the General Council had before it a request by Senegal (G/L/165) for an extension of a waiver previously granted in connection with its renegotiation of its schedule, and a draft decision to this effect (G/C/W/76).

The Chairman of the Council for Trade in Goods informed the General Council that since the Goods Council meeting at which this request had been considered, Senegal had concluded its pending negotiations under Article XXVIII of GATT 1994. Senegal was therefore not pursuing its request on the waiver, and the General Council did not need to take further action on this item.

The General Council took note of the statement.

(ii) Zambia - Renegotiation of Schedule LXXVIII (WT/GC/M/19, 23)

At its meeting on 24 April 1997, the General Council considered a request by Zambia (G/L/162) for an extension of a waiver previously granted in connection with its renegotiation of its schedule, and a draft decision to this effect (G/C/W/75).

The Chairman of the Council for Trade in Goods reported on the consideration of this request by the Council.

The General Council took note of the report and, in accordance with the Decision-Making Procedures Under Articles IX and XII of the WTO Agreement (WT/L/93), adopted the draft decision (WT/L/213).

At its meeting on 22 October 1997, the General Council considered a request by Zambia (G/L/189) for an extension of the waiver previously granted in connection with its renegotiation of its schedule, and a draft decision to this effect (G/C/W/91).

The Chairman of the Council for Trade in Goods reported on the consideration of this request by the Council.

The General Council took note of the report and, in accordance with the Decision-Making Procedures Under Articles IX and XII of the WTO Agreement (WT/L/93), adopted the draft decision (WT/L/242).

(e) Decision on the introduction of Harmonized System changes into WTO schedules of tariff concessions on 1 January 1996 (WT/GC/M/19, 23)

At its meeting on 24 April 1997, the General Council considered a draft decision extending the time-limit of the Decision on the introduction of Harmonized System changes into WTO schedules of tariff concessions on 1 January 1996 (G/MA/W/12 and Corr.1).

The Chairman of the Council for Trade in Goods reported on the consideration of this matter by the Council.

The representatives of Switzerland, Trinidad and Tobago and Argentina, and the Chairman and the Director-General spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements and of the report by the Chairman of the Council for Trade in Goods, including on the consultations held on the proposal made by Switzerland (WT/GC/W/56 - G/C/W/79), and of his intention to hold further consultations with a view to finding a solution in time for the meeting of the Council for Trade in Goods on 2 June. The General Council then adopted the draft decision (WT/L/216) in accordance with the Decision-Making Procedures Under Articles IX and XII of the WTO Agreement (WT/L/93).

At its meeting on 22 October 1997, the General Council considered a draft decision extending the time-limit of the Decision on the introduction of Harmonized System changes into WTO schedules of tariff concessions on 1 January 1996 (G/C/W/93/Rev.1)

The Chairman of the Council for Trade in Goods reported on the consideration of this matter by the Council.

The General Council took note of the report and that Cuba had requested to be withdrawn from the list of Members annexed to the draft decision and, in accordance with the Decision-Making Procedures Under Articles IX and XII of the WTO Agreement (WT/L/93), adopted the draft decision as amended (WT/L/243).

The representative of Switzerland spoke.

The General Council took note of the statement.

(f) Review of waivers pursuant to Article IX:4 of the WTO Agreement (WT/GC/M/23)

Under Article IX:4 of the WTO Agreement, "Any waiver granted for a period of more than one year shall be reviewed by the Ministerial Conference not later than one year after it is granted, and thereafter annually until the waiver terminates." The Article further provides that: "In each review, the Ministerial Conference shall examine whether the exceptional circumstances justifying the waiver still exist and whether the terms and conditions attached to the waiver have been met. The Ministerial Conference, on the basis of the annual review, may extend, modify or terminate the waiver."

At its meeting on 22 October 1997, the General Council conducted a review of the following waivers: Canada - CARIBCAN (WT/L/185); Cuba - Article XV:6 (WT/L/182); EC - The Fourth ACP-EC Convention of Lomé (WT/L/186); United States - Andean Trade Preference Act (WT/L/184); United States - Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act (WT/L/104); and United States - Former Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (WT/L/183). In so doing, the General Council considered reports on the implementation of the waivers submitted by the following governments: Canada (WT/L/236), Cuba (WT/L/231), the European Communities (WT/L/235), and the United States (WT/L/232-234).

The General Council took note of the reports submitted under the waivers.

9. Action pursuant to Article X:9 of the WTO Agreement

(a) Deletion of the International Dairy Agreement from Annex 4 of the WTO Agreement (WT/GC/M/25)

At the General Council meeting on 10 December 1997, the Chairman recalled that on 30 September the International Dairy Council had decided to terminate the International Dairy Agreement "as of 1 January 1998" (IDA/8), and had requested that the Ministerial Conference delete the Agreement from Article 4 of the WTO Agreement upon its termination, in accordance with Article X:9 of the WTO Agreement. Accordingly, he proposed that the draft decision to this effect in WT/GC/W/70 be adopted.

The representative of Korea and the Chairman spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements and adopted the draft decision (WT/L/251).

(b) Deletion of the International Bovine Meat Agreement from Annex 4 of the WTO Agreement (WT/GC/M/25)

At the General Council meeting on 10 December 1997, the Chairman recalled that on 30 September the International Meat Council had decided to terminate the International Bovine Meat Agreement "at the end of 1997" (IMA/8), and had requested that the Ministerial Conference delete the Agreement from Annex 4 of the WTO Agreement upon its termination, in accordance with Article X:9 of the WTO Agreement. Accordingly, he proposed that the draft decision to this effect in WT/GC/W/71 be adopted.

The General Council so agreed (WT/L/252).

10. Accession

(a) Andorra (WT/GC/M/23, 25)

At its meeting on 22 October 1997, the General Council considered a communication from Andorra (WT/ACC/AND/1) concerning its interest in acceding to the WTO Agreement pursuant to Article XII.

The representatives of Andorra (as an observer), the European Communities, Argentina, the United States, Brunei for the ASEAN Members, Mexico, Paraguay, Venezuela, Tunisia, Chile, the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic, Japan, Romania, Mauritius and Canada and the Chairman spoke. The representative of Cuba wished to be placed on record as welcoming and supporting Andorra's request.

The General Council took note of the statements and of the expression of support, agreed to establish a working party to examine Andorra's application, and authorized the Chairman to hold consultations on the procedures and terms of reference of the Working Party. The General Council further agreed to revert to this matter after the consultations were concluded.

The Chairman invited Andorra, on behalf of the General Council, to attend meetings of the General Council and, as appropriate, meetings of other WTO bodies as an observer during the period when the Working Party was carrying out its work.

At its meeting on 10 December 1997, the Chairman informed the General Council that in consultations he had held it had been agreed that the Working Party would carry out its work under standard terms of reference as follows: "To examine the application of the Government of Andorra to accede to the WTO Agreement under Article XII, and to submit to the General Council recommendations which may include a draft Protocol of Accession", and that Mr. B. Jonsson (Iceland) had agreed to chair the Working Party.

The General Council took note of this information.

(b) Azerbaijan (WT/GC/M/21, 23)

At its meeting on 16 July 1997, the General Council considered a communication from Azerbaijan (WT/ACC/AZE/1) concerning its interest in acceding to the WTO Agreement pursuant to Article XII.

The General Council agreed to establish a working party to examine Azerbaijan's application, and authorized its Chairman to designate the Chairperson of the Working Party in consultation with representatives of Members and with the representative of Azerbaijan.

At its meeting on 22 October 1997, the Chairman informed the General Council that he was still pursuing consultations on the designation of a chairperson for the Working Party.

The representative of Azerbaijan spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements.

(c) Georgia (WT/GC/M/19)

In July 1996, the General Council had established a working party to examine Georgia's application for accession to the WTO Agreement, and had authorized its Chairman to designate the Chairperson of the Working Party in consultation with representatives of Members and with the representative of Georgia.

At its meeting on 24 April 1997, the Chairman informed the General Council that Ms. E. Herfkens (Netherlands) had agreed to chair the Working Party.

The General Council took note of this information.

(d) Panama (WT/GC/M/19, 20)

In October 1996, the General Council had adopted a Decision (WT/ACC/PAN/20) authorizing Panama to accede to the WTO Agreement under terms set out in its Protocol of Accession (WT/ACC/PAN/21). As set out in its paragraph 7, the Protocol was open for acceptance by Panama until 30 June 1997.

At the General Council meeting on 24 April 1997, the Chairman announced that Panama had recently indicated that it might not be able to meet the time-limit of 30 June 1997 for its acceptance of the Protocol of Accession. If this proved to be the case, a draft decision proposing an extension of the time-limit would be placed before the General Council for consideration at its next meeting.

The General Council took note of this information.

At its meeting on 30 June - 1 July 1997, the General Council considered a communication from Panama requesting that the time-limit for acceptance in paragraph 7 of its Protocol of Accession be changed to 31 October 1997 (WT/GC/W/59), and a draft decision to this effect in the Annex to that document.

The General Council adopted the draft decision (WT/ACC/PAN/22).

The representative of Panama spoke.

The General Council took note of the statement.

(e) Seychelles (WT/GC/M/23)

In July 1995, the General Council had established a working party to examine Seychelles' application for accession to the WTO Agreement, and had authorized its Chairman to designate the Chairperson of the Working Party in consultation with representatives of Members and with the representative of Seychelles. In July 1996, the General Council had taken note that Mr. Ravaloson (Madagascar) had agreed to chair the Working Party.

At its meeting on 22 October 1997, the Chairman informed the General Council that, following the departure of Mr. Ravaloson (Madagascar) from Geneva, Mr. Berthet (Uruguay) had agreed to replace him as Chairman of the Working Party.

The General Council took note of this information.

11. Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization
- Extension of time-limit for acceptance of the Agreement by the Republic of the Congo
(WT/GC/M/19)

At the General Council meeting on 24 April 1997, the Chairman announced that the Republic of the Congo had notified the WTO on 25 February 1997 of its ratification of the Marrakesh Agreement. However, the time-limit for acceptance of the Marrakesh Agreement by contracting parties to GATT 1947 eligible to become original Members expired on 1 January 1997, as provided in Article XIV:1 of the Agreement. Given that the Republic of the Congo was the only remaining contracting party to GATT 1947 eligible to become an original Member before 1 January 1997 which was not yet a Member, it was proposed that the General Council adopt the draft decision in WT/GC/W/54, which would extend retroactively the time-limit for acceptance by the Congo of the Marrakesh Agreement to 25 February 1997.

The General Council adopted the draft decision (WT/L/208).⁴

⁴The Congo was thus deemed to be a WTO Member as of 27 March 1997, i.e. 30 days after receipt of its notification of ratification, as provided for in Article XIV:1 of the WTO Agreement.

12. Brazil - Import financing restrictions (WT/GC/M/21)

At the General Council meeting on 16 July 1997, the representative of the European Communities expressed concern at measures recently imposed by Brazil on import financing which he said had the effect of reducing the availability of short-term credit.

The representatives of Brazil and Switzerland spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements.

13. Peru - Recent customs tariff changes (WT/GC/M/19)

At its meeting on 24 April 1997, the representative of Peru informed the General Council that tariff duties on goods imported into Peru had been modified as of 13 April, and that these unilateral changes did not affect Peru's rights and obligations under the WTO Agreement.

The General Council took note of the statement.

14. Ecuador - Commitments under the Protocol of Accession (WT/GC/M/18)

At its meeting on 7 February 1997, the General Council considered a communication from the United States (WT/L/202) expressing concern that Ecuador had not implemented certain commitments in its Protocol of Accession.

The representatives of the United States, Ecuador, the European Communities, Venezuela also on behalf of Colombia, New Zealand and Switzerland spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements.

15. Frugality measures in Korea (WT/GC/M/19)

At the General Council meeting on 24 April 1997, the representative of the European Communities expressed concern at the impact on Community exports of the so-called frugality campaign in Korea, which affected not only trade in goods but also trade in services.

The representatives of the United States and Korea spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements.

16. United States - Recent action with regard to Korea under Section 301 of the Omnibus Trade and Competitiveness Act of 1988 (WT/GC/M/23)

At the General Council meeting on 22 October 1997, the representative of Korea expressed concern at recent US action identifying Korea's automobile market practice as a "priority foreign country practice" under Section 301 of the Omnibus Trade and Competitiveness Act of 1988, and reserved Korea's rights under the WTO Agreements in this connection.

The General Council took note of the statement.

17. Accreditation of Permanent Representatives to the WTO (WT/GC/M/21, 23)

At the General Council meeting on 16 July 1997, the Chairman said that this matter had been discussed at an informal meeting on 23 June on the basis of a text circulated by the Secretariat at his request (WT/GC/W/61), and at a further informal meeting on 10 July on the basis of a revised text by the Secretariat (WT/GC/W/61/Rev.1). It appeared that additional time was needed to settle certain aspects of the issue and to allow for further reflection by some delegations. He hoped that, following further work on the procedures, it would be possible to take a decision thereon after the summer break.

The representatives of Switzerland, Tunisia, Paraguay, Japan, Uruguay, Singapore on behalf of the ASEAN Members, Canada, Chile and Hungary spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements and agreed to revert to this matter at its next meeting.

At its meeting on 22 October 1997, the Chairman informed the General Council that a revised text on accreditation procedures (WT/GC/W/61/Rev.2) had been considered at an informal meeting on 2 October, and that following the comments made at that meeting he had undertaken to circulate a further revised text with a view to seeking agreement thereon. However, it had not proved possible to reach a consensus on this text, and he proposed therefore to continue consultations with interested delegations before submitting a further revised proposal. He had, in the meantime, requested the Secretariat to circulate a note on the existing accreditation practices with regard to international intergovernmental organizations.

The General Council took note of the statement and agreed to revert to this matter at a future meeting.

18. Institutional reform and restructuring of the Secretariat⁵ (WT/GC/M/19, 23, 25)

At the General Council meeting on 24 April 1997, the Chairman said that a number of delegations had been of the view that, in the light of the first two years of operation of the WTO Secretariat, consideration should be given to how its functioning and operational efficiency might be enhanced to meet the challenges facing the Organization. The view had also been expressed that the number of Deputy Directors-General should be reduced at an appropriate time. He drew attention to a draft decision on the WTO Secretariat and senior management structure (WT/GC/W/57), which had resulted from broad-based informal consultations on this matter.

The representatives of Pakistan, Singapore on behalf of the ASEAN Members, Mexico, Hong Kong, India, Korea, Colombia, New Zealand, Trinidad and Tobago, Peru, Argentina, Morocco, Switzerland, Norway, Venezuela and Tunisia spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements and adopted the draft decision on the WTO Secretariat and Senior Management Structure (WT/L/207).

The Director-General spoke.

The General Council took note of the statement.

⁵Some discussion relating to this matter is carried under sub-point 28(b) - "Offices of the Deputy Directors-General".

At its meeting on 22 October 1997, the Chairman informed the General Council that the report requested of the Director-General on this matter by the Decision of 24 April 1997 (WT/L/207) had recently been circulated to delegations, and that he intended to hold consultations thereon in the near future.

The General Council took note of this information.

At the General Council meeting on 10 December 1997, the Chairman said that the Director-General's report had been discussed briefly at informal consultations on 2 December, at which he had invited delegations to give careful consideration to the report and had indicated his intention to hold further consultations on this matter early in the following year.

The General Council took note of this information.

19. Scheduling of meetings of WTO bodies (WT/GC/M/18)

At the General Council meeting on 7 February 1997, the Chairman said that concerns expressed by a number of delegations about the excessive number of meetings and their ability to follow them pointed to the need to further intensify efforts to rationalize work in the WTO through a stricter adherence to the guidelines on arrangements for scheduling of meetings (WT/L/106). He intended to suggest to the future Chairperson of the General Council to take this matter into account in consultation with chairpersons of other WTO bodies to ensure that the guidelines were applied to the fullest extent possible and to seek practical solutions to the problems encountered.

The representative of Tanzania spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements.

20. Follow-up to paragraph 22 of the Singapore Ministerial Declaration (WT/GC/M/19)

At the General Council meeting on 24 April 1997, the representative of Egypt expressed the hope that informal consultations on ways to minimize the burdens on delegations, especially those with more limited resources, in the organization of the WTO's work referred to in paragraphs 20 and 21 of the Singapore Ministerial Declaration (WT/MIN(96)/DEC), would be continued.

The Chairman spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements.

21. Frequency of meetings of WTO bodies (WT/GC/M/23, 25)

At the General Council meeting on 22 October 1997, the representative of Egypt expressed concern at the frequency of meetings of WTO bodies, and urged consideration of this issue by the General Council to ensure strict adherence to the guidelines on the arrangements for scheduling of meetings of WTO bodies (WT/L/106) and the provisions of paragraph 22 of the Singapore Ministerial Declaration in this regard (WT/MIN(96)/DEC).

The representatives of Jamaica, Brunei on behalf of the ASEAN Members, India and Cuba spoke.

The Chairman proposed that he hold structured consultations on this matter. The consultations, open to all, would be held as soon as possible and would take into account the suggestions made by Egypt on how to address this issue. The Secretariat would be requested to prepare some additional information for circulation to Members on this matter.

The General Council took note of the statements and so agreed.

At its meeting on 10 December 1997, the Chairman informed the General Council of informal consultations he had held recently on this matter.

The General Council took note of the statement.

22. Supply of information to the integrated data base for personal computers (WT/GC/M/21)

At its meeting on 16 July 1997, the General Council considered a draft decision on the supply of information to the integrated data base for personal computers (G/C/W/82).

The Chairman of the Council for Trade in Goods reported on the consideration of this matter by the Council.

The General Council took note of the statement and adopted the draft decision (WT/L/225).

23. Issuance of a Daily Bulletin (WT/GC/M/21, 25)

At its meeting on 16 July 1997, the Chairman, on the basis of consultations he had held regarding the possibility of issuing a daily bulletin to assist delegations in following meetings at the WTO, informed the General Council that: (i) the bulletin would be issued in English only and placed in the pigeon holes assigned to delegations at the WTO before the close-of-business on each working day. It would indicate the meetings to be held the following day, and contain a brief factual description of the results of formal meetings held the previous day; (ii) the bulletin would not be made available to the public and the press; and (iii) the bulletin would be circulated on a trial basis for three months starting in September 1997, and would be reviewed in the light of experience and financial implications, if any.

The representatives of Côte d'Ivoire and Venezuela spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements.

At the General Council meeting on 10 December 1997, the Chairman proposed that, in light of the generally positive experience thus far with the issuance of the Daily Bulletin, the Bulletin continue to be issued for a further trial period of three months in English only, since its issuance in French and Spanish would have financial implications that would have to be examined by the Committee on Budget, Finance and Administration.

The General Council took note of the statement and so agreed.

24. Secretariat efforts to improve transparency and general contact with the public (WT/GC/M/25)

At its meeting on 10 December 1997, the Director-General informed the General Council of efforts being made by the Secretariat to improve transparency and general contact with the public.

The representatives of the United States, Switzerland and Pakistan spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements.

25. Status of the collaboration between the WTO and ILO Secretariats pursuant to paragraph 4 of the Singapore Ministerial Declaration (WT/GC/M/21)

At the General Council meeting on 16 July 1997, the representative of Norway recalled the provisions of paragraph 4 of the Singapore Ministerial Declaration (WT/MIN(96)/DEC) and requested the Director-General for information as to the status of the collaboration between the WTO and ILO secretariats and whether the WTO Secretariat had received any information on the issue of the ILO's work on core labour standards that could be shared with Members.

The Director-General, and the representatives of the United States, Egypt, Pakistan, Brazil, Morocco, India, Peru, Australia, Singapore on behalf of the ASEAN Members, Canada, Japan, Cuba, Colombia, the European Communities and Switzerland, and the Chairman spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements.

26. Arrangements for effective cooperation with other intergovernmental organizations

(a) Office International des Epizooties (WT/GC/M/23)

At its meeting on 22 October 1997, the General Council considered draft texts of an exchange of letters proposed as the basis for establishing relations between the WTO and the Office International des Epizooties (G/SPS/W/61), which had earlier been approved by the General Session of the OIE and by the WTO Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures and the Council for Trade in Goods.

The General Council approved the draft texts of the exchange of letters.

(b) IMF and World Bank (WT/GC/M/23, 25)

At the General Council meeting on 22 October 1997, the Chairman recalled that under the Decision approving the Agreements between the WTO and the IMF and World Bank (WT/L/194), the Director-General was to hold consultations with Members under the auspices of the General Council Chairman, and that these consultations should include reports on the coherence consultations between the Heads of the three organizations as well as on other matters. He informed the General Council that a first report was being prepared, and that the consultations with Members would be held in the near future.

The General Council took note of this information.

At its meeting on 10 December 1997, the Chairman informed the General Council that the Director-General had held consultations with Members on 2 December under the auspices of the Chairman of the General Council on matters relating to the implementation of the Agreements with the IMF and World Bank, in the course of which the Director-General's report on the implementation of the Agreements (WT/GC/W/68) had been considered.

The representatives of Jamaica, Pakistan, the United States, India, Argentina, Korea, Norway, Morocco and Hong Kong, China, and the Director-General and the Chairman spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements and of the Director-General's report, and agreed that the idea of broad discussions early the following year on the matters raised by Members be pursued. The General Council also agreed that the Secretariat compile the references in the WTO Agreements to the IMF and its Articles of Agreement.

27. International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO
- Reports of the Joint Advisory Group (WT/GC/M/18, 21)

At its meeting on 7 February 1997, the General Council considered the report of the Joint Advisory Group of the International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO on its twenty-ninth session (ITC/AG(XXIX)/157).

The Vice-Chairman of the Group introduced the report. The representatives of Egypt, Jamaica, India, Singapore on behalf of the ASEAN Members, and Japan, and the Executive Director of the ITC and the Chairman spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements and adopted the report.

At its meeting on 16 July 1997, the General Council considered the report of the Joint Advisory Group of the International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO on its thirtieth session (ITC/AG(XXX)/164).

The Chairman of the Group introduced the report, and the representative of Pakistan spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements and adopted the report.

28. Administrative matters

(a) Conditions of service of WTO staff (WT/GC/M/18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24)

In November 1996, the General Council had decided that it would in 1997 continue its consideration of the draft decision of 18 September 1996 on conditions of service of WTO staff, with a view to reaching a final conclusion by 30 June 1997 at the latest (WT/L/197).

At the General Council meeting on 7 February 1997, the Chairman proposed the establishment of an open-ended working group to assist the General Council in meeting the 30 June deadline for a final conclusion to this matter, with terms of reference that he read out.

The representatives of Egypt, Germany, Morocco, Norway, the United States, Uruguay, Jamaica, Hong Kong, Canada, Haiti, Singapore on behalf of the ASEAN Members, Mexico and Korea, and the Director-General and the Chairman spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements, agreed to the Chairman's proposal regarding the establishment and terms of reference of a working group to study this matter, and authorized the Chairman to designate the Chairman of the Working Group in consultation with Members.⁶ The General

⁶On the basis of his consultations, the Chairman subsequently designated Mr. Morjane (Tunisia) as Chairman of the Working Group (WT/L/205).

Council also agreed that the Chairman should hold further consultations on the question of participation of the WTO Staff Council as an observer in the Working Group.

At the General Council meeting on 24 April 1997, the Chairman of the Working Group on conditions of service reported on the work undertaken by the Group thus far.

The Director-General expressed concern that work in the Group had thus far not proceeded as well or as expeditiously as expected. He suggested that, in order to facilitate consensus, Members first take the political and institutional decision, and then address the budgetary aspects of establishing an independent Secretariat.

The representatives of Norway, Hong Kong, Iceland, Nigeria, Brazil, the Czech Republic, Japan, Turkey, Australia, Singapore on behalf of the ASEAN Members, Korea, France, Switzerland, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Germany, India, Italy and Morocco spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements.

At its meeting on 30 June - 1 July 1997, the General Council had before it a draft decision on conditions of service of WTO staff (WT/GC/W/63) prepared by the Chairman of the Working Group on conditions of service. Following further informal consultations during the course of the meeting, the General Council considered a revised text of the draft decision (WT/GC/W/63/Rev.2).

The representatives of the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, Paraguay on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC), and Nigeria spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements and adopted the draft decision in WT/GC/W/63/Rev.2.⁷

The Chairman then read the following statement: "In light of the views expressed by some Members, subject to your agreement I propose to request the Director-General to contact the International Civil Service Commission as soon as possible in order to explore the possibilities for implementing reforms in WTO conditions of service, taking into account the different options raised by Members. The Director-General will report back to the General Council not later than October 1997 on the results of these consultations." He added that he had discussed this matter with the Director-General, and the latter was ready to respond to this request.

The General Council took note of this statement, and of further statements by the Chairman and the representative of Morocco.

At the General Council meeting on 16 July 1997, the Chairman recalled that the Working Group on Conditions of Service established in February had been asked to submit its final report by the end of May 1997. By their Decision on conditions of service of WTO staff of 1 July (WT/L/223), Members had implicitly extended the 30 June deadline for a final conclusion to this matter established in November 1996 (WT/L/197) by agreeing that the General Council would consider this matter further not later than October 1997. Since much technical work was still required in connection with the question of conditions of service, he wished to confirm that the original mandate of the Group was also extended so that it might pursue its work as appropriate in light of the 1 July Decision.

The General Council took note of the statement.

⁷The Decision was subsequently also adopted by the Executive Committee of the Interim Commission for the International Trade Organization (ICITO), and circulated as WT/L/223.

The Chairman then informed the General Council of his decision, pursuant to paragraph 2 of the 1 July Decision on conditions of service (WT/L/223), and in consultation with the Chairman of the Working Group on Conditions of Service, to designate Mr. Christopher Daykin, the Government Actuary of the United Kingdom, to prepare the second opinion on the calculations of the WTO consulting actuary with regard to the proposed WTO pension plan.

The General Council took note of this information.

At the General Council meeting on 22 October 1997, the Chairman noted that the additional information on this matter that Members had requested at the General Council meeting on 30 June-1 July had since been received from the UN Joint Staff Pension Fund, the UK Government Actuary and the International Civil Service Commission. It was his understanding that certain governments were still considering this matter and were not yet in a position to join in a consensus. He therefore proposed that, notwithstanding the deadline of October 1997 set by the General Council for a decision, the General Council agree to defer further consideration of this matter to a future meeting to be convened by the second week of November at the latest.

The General Council so agreed.

The Chairperson of the WTO Staff Council, and the Director-General spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements.

At the General Council meeting on 14 November 1997, the representative of the United States indicated that his authorities could in principle accept the establishment of the WTO Secretariat on an independent basis, and specified conditions which the United States would expect to see reflected in the package prior to a final decision.

The representatives of Morocco, the Netherlands, Japan and Hong Kong, China, and the Director-General and Mr. Lavorel, Deputy Director-General, spoke.

In the light of the statements that had been made, the Chairman invited the Chairman of the Working Group on Conditions of Service to prepare a revised draft decision for the consideration of Members, taking into account the latest developments. He proposed that the meeting be adjourned in the meantime and that it be reconvened at the earliest possible date with a view to taking a decision on this matter.

The General Council took note of the statements and so agreed.⁸

(b) Offices of the Deputy Directors-General (WT/GC/M/18, 19)

At its meeting in April 1996, the General Council had agreed that the contracts of the three Deputy Directors-General that were due to expire on 31 July 1996 be extended for one year, and that the Director-General initiate consultations on further renewals or new appointments early in 1997, well in advance of the date of expiration of their terms of office.

At the General Council meeting on 7 February 1997, the Director-General, in accordance with the procedures for the future appointments of the Deputy Directors-General (BISD 34S/173), informed the General Council of the initiation of his consultations on the posts of the Deputy Directors-General.

⁸The discussion at the reconvened meeting will be reflected in an addendum to the present report.

The representatives of Morocco, Pakistan, Singapore on behalf of the ASEAN Members, and Mexico, and the Chairman spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements.

At the General Council meeting on 24 April 1997, the Director-General announced that he had decided to extend the present contracts of the four Deputy Directors-General until 30 April 1999, the date on which he would leave office. He believed that in taking his decision he was not touching on Members' freedom of action to change the present senior management structure⁹ and the timetable for implementing that change.

The representatives of the European Communities, Colombia and Mexico, and the Chairman spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements and of the Director-General's announcement.

29. Observer status

(a) International intergovernmental organizations (WT/GC/M/17, 18, 23, 25)

At the General Council meeting on 26 November 1996, the Chairman said it was his understanding that, pending agreement on the organizations to be accorded observer status in the General Council in accordance with the guidelines for such status agreed on 18 July 1996¹⁰, the United Nations, UNCTAD, IMF, World Bank, FAO, WIPO and OECD would be invited to the next meeting of the General Council.

The General Council took note of this information.

At the General Council meeting on 7 February 1997, the Chairman noted that the IMF and the World Bank had been given observer status in the General Council and other WTO bodies as provided for in their recently concluded respective Agreements with the WTO (WT/L/195), and proposed the following with regard to other international intergovernmental organizations that had requested observer status: (a) that the organizations that had ad hoc observer status in the General Council, namely, the United Nations, UNCTAD, FAO, WIPO and OECD be granted observer status immediately; (b) that the Chairman consult on the international intergovernmental organizations whose requests for observer status had not yet been considered; and (c) that the General Council invite other WTO bodies to proceed in a similar way with regard to observer status for international intergovernmental organizations.

The representatives of Jamaica, the United States and Morocco spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements and agreed to the Chairman's proposal.

At the General Council meeting on 22 October 1997, the representative of Egypt expressed concern at the inconsistency in dealing with requests for observer status from certain international organizations in various WTO bodies, and requested information from the Chairman on his efforts to find an acceptable solution soon to this issue.

⁹See point 18 - "Institutional reform and restructuring of the Secretariat".

¹⁰The guidelines are reproduced as Annex 3 of WT/L/161.

The representatives of Brunei on behalf of the ASEAN Members, Bangladesh and Argentina, and the Chairman spoke. The Chairman said that he would reactivate broad informal consultations with delegations on this matter as soon as possible.

The General Council took note of the statements.

At the General Council meeting on 10 December 1997, the Chairman reported that he had recently held consultations on this matter, and that further consultations would need be held early the following year. In the meantime, he proposed that the International Trade Centre, as a joint subsidiary organ of the WTO and UNCTAD, be invited, as appropriate, to attend meetings of those WTO bodies it wished to attend without having to submit a request for observer status.

The General Council took note of the statement and so agreed.

(b) Holy See (WT/GC/M/19, 21)

At the General Council meeting on 24 April 1997, the Chairman recalled that in informal consultations he had informed delegations of informal enquiries from the Vatican regarding the possibility of being allowed to observe meetings of the General Council, and had invited all to reflect on this matter and to inform him by the time of that meeting whether they would have any difficulty in considering, at a future meeting, a formal request from the Vatican. He announced that no Member had until then indicated any difficulty in considering such a request.

The General Council took note of this information.

At its meeting on 16 July 1997, the General Council considered a communication from the Holy See requesting observer status in the Ministerial Conference and the General Council (WT/L/221).

The representatives of India and Paraguay, and the Chairman spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements and agreed to grant the Holy See observer status at meetings of the Ministerial Conference and the General Council. Taking into account the uniqueness of the Holy See's situation, the General Council further agreed to waive the requirement concerning the intention to initiate accession negotiations set out in Annex 2 of the Rules of Procedure (WT/L/161), on the understanding that this did not constitute a precedent for future decisions on requests for observer status.

The representatives of Egypt, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Paraguay on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC), and Indonesia, and the observer from the Holy See, and the Director-General and the Chairman spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements.

(c) Ethiopia (WT/GC/M/23)

At its meeting on 22 October 1997, the General Council considered a request from Ethiopia (WT/L/229) for observer status in the General Council and its subsidiary bodies, and agreed to grant the request.

The representatives of Ethiopia (as an observer), Morocco on behalf of the African Group, Egypt, Kenya, India, Brunei on behalf of the ASEAN Members, and Bangladesh spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements.

30. Appointment of officers to WTO bodies (WT/GC/M/18)

At the General Council meeting on 7 February 1997, the Chairman said that in accordance with the guidelines for appointment of officers to WTO bodies (WT/L/31), he had held consultations on this matter, and considered that there was a consensus on the following slate of names:

| | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Chairperson of the General Council | Mr. C. Lafer (Brazil) |
| Chairperson of the Dispute Settlement Body | Mr. W. Armstrong (New Zealand) |
| Chairperson of the Trade Policy Review Body | Mr. M. Akram (Pakistan) |
| Chairperson of the Council for Trade in Goods | Mr. T. Johannessen (Norway) |
| Chairperson of the Council for TRIPS | Mrs. C. Luz Guarda (Chile) |
| Chairperson of the Council for Trade in Services | Mr. J. Yung Sun (Korea) |
| Chairperson of the Committee on Trade and Environment | Mr. B. Ekblom (Finland) |
| Chairperson of the Committee on Trade and Development | Mr. D. Baichoo (Mauritius) |
| Chairperson of the Committee on Budget, Finance and Administration | Mr. K. Morjane (Tunisia) |
| Chairperson of the Committee on Balance-of-Payments Restrictions | Mr. P.R. Jenkins (United Kingdom) |
| Chairperson of the Committee on Regional Trading Arrangements | Mr. J. Weekes (Canada) |

The representatives of Hong Kong, Singapore on behalf of the ASEAN Members, and Tanzania spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements and of the consensus on the above slate of names.

31. Election of Chairperson (WT/GC/M/18)

At the General Council meeting on 7 February 1997, the Chairman, as the outgoing presiding officer of the General Council, made a statement (WT/GC(97)/ST/1).

The General Council then unanimously elected Mr. Lafer (Brazil) to the Chair.

32. Review of WTO activities¹¹ (WT/GC/M/25)

33. Annual overview of developments in international trade and the trading system¹¹ (WT/GC/M/25)

At its meeting on 10 December 1997, the General Council conducted a review of WTO activities in pursuance of the Decision concerning procedures for the overview of WTO activities and for reporting under the WTO (WT/L/105), as well as an overview of developments in international trade and the

¹¹At the Chairman's suggestion the matters under points 32 and 33 were taken up together and the discussion thereof is reflected accordingly in the Minutes of the meeting.

trading system as required under paragraph G of the Trade Policy Review Mechanism. In so doing, the General Council considered annual reports for 1997 from WTO bodies and an annual report by the Director-General on developments in international trade and the trading system (WT/TPR/OV/3 and Corr.1).

The Chairpersons of the respective WTO bodies presented the annual reports submitted by those bodies.

The General Council agreed to the composition of the Textiles Monitoring Body as proposed by the Chairman of the Council for Trade in Goods (WT/L/253), and also agreed to a proposal by the Director-General that the Chairman of the TMB, Mr. Szepesi, be reappointed for a further period of three years as of 1 January 1998.

The representatives of Ecuador, Colombia, Bolivia, Brunei for the ASEAN Members, Egypt, India, Pakistan, the United States, the European Communities, Canada, Norway, Mexico and Hong Kong, China, and the Chairman then spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements, adopted the report of the Committee on Trade and Development and took note of the reports of the other WTO bodies.

The Chairman of the Trade Policy Review Body and the Director-General then spoke.

The General Council took note of the statements.

The General Council next heard statements on both these points from representatives¹². The General Council then agreed that the review of WTO activities and the overview of developments in international trade and the trading system for 1997 had been conducted. It further agreed that the Chairman would consult with delegations on the possibility of convening an informal meeting early the following year for the purposes of holding a policy discussion to deal with the matters raised by delegations relating to the conduct of the end-of-year reviews in the General Council.

¹²The statements were subsequently circulated as documents in the WT/GC(97)/ST/- series.