

GENERAL COUNCIL

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Annual Report (1996)

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 since the previous overview of WTO activities held in December 1995.¹

In carrying out its tasks, the General Council has held seven meetings since December 1995. The minutes of these meetings, which remain the record of the General Council's work, are contained in documents WT/GC/M/10-WT/GC/M/16.

The following subjects are included in the report:

	<u>Page</u>
1. 1996 Ministerial Conference	4
(a) Preparations for the Ministerial Conference	4
(i) Reports by the Director-General	4
(ii) Schedule of meetings of WTO bodies	6
(iii) Progress of preparatory work in subsidiary bodies of the General Council	6
(iv) Reports of:	7
(a) Dispute Settlement Body and Trade Policy Review Body	7
(b) Councils for Trade in Goods, Trade in Services, and TRIPS	7
(c) Committee on Trade and Environment	7
(d) Committees on Trade and Development, Regional Trade Agreements, Balance-of-Payments Restrictions, and Budget, Finance and Administration	8
(e) Committees and Councils under the Plurilateral Trade Agreements	8
(v) Election of officers of the Ministerial Conference	8
(vi) Organizational matters	9
(b) Attendance of observers at the Ministerial Conference	10
(i) Governments	10
(ii) International intergovernmental organizations	10
(iii) Non-governmental organizations	11

¹The annual report of the General Council for 1995 is contained in WT/GC/5 and Corr.1.

2.	Finalization of negotiations on schedules on goods and services	12
-	Decision on the accession of, and approval of protocol of accession for, the United Arab Emirates	12
3.	Composition of the Textiles Monitoring Body	12
4.	Committee on Balance-of-Payments Restrictions	13
(a)	Consultations	13
(b)	Disinvocation of the balance-of-payments provisions of the GATT 1994 by Turkey and Poland	13
(c)	Notifications by the Philippines and India	13
(d)	Notes on meetings	13
(e)	Ad hoc observer status for international intergovernmental organizations	13
5.	Committee on Budget, Finance and Administration	13
-	Reports	13
6.	Committee on Regional Trade Agreements	14
(a)	Establishment of the Committee and adoption of its terms of reference	14
(b)	Presiding officers of the Committee	14
7.	Approval of rules of procedure for subsidiary bodies	14
-	Committee on Regional Trade Agreements	14
8.	Agreement on Preshipment Inspection - Review under Article 6 of the Agreement	15
-	Establishment of a working party	15
9.	Waivers under Article IX of the WTO Agreement	15
(a)	Harmonized System	15
-	Bangladesh, Bolivia, Guatemala, Jamaica, Morocco, Nicaragua and Sri Lanka	15
(b)	Renegotiations of Schedules	15
(i)	Malawi - Renegotiation of Schedule LVIII	15
(ii)	Senegal - Renegotiation of Schedule XLIX	15
(iii)	Zambia - Renegotiation of Schedule LXXVIII	16
(c)	Decision on the introduction of Harmonized System changes into WTO schedules of tariff concessions on 1 January 1996	16
-	Extension of time-limit	16
(d)	Extension of waivers pursuant to paragraph 2 of the Understanding in respect of waivers of obligations under GATT 1994	16
(i)	- Canada - CARIBCAN	16
	- Cuba - Article XV:6 of GATT 1994	16
	- European Communities - Fourth ACP-EC Convention of Lomé	16
	- France - Trading Arrangements with Morocco	16
	- South Africa - Base dates under Article I:4	16
	- United States - ANDEAN Trade Preference Act	16
	- United States - Former Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands	16
	- Zimbabwe - Base dates under Article I:4	16
(ii)	United States - Imports of automotive products	17

10.	Status of waivers in effect on the date of entry into force of the WTO Agreement	17
11.	Accessions	17
	(a) Bulgaria	17
	(b) Georgia	18
	(c) Kazakhstan	18
	(d) Kyrgyz Republic	18
	(e) Mongolia	19
	(f) Oman	19
	(g) Panama	19
	(h) Papua New Guinea	20
	(i) Saudi Arabia	20
	(j) Seychelles	20
	(k) Tonga	20
	(l) Vanuatu	21
12.	Brazil - Provisional safeguard measures concerning imports of toys	21
13.	Hungary - Invocation of Article 48 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of the Treaties	21
14.	United States - Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act of 1996	21
15.	Compliance with the obligations of Articles 70.8 and 70.9 of the TRIPS Agreement	21
16.	Notification requirements	22
17.	World Bank study on MERCOSUR	22
18.	WTO Press Release on Trade and Foreign Direct Investment	22
19.	Procedures for the circulation and derestriction of WTO documents	22
20.	Status of ratification of the WTO Agreement by certain governments	23
21.	Arrangements for effective cooperation with other intergovernmental organizations - Relations between the WTO and the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank	23 23
22.	Guidelines for arrangements on relations with non-governmental organizations pursuant to Article V:2 of the WTO Agreement	23
23.	Administrative matters	24
	(i) Offices of the Deputy Directors-General	24
	(ii) Staff-related matters	24
	(iii) Pensions and salaries of WTO staff	24
24.	Observer status	24
	(i) Governments	24
	(ii) International intergovernmental organizations	24

(iii)	Guidelines on observer status for international intergovernmental organizations	25
25.	Election of Chairperson	26
1.	<u>1996 Ministerial Conference</u>	
(a)	<u>Preparations for the Ministerial Conference</u>	
(i)	<u>Reports by the Director-General</u> (WT/GC/M/11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16)	

At the General Council meeting on 16 April 1996, the Chairman recalled that at an informal meeting of the General Council on 5 March, it had been agreed that preparations for the Singapore Ministerial Conference would be undertaken in the following manner:

1. The General Council, meeting informally on that day, would invite the Director-General, Mr. Renato Ruggiero, in his personal capacity, to chair informal meetings open to participation of all Members, in principle at the Head of Delegation level. The purpose of these meetings would be to enable Members to exchange views on the preparation of the Singapore Ministerial Conference, with regard to both substantive and organizational matters.
2. In so doing, the Director-General would act in close cooperation and coordination with the Chairman of the General Council.
3. In all matters relating to the organization of the Ministerial Conference, the Director-General would work closely with the Head of the Delegation of the host country of the Ministerial Conference.
4. The Director-General would submit progress reports on this work at the meetings of the General Council.
5. The General Council would act upon these reports of the Director-General as necessary. In particular, it would consider any proposals addressed to it and take any decisions it deemed appropriate for the further preparation of the Singapore Ministerial Conference.

It was understood that the different WTO bodies would carry out the tasks assigned to them under the texts agreed in the Uruguay Round for the purposes of the first Ministerial Conference.

In accordance with paragraph 4 of the above procedures, the Director-General then reported on the process that had been undertaken thus far.

The Chairman proposed that the General Council take note of the Director-General's statement and agree that the Singapore Ministerial Conference take place from 9-13 December 1996, that the agenda for the Conference be divided between general discussion and specific business items, and that a decision on the specific agenda items and the exact time to be allocated to the general discussion and the specific items be taken at a later date.

The General Council so agreed.

At the General Council meetings on 26 June, 18 July, 2 October, and 14 October 1996, the Director-General reported on the process that had been undertaken until then.

At the General Council meeting on 7, 8 and 13 November 1996 the Director-General recalled that the Heads-of-Delegations process had been formally put into place at the General Council meeting on 16 April. At that meeting, the Chairman had outlined the arrangements agreed at an informal meeting of the General Council on 5 March. Under these arrangements, he had already reported to the General Council on 16 April, 26 June, 18 July, 2 October and 14 October. Eight informal HOD meetings had been held in 1996: on 18 March, 15 April, 15 May, 17 June, 16 September, 7 and 22 October, and 2 November. In addition, a series of six informal consultations on specific issues, open to all interested delegations and focusing mainly on what might constitute the work programme of the WTO, had been held in the latter part of June. Intensive informal bilateral and plurilateral consultations had also been held in the period from July through early November on the elements of a ministerial declaration and on specific issues. At each of these meetings, both implementation questions and the future work programme of the WTO had been discussed. With regard to implementation, delegations had been given the possibility to address problems or new ideas concerning the implementation programme which could emerge in certain areas and which were not provided for in the WTO Agreements themselves or the programme they envisaged. In April, delegations had agreed on the structure of the Singapore Conference. The structure divided, in an illustrative manner only, the available time between general statements and specific agenda items. The exact division would be made at a later date depending on the likely number of general statements and the specific agenda items, for which several delegations had already made useful suggestions. That structure had been formally approved by the General Council on 16 April.

Throughout the process, delegations had introduced non-papers on various subjects. The issues concerned were the following: built-in agenda; competition policy; government procurement; implementation of Uruguay Round Agreements; industrial tariff negotiations; investment; labour standards; regionalism; rules of origin; services; state-trading; technical barriers to trade; textiles and clothing; trade liberalization initiatives; TRIPS; trade facilitation; WTO rules in a globalizing economy; and World Trade Summit in 1998. The Secretariat had also circulated non-papers in the course of October and early November. These were: Outline of the Draft Ministerial Declaration, Draft Ministerial Declaration - Part I, and the full text of the Draft Ministerial Declaration. Of the non-papers submitted by delegations, only the non-papers concerning competition, investment, government procurement, WTO rules, and labour standards had been retained for consideration in the HOD process. At an early stage he had submitted a list of questions with respect to the action that might be required at Singapore in each case, suggesting that Members consider whether the proposals called for specific decisions to be agreed by the Ministers or required a political statement, such as in a ministerial declaration. The other issues raised in the non-papers had all been referred to the relevant WTO bodies for consideration therein. The issue of the World Trade Summit had been left for consideration at an appropriate later stage, and there had been no subsequent discussion of this issue in the HOD process.

Consultations held in July and September had led to the circulation of an outline of a draft ministerial declaration, based on these consultations, which had been discussed at an informal HOD meeting on 7 October. Following this discussion, all WTO Members had been provided with the draft of a political statement which would constitute the introductory part of the ministerial declaration. This draft text had been discussed at the informal HOD meeting held on 22 October. Intensive bilateral and plurilateral consultations had been held throughout the latter part of October on the remaining parts of the draft declaration, as well as on other specific outstanding issues in the HOD process. As a result of these consultations, he had circulated a draft of the full text of the draft declaration, which attempted to reflect the points made by delegations in the course of the consultations. This text had been discussed

at the informal HOD meeting held on 2 November. He added that work on the Declaration and on the outstanding HOD issues was still continuing.

(ii) Schedule of meetings of WTO bodies (WT/GC/M/11)

At the General Council meeting on 16 April 1996, the Chairman drew attention to the schedule of end-of-year meeting for various WTO bodies for the purpose of adoption of their respective reports to the Ministerial Conference (WT/GC/W/32/Rev.1), and to the revised Programme of Meetings of WTO bodies for 1996 (WT/GC/4/Rev.1).

With regard to reporting procedures for the Ministerial Conference, he said that his informal consultations had resulted in agreement on the following text of a statement to be read by him:

- "1. Subsidiary bodies of the General Council are invited to prepare their reports on the basis of the Procedures for an annual overview of the WTO activities and for reporting under the WTO laid down by the General Council on 15 November 1995 (WT/L/105). These reports should be submitted in accordance with the schedule of meetings circulated in document WT/GC/W/32/Rev.1 in order to enable the General Council to adopt its own report to the Ministerial Conference on 7 November 1996.
2. Given the different mandates of Standing Bodies of the WTO it is difficult to establish a common format for reports of these bodies. In some instances, for example, efforts to include in reports an assessment or an identification of problems and issues could lead to undue difficulties. Each Body must therefore ultimately decide on the format of report which it deems most appropriate for consideration of relevant issues by the superior Body.
3. While taking the above into account, I suggest that these reports include at least the following elements:
 - (a) a section on implementation of the relevant Agreements;
 - (b) progress concerning work under the Built-in Agenda;
 - (c) an indication as appropriate of issues and problems which have been identified and recommendations if any."

The General Council took note of the Chairman's statement on reporting procedures for the Ministerial Conference (WT/L/145), also took note that the Chairman would consult with Pakistan on its concerns regarding the second sentence of paragraph 2 of the statement, and further took note that Pakistan would have the possibility to revert to this matter at the next meeting.

The Chairman then invited the chairpersons of subsidiary bodies to undertake the necessary arrangements for the preparation of their respective reports along the lines of his statement.

(iii) Progress of preparatory work in subsidiary bodies of the General Council
(WT/GC/M/13, 14, 15)

At its meeting on 18 July 1996, the General Council heard reports on the progress of preparatory work in their respective bodies, made under their own responsibility, by the Chairpersons of the Dispute Settlement Body, the Trade Policy Review Body, the Council for Trade in Services, the Council for

Trade in Goods, the Committee on Trade and Development, the Committee on Trade and Environment and the Committee on Regional Trade Agreements, and by the Chairman on behalf of the Chairman of the Council for TRIPS. The General Council also heard that the Chairmen of the Budget and Balance-of-Payments Committees had nothing to report at this stage with regard to preparatory work for the Ministerial Conference in their respective Committees.

At its meeting on 2 October 1996, the General Council heard brief reports on the preparatory work in their respective bodies, made under their own responsibility, by the Chairpersons of the Council for Trade in Goods, the Council for Trade in Services and the Council for TRIPS. The General Council also heard that the Chairman of the Committee on Trade and Development had nothing to report at this stage.

At its meeting on 14 October 1996, the General Council heard reports on the preparatory work in their respective bodies, made under their own responsibility, by the Chairpersons of the Trade Policy Review Body, the Council for Trade in Goods, the Council for Trade in Services, the Council for TRIPS, the Dispute Settlement Body, the Committee on Trade and Development, the Committee on Regional Trade Agreements and the Committee on Trade and Environment. The General Council also heard that the Chairmen of the Budget and Balance-of-Payments Committees had nothing to report at this stage with regard to preparatory work for the Ministerial Conference in their respective Committees.

(iv) Reports of:

- (a) Dispute Settlement Body and Trade Policy Review Body
(WT/GC/M/16)

At its meeting on 7, 8 and 13 November 1996, the General Council considered the annual reports of the Dispute Settlement Body (WT/DSB/8) and the Trade Policy Review Body (WT/TPR/27). The General Council took note of the two reports.

- (b) Councils for Trade in Goods, Trade in Services, and TRIPS
(WT/GC/M/16)

At its meeting on 7, 8 and 13 November 1996, the General Council considered the annual reports of the Councils for Trade in Goods (G/L/134), Trade in Services (S/C/3), and TRIPS (IP/C/8). The General Council took note of the three reports and approved the recommendations contained therein. It agreed to revert at a future meeting to the recommendations of the Council for Trade in Goods regarding notification obligations and procedures, and took separate action at the meeting on the recommendation regarding Preshipment Inspection.²

- (c) Committee on Trade and Environment (WT/GC/M/16)

At its meeting on 7, 8 and 13 November 1996, the General Council considered the report of the Committee on Trade and Environment (WT/CTE/W/40³). The General Council took note of the report, approved the recommendations contained therein, and agreed to forward it to the Ministerial Conference for consideration.

²See point 8 - "Agreement on Preshipment Inspection...".

³The report was subsequently reissued as WT/CTE/1.

- (d) Committees on Trade and Development, Regional Trade Agreements, Balance-of-Payments Restrictions, and Budget, Finance and Administration (WT/GC/M/16)

At its meeting on 7, 8 and 13 November 1996, the General Council considered the annual reports of the Committees on Trade and Development (WT/COMTD/9), Regional Trade Agreements (WT/REG/2), Balance-of-Payments Restrictions (WT/BOP/R/19), and Budget, Finance and Administration (WT/BFA/29).

The General Council adopted the report of the Committee on Trade and Development, approved the draft plan of Action for the Least-Developed Countries in WT/COMTD/W/20,⁴ and agreed to submit it to the Ministerial Conference for adoption.

The General Council then took note of the reports of the Committees on Regional Trade Agreements, Balance-of-Payments Restrictions, and Budget, Finance and Administration.

- (e) Committees and Councils under the Plurilateral Trade Agreements (WT/GC/M/16)

At its meeting on 7, 8 and 13 November 1996, the General Council considered and took note of the annual reports of the four Committees and Councils under the Plurilateral Trade Agreements (Committee on Government Procurement (WT/L/190); Committee on Trade in Civil Aircraft (WT/L/193); International Dairy Council (WT/L/178); International Meat Council (WT/L/179)).

- (v) Election of officers of the Ministerial Conference (WT/GC/M/14, 16)

At the General Council meeting on 2 October 1996, the Chairman recalled that the Rules of Procedure for Sessions of the Ministerial Conference (WT/L/161) provided for the election of a Chairperson and three Vice-Chairpersons who would hold office from the end of one session until the end of the next regular session. Since the Singapore Ministerial Conference was the first Ministerial Conference, and there was no elected Chairperson, he proposed that the General Council act on behalf of the Ministerial Conference and elect a Chairperson and three Vice-Chairpersons at its meeting on 7 November 1996. If this proposal were acceptable, he would consult with Members so that the election of the Chairperson and the three Vice-Chairpersons could take place at the General Council meeting on 7 November.

The General Council so agreed.

At its meeting on 7, 8 and 13 November 1996, the General Council, acting on behalf of the Ministerial Conference, elected the following as officers of the 1996 Ministerial Conference by acclamation:

Chairperson:	H.E. Mr. Yeo Cheo Tong Minister for Trade and Industry of Singapore
Vice-Chairpersons:	H.E. Mr. Enda Kenny Minister for Tourism and Trade of Ireland

⁴Subsequently reissued as WT/MIN(96)/W/2.

H.E. Mr. Alvaro Ramos
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uruguay

H.E. Mr. Mondher Zenaïdi
Minister of Trade of Tunisia

(vi) Organizational matters (WT/GC/M/14, 16)

At the General Council meeting on 2 October 1996, the Chairman addressed the following organizational matters pertaining to the Ministerial Conference:

1. Opening Session of the Conference

- (a) In accordance with the usual practice at Ministerial meetings, a brief inaugural ceremony would be held at the opening session to welcome the Prime Minister of Singapore.
- (b) The elected Chairperson of the Ministerial Conference would invite the Prime Minister of Singapore to address the Conference.
- (c) At the end of his address to the Conference, the Prime Minister of Singapore would declare the first Ministerial Conference of the WTO formally opened.
- (d) After the departure of the Prime Minister of Singapore, the Chairperson would take up the following business on the morning of Monday, 9 December as follows:
 - (i) Adoption of the Agenda.
 - (ii) Agreement on the Order of Business.
 - (iii) Introduction of the Report of the General Council by the Chairman of the General Council.
 - (iv) Introduction of the Report on an overview of developments in international trade and the trading system by the Director-General.
 - (v) Statements by Ministers.

2. List of Speakers

Members wishing to speak at the Ministerial Conference should contact the Secretariat and make reservations not later than 1 November 1996. Statements should be limited to a maximum of five minutes. If a delegation so wished, a longer text would be circulated in document form to the Conference.

Requests for reservations made after 1 November would be accommodated in accordance with the availability of time. The purpose of this procedure was to enable the Secretariat to organize in advance the sequence of plenary sessions of the Ministerial Conference.

At the General Council meeting on 7, 8 and 13 November 1996, the Chairman informed delegations, following consultations with the Secretariat and with the authorities of the host government, that the business of the Ministerial Conference was being planned on the following basis: (a) Opening Ceremony: The opening ceremony would be held on Monday, 9 December as previously indicated by him on 2 October; (b) Plenary sessions: Plenary sessions would be held on Monday morning and afternoon, and thereafter on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday mornings; (c) Special meetings among Ministers: The afternoons of Tuesday and Wednesday, 10 and 11 December, would be left open for special meetings among Ministers to discuss specific issues of interest to them. Thursday afternoon, 12 December, would be reserved for any meetings that might be necessary in accordance with the advancement of the Conference; and (d) Closure of the Ministerial Conference: The closing

ceremony would take place on Friday, 13 December. Immediately before the closing ceremony at the plenary of the Conference, Ministers would adopt the Ministerial Declaration and take any other actions that they deemed relevant under item 2 of the Provisional Agenda of the Conference. On that occasion, they would also take note of the General Council report and endorse all recommendations therein. With regard to the special meetings among Ministers planned to take place on Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons, it was proposed that they be organized in the following manner: (a) These meetings would be open to participation by all Ministers and their advisers; (b) Although the meetings would be informal in nature and would take no decisions or actions, records of the discussions could be kept by the Secretariat if so desired; and (c) In order to ensure an orderly discussion, Ministers would be invited to address the following general topics: (i) implementation (on Tuesday afternoon); (ii) future work of the WTO; and (iii) any other matters which Ministers might wish to raise (Wednesday, afternoon). The purpose of the special meetings among Ministers would be to provide the opportunity for an exchange of views among Ministers on matters relating to the WTO and the multilateral trading system, in an open and informal atmosphere.

(b) Attendance of observers at the Ministerial Conference

(i) Governments (WT/GC/M/14, 16)

At the General Council meeting on 2 October 1996, the Chairman recalled the procedures for the attendance of governments as observers at meetings of the Ministerial Conference as set out in Annex 2 of the Rules of Procedure for Sessions of the Ministerial Conference (WT/L/161). Under these procedures, governments that were presently accorded observer status in the General Council and its subsidiary bodies would be invited to attend sessions of the Ministerial Conference as observers. Other governments that wished to have observer status at the Ministerial Conference, and did not at present have such status in the General Council and its subsidiary bodies, would have to make a formal request in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 1 of the above procedures. Any such requests would be examined in accordance with the procedures set out. Furthermore, observer governments that wished to speak at the Ministerial Conference would be invited to do so after Members had spoken, as provided for in the procedures.

At its meeting on 7, 8 and 13 November 1996, the General Council considered requests for observer status by Iran (WT/L/191) and Laos (WT/L/192).⁵ The General Council agreed to grant the request by Laos, and further agreed that the Chairman should inform Iran that there was no consensus regarding the latter's request.

(ii) International intergovernmental organizations (WT/GC/M/13, 14, 15, 16)

At the General Council meeting on 18 July 1996, the Chairman said that, as he had indicated to delegations at an informal meeting on 12 July, he intended to start consultations on the international intergovernmental organizations to be invited as observers to the Ministerial Conference on the basis of the following guidelines:

- (a) organizations that were observers to the General Council would be automatically invited;
- (b) organizations that were observers to subsidiary bodies of the WTO would be invited if they requested to attend the Conference;

⁵Carried in General Council Minutes under "Iran - Request for observer status at the 1996 Ministerial Conference", and "Laos - Request for observer status at the 1996 Ministerial Conference".

- (c) consultations would be carried out to determine which other international intergovernmental organizations that were not observers to the WTO and that requested attendance at the Conference should also be invited.

He hoped that at its meeting scheduled for October, the General Council would be in a position to take a decision on the international intergovernmental organizations to be invited as observers to the Ministerial Conference.

The General Council agreed with the Chairman's proposed approach.

At its meeting on 2 October 1996, the Chairman informed the General Council that the following organizations which were not observers to the WTO had requested attendance at the 1996 Ministerial Conference: the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Central American Bank for Economic Integration, the Common Fund for Commodities and the Islamic Development Bank. He proposed that the General Council accept these requests and invite these organizations as observers to the Ministerial Conference.

The General Council so agreed.

At its meeting on 14 October 1996, the Chairman informed the General Council that the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), which was not an observer to the WTO had requested attendance at the 1996 Ministerial Conference. He proposed that the General Council accept this request and invite this organization as an observer to the Ministerial Conference.

The General Council so agreed.

At its meeting on 7, 8 and 13 November 1996, the Chairman informed the General Council that the following organizations which were not observers to the WTO had requested attendance at the 1996 Ministerial Conference: ASEAN, Asian Development Bank, Organization for African Unity (OAU), Organization of the Islamic Conference, and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). He proposed that all organizations of a regional or sub-regional nature that had expressed a wish to attend the Ministerial Conference as observers be invited thereto.

The General Council so agreed.

(iii) Non-governmental organizations (WT/GC/M/13, 14, 15)

At the General Council meeting on 18 July 1996, the Chairman said he believed it was necessary to determine urgently how to proceed with requests from non-governmental organizations to attend the Ministerial Conference in an observer capacity and, on the basis of consultations he had held, proposed the following method for proceeding:

- (i) NGOs would be allowed to attend the Plenary Sessions of the Conference;
- (ii) applications from NGOs to be registered would be accepted on the basis of Article V of the WTO Agreement, i.e. those NGOs "concerned with matters related to those of the WTO"; and
- (iii) a deadline would be established for the registration of NGOs that wished to attend the Conference. A list of the NGOs that had applied for attendance would be circulated subsequently for the information of the General Council. Attendance at plenary sessions by NGOs would also depend upon the availability of space.

The General Council agreed to the Chairman's proposed procedure.

At the General Council meeting on 2 October 1996, the Chairman drew attention to an informal document recently circulated by the Secretariat which listed those NGOs which had complied with the requirements for attendance at the Singapore Ministerial Conference that had been agreed in July.

The General Council agreed that the Secretariat would prepare a paper outlining the agreed modalities for the attendance of NGOs at the Ministerial Conference and that the deadline for registration of NGOs be extended to 15 October.

At the General Council meeting on 14 October 1996, the Chairman said that since the General Council would not meet again before 7 November, and in order not to delay unnecessarily the process of registration for NGOs, agreement had been reached in informal consultations on a way to move the process forward, as follows: (a) the Secretariat would establish for 16 October, as an addendum to the list distributed on 2 October, a list of those additional NGOs which had presented requests for registration and which had received registration forms since 2 October, and would circulate on 22 October a final list of those NGOs to whom confirmation would be sent; and (b) the facilities provided for NGOs at the Singapore Ministerial Conference might be reviewed by the General Council in the light of the experience gained from this first Ministerial Conference.

The General Council agreed to the Chairman's proposed procedure.

2. Finalization of negotiations on schedules on goods and services

- Decision on the accession of, and approval of protocol of accession for, the United Arab Emirates (WT/GC/M/10)

In December 1995, the General Council had approved the goods and services schedules of the United Arab Emirates.

At its meeting on 6 February 1996, the General Council approved the text of the Protocol of Accession for the United Arab Emirates (WT/L/129) and, in accordance with the Decision-Making Procedures Under Articles IX and XII of the WTO Agreement agreed in November 1995 (WT/L/93), adopted the Decision on the Accession of the UAE (WT/L/128).

3. Composition of the Textiles Monitoring Body (WT/GC/M/10)

In January 1995, the General Council had adopted a Decision on the composition of the Textiles Monitoring Body until the end of 1997 (WT/L/26). With regard to the China/Pakistan constituency, a footnote to the Decision stipulated that in the event that China did not become a WTO Member by 31 December 1995, "a WTO Member, to be proposed by the WTO Members that are members of the International Textiles and Clothing Bureau, shall be included in this constituency until such date as China becomes a WTO Member".

At its meeting on 6 February 1996, the General Council considered a communication from the ITCB (WT/GC/W/28) proposing that Macau be included in the China/Pakistan constituency until such time as China became a Member of the WTO, or until 31 December 1997, whichever came first.

The General Council took note of the proposed nomination to the TMB (WT/L/26/Add.1).

4. Committee on Balance-of-Payments Restrictions

(a) Consultations (WT/GC/M/10, 13, 16)

At its meeting on 6 February 1996, the General Council considered and adopted the Committee's report on its consultation with India (WT/BOP/R/11 - BOP/R/234).

At its meeting on 18 July 1996, the General Council considered and adopted the Committee's reports on its consultations with Nigeria (WT/BOP/R/13), Tunisia (WT/BOP/R/14) and Slovakia (WT/BOP/R/15).

At its meeting on 7, 8 and 13 November 1996, the General Council considered and adopted the Committee's reports on its consultations with Hungary (WT/BOP/R/17) and Nigeria (WT/BOP/R/18).

(b) Disinvoication of the balance-of-payments provisions of the GATT 1994 by Turkey and Poland (WT/GC/M/13)

At its meeting on 18 July 1996, the Chairman of the Committee informed the General Council that Turkey and Poland had recently communicated to the Committee their intention to disinvoke the balance-of-payments provisions of GATT 1994 as of 1 January 1997 (WT/BOP/N/7 and WT/BOP/N/8).

(c) Notifications by the Philippines and India (WT/GC/M/13)

At its meeting on 18 July 1996, the General Council took note that the Committee had received a notification from the Philippines concerning the lifting of restrictions on agricultural products (WT/BOP/N/9), and a recent submission from India containing a list of all quantitative restrictions including those maintained for BOP purposes (WT/BOP/N/11).

(d) Notes on meetings (WT/GC/M/10, 13)

At its meeting on 6 February 1996, the General Council took note of the Committee's discussion of its ongoing business reported in WT/BOP/R/12 - BOP/R/235.

At its meeting on 18 July 1996, the General Council took note of the Committee's discussion of its ongoing business reported in WT/BOP/R/16.

(e) Ad hoc observer status for international intergovernmental organizations (WT/GC/M/16)

At its meeting on 7, 8 and 13 November 1996, the General Council took note that at its meeting on 23, 24 and 25 September 1996, the Committee had recognized the ad hoc observer status of the following international intergovernmental organizations: the ACP Secretariat, EBRD, EFTA, OECD, World Bank and UNCTAD.

5. Committee on Budget, Finance and Administration
- Reports (WT/GC/M/10, 11, 12, 13)

At its meeting on 6 February 1996, the General Council considered the Committee's reports in WT/BFA/16 - L/7660 and WT/BFA/18 - L/7662, and adopted the two reports.

At its meeting on 16 April 1996, the General Council considered the Committee's reports in WT/BFA/20, WT/BFA/21 and WT/BFA/22. The General Council approved the Committee's specific

recommendations in paragraphs 12 and 14 of its report in WT/BFA/20, and adopted the report. The General Council then approved the Committee's specific recommendations in paragraph 8 of its report in WT/BFA/21, and adopted the report. The General Council then approved the Committee's specific recommendations in paragraphs 5 to 11 of its report in WT/BFA/22, and adopted the report.

At its meeting on 26 June 1996, the General Council considered the Committee's report in WT/BFA/24. The General Council approved the Committee's specific recommendation in paragraph 11 of its report in WT/BFA/24, and adopted the report.

At its meeting on 18 July 1996, the General Council considered the Committee's report in WT/BFA/26. The General Council approved the Committee's specific recommendations in paragraphs 6 and 8 of its report in WT/BFA/26, and adopted the report.

6. Committee on Regional Trade Agreements

(a) Establishment of the Committee and adoption of its terms of reference (WT/GC/M/10)

In December 1995, the General Council had agreed in principle to establish a committee on regional trade agreements and that the Chairman would hold consultations on the terms of reference and other related matters concerning the committee.

At the General Council meeting on 6 February 1996, Mr. Weekes (Canada) reported on the consultations he had held on behalf and at the request of the Chairman, and proposed that a draft decision that had been circulated to delegations on this matter be adopted with an amendment.

The General Council adopted the Decision establishing the Committee on Regional Trade Agreements with the terms of reference set out therein (WT/L/127).

(b) Presiding officers of the Committee (WT/GC/M/11)

At its meeting on 16 April 1996, the Chairman informed the General Council that Mr. Weekes (Canada) had agreed to serve as Chairman of the Committee, and Mr. Berthet (Uruguay) Mr. Harbinson (Hong Kong), Mr. Ravaloson (Madagascar) and Mr. Willems (Belgium) had agreed to serve as Vice-Chairmen.

7. Approval of rules of procedure for subsidiary bodies

- Committee on Regional Trade Agreements (WT/GC/M/14)

At its meeting on 2 October 1996, the General Council approved the rules of procedure for meetings of the Committee on Regional Trade Agreements in WT/REG/1, which had been adopted by that Committee on 2 July.

8. Agreement on Preshipment Inspection - Review under Article 6 of the Agreement
- Establishment of a working party (WT/GC/M/16)

At its meeting on 7, 8 and 13 November 1996, the General Council, on the basis of a recommendation by the Council for Trade in Goods,⁶ agreed to establish a working party under the Council for Trade in Goods with the following terms of reference: "To conduct the review provided for under Article 6 of the Agreement on Preshipment Inspection and to report to the General Council through the Council for Trade in Goods in December 1997" (WT/L/196).

9. Waivers under Article IX of the WTO Agreement

(a) Harmonized System
- Bangladesh, Bolivia, Guatemala, Jamaica, Morocco, Nicaragua and Sri Lanka (WT/GC/M/13)

At its meeting on 18 July 1996, the General Council considered requests by Bangladesh (G/L/77), Bolivia (G/L/78), Guatemala (G/L/86), Jamaica (G/L/79), Morocco (G/L/80), Nicaragua (G/L/81) and Sri Lanka (G/L/83) for extensions of waivers previously granted in connection with their implementation of the Harmonized System, and the related draft decisions.

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

The General Council adopted the Decisions on the extensions of the waivers (WT/L/164 - Bangladesh; WT/L/165 - Bolivia; WT/L/172 - Guatemala; WT/L/166 - Jamaica; WT/L/167 - Morocco; WT/L/168 - Nicaragua; and WT/L/170 - Sri Lanka) in accordance with the Decision-Making Procedures Under Articles IX and XII of the WTO Agreement agreed in November 1995 (WT/L/93).

(b) Renegotiations of Schedules

(i) Malawi - Renegotiation of Schedule LVIII (WT/GC/M/10)

At its meeting on 6 February 1996, the General Council considered a request by Malawi (G/L/51) 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/31).

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

The General Council adopted the Decision on the extension of the waiver (WT/L/131) in accordance with the Decision-Making Procedures Under Articles IX and XII of the WTO Agreement agreed in November 1995 (WT/L/93).

(ii) Senegal - Renegotiation of Schedule XLIX (WT/GC/M/13)

At its meeting on 18 July 1996, the General Council considered a request by Senegal (G/L/82) for an extension of a waiver previously granted in connection with its renegotiation of its schedule, and the related draft decision (G/C/W/45).

⁶See WT/GC/W/41.

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

The General Council adopted the Decision on the extension of the waiver (WT/L/169) in accordance with the Decision-Making Procedures Under Articles IX and XII of the WTO Agreement agreed in November 1995 (WT/L/93).

(iii) Zambia - Renegotiation of Schedule LXXXVIII (WT/GC/M/13)

At its meeting on 18 July 1996, the General Council considered a request by Zambia (G/L/84) for an extension of a waiver previously granted in connection with its renegotiation of its schedule, and the related draft decision (G/C/W/47).

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

The General Council adopted the Decision on the extension of the waiver (WT/L/171) in accordance with the Decision-Making Procedures Under Articles IX and XII of the WTO Agreement agreed in November 1995 (WT/L/93).

(c) Decision on the introduction of Harmonized System changes into WTO schedules of tariff concessions on 1 January 1996
- Extension of time-limit (WT/GC/M/13)

At its meeting on 18 July 1996, 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/6).

The Chairman of the Council for Trade in Goods reported on the Council's consideration of this extension of the time-limit.

The General Council adopted the Decision extending the time-limit (WT/L/173) in accordance with the Decision-Making Procedures Under Articles IX and XII of the WTO Agreement agreed in November 1995 (WT/L/93).

(d) Extension of waivers pursuant to paragraph 2 of the Understanding in respect of waivers of obligations under GATT 1994

- (i) - Canada - CARIBCAN
- Cuba - Article XV:6 of GATT 1994
- European Communities - Fourth ACP-EC Convention of Lomé
- France - Trading Arrangements with Morocco
- South Africa - Base dates under Article I:4
- United States - ANDEAN Trade Preference Act
- United States - Former Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands
- Zimbabwe - Base dates under Article I:4
(WT/GC/M/14, 15)

At its meeting on 2 October 1996, the General Council considered requests by Canada (G/L/100), Cuba (G/L/89), the European Communities (G/L/108, G/L/109), South Africa (G/L/104), the United States (G/L/101, G/L/102) and Zimbabwe (G/L/106) for extensions of waivers pursuant to paragraph 2

of the Understanding in respect of waivers of obligations under GATT 1994, and the related draft decisions.

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

The General Council agreed to revert to this matter at its next meeting.

At its meeting on 14 October 1996, the General Council again considered these requests and adopted the Decisions on the extensions of the waivers (WT/L/185 - Canada; WT/L/182 - Cuba; WT/L/186 and WT/L/187 - European Communities; WT/L/188 - South Africa; WT/L/183 and WT/L/184 - United States; and WT/L/189 - Zimbabwe) in accordance with the Decision-Making Procedures Under Articles IX and XII of the WTO Agreement agreed in November 1995 (WT/L/93).

(ii) United States - Imports of automotive products (WT/GC/M/16)

At its meeting on 7, 8 and 13 November 1996, the General Council considered a request by the United States (G/L/103 and Corr. 1) for an extension of its waiver pursuant to paragraph 2 of the Understanding in respect of waivers of obligations under GATT 1994, and the related draft decision (GC/W/55).

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

The General Council adopted the Decision on the extension of the waiver (WT/L/198) in accordance with the Decision-making procedures under Articles IX and XII of the WTO Agreement agreed in November 1995 (WT/L/93).

10. Status of waivers in effect on the date of entry into force of the WTO Agreement (WT/GC/M/13)

At its meeting on 18 July 1996, the General Council took note that in consultations held recently by the Chairman on the status of waivers in effect on the date of entry into force of the WTO Agreement, there appeared to be broad agreement that each Member that sought an extension of such a waiver, a list of which was provided in WT/L/153/Rev. 1, should submit a request for its extension which should be dealt with under the provisions of Article IX:3 of the WTO Agreement and that, pursuant to those provisions, such requests should first be considered by the Council for Trade in Goods.

11. Accessions

(a) Bulgaria (WT/GC/M/14)

In November 1986 and February 1990, the GATT 1947 Council had established a working party to examine Bulgaria's request for accession to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. Subsequently, in pursuance of the Decision regarding requests for WTO accession adopted by the General Council on 31 January 1995⁷, the GATT 1947 Accession Working Party had been transformed into a WTO Accession Working Party.

⁷See WT/GC/M/1, Item 4(g).

At its meeting on 2 October 1996, the General Council considered the Working Party's report (WT/ACC/BGR/5 and Corr.1, Add.1 and Add.2).

The General Council approved the text of the Protocol of Accession (WT/ACC/BGR/7) and the text of the draft decision on the Accession of Bulgaria and, in accordance with the Decision-Making Procedures Under Articles IX and XII of the WTO Agreement agreed in November 1995 (WT/L/93), adopted the Decision on the Accession of Bulgaria (WT/ACC/BGR/6). The General Council then adopted the report of the Working Party (WT/ACC/BGR/5 and Corr.1, Add.1 and Add.2).

(b) Georgia (WT/GC/M/13)

At its meeting on 18 July 1996, the General Council considered a communication from Georgia (WT/ACC/GEO/1) concerning its interest in acceding to the WTO Agreement pursuant to Article XII thereof.

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

(c) Kazakstan (WT/GC/M/10, 11)

At its meeting on 6 February 1996, the General Council considered a communication from Kazakstan (WT/ACC/KAZ/1) concerning its interest in acceding to the WTO Agreement pursuant to Article XII thereof.

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

The Chairman invited Kazakstan, 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 16 April 1996, the Chairman informed the General Council that Mr. Ekblom (Finland) had agreed to chair the Working Party.

(d) Kyrgyz Republic (WT/GC/M/11, 13)

At its meeting on 16 April 1996, the General Council considered a communication from the Kyrgyz Republic (WT/ACC/KGZ/1) concerning its interest in acceding to the WTO Agreement pursuant to Article XII thereof.

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

The Chairman invited the Kyrgyz Republic, 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 18 July 1996, the Chairman informed the General Council that Mr. Metzger (France) had agreed to chair the Working Party.

(e) Mongolia (WT/GC/M/13)

In October 1991, the GATT 1947 Council had established a working party to examine Mongolia's request for accession to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. Subsequently, in pursuance of the Decision regarding requests for WTO accession adopted by the General Council on 31 January 1995⁸, the GATT 1947 Accession Working Party had been transformed into a WTO Accession Working Party.

At its meeting on 18 July 1996, the General Council considered the Working Party's report (WT/ACC/MNG/9 and Corr.1, Add.1, Add.1/Corr.1, and Add.2).

The General Council approved the text of the Protocol of Accession (WT/ACC/MNG/11) and the text of the draft decision on the Accession of Mongolia and, in accordance with the Decision-Making Procedures Under Articles IX and XII of the WTO Agreement agreed in November 1995 (WT/L/93), adopted the Decision on the Accession of Mongolia (WT/ACC/MNG/10). The General Council then adopted the report of the Working Party (WT/ACC/MNG/9 and Corr.1, Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1, and Add.2).

(f) Oman (WT/GC/M/12, 14)

At its meeting on 26 June 1996, the General Council considered a communication from Oman (WT/ACC/OMN/1) concerning its interest in acceding to the WTO Agreement pursuant to Article XII thereof.

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

The Chairman invited Oman, 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 2 October 1996, the Chairman informed the General Council that Mr. Akram (Pakistan) had agreed to chair the Working Party.

(g) Panama (WT/GC/M/14)

In October 1991, the GATT 1947 Council had established a working party to examine Panama's request for accession to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. Subsequently, in pursuance of the Decision regarding requests for WTO accession adopted by the General Council on 31 January 1995⁹, the GATT 1947 Accession Working Party had been transformed into a WTO Accession Working Party.

At its meeting on 2 October 1996, the General Council considered the Working Party's report (WT/ACC/PAN/19 and Corr.1, Add.1 and Add.2).

The General Council approved the text of the Protocol of Accession (WT/ACC/PAN/21) and the text of the draft decision on the Accession of Panama and, in accordance with the Decision-Making

⁸See WT/GC/M/1, Item 4(g).

⁹See WT/GC/M/1, Item 4(g).

Procedures Under Articles IX and XII of the WTO Agreement agreed in November 1995 (WT/L/93), adopted the Decision on the Accession of Panama (WT/ACC/PAN/20). The General Council then adopted the report of the Working Party (WT/ACC/PAN/19 and Corr.1, Add.1 and Add.2).

(h) Papua New Guinea (WT/GC/M/10, 11)

In November 1995, the General Council had adopted a Decision (WT/L/98) authorizing Papua New Guinea to accede to the WTO Agreement under terms set out in its Protocol of Accession (WT/L/99).

At its meeting on 6 February 1996, the General Council considered a communication from Papua New Guinea requesting that the time-limit for acceptance in paragraph 6 of its Protocol of Accession be changed to 13 May 1996 (WT/GC/W/30), and a draft decision to this effect in the Annex to that document.

The representative of Japan reiterated his Government's concern with regard to Papua New Guinea's applied tariff on canned mackerel that was in excess of the bound tariff.

The General Council adopted the Decision extending the time-limit (WT/L/130).

At its meeting on 16 April 1996, the General Council considered a communication from Papua New Guinea requesting that the time-limit in paragraph 6 of its Protocol of Accession be further extended to 13 August 1996 (WT/GC/W/33), and a draft decision to this effect in the Annex to that document.

The General Council adopted the Decision further extending the time-limit (WT/L/148).

(i) Saudi Arabia (WT/GC/M/10)

In July 1993, the GATT 1947 Council had established a working party to examine Saudi Arabia's request for accession to the GATT. Following the request by Saudi Arabia for accession to the WTO Agreement (WT/ACC/SAU/1), that working party had been transformed into a WTO Accession Working Party.

At its meeting on 6 February 1996, the Chairman informed the General Council that Mr. Weekes (Canada) had agreed to chair the Working Party.

(j) Seychelles (WT/GC/M/13)

In July 1995, the General Council had established a working party to examine Seychelles' request 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.

At its meeting on 18 July 1996, the Chairman informed the General Council that Mr. Ravaloson (Madagascar) had agreed to chair the Working Party.

(k) Tonga (WT/GC/M/10)

In November 1995, the General Council had established a working party to examine Tonga's request 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 Tonga.

At its meeting on 6 February 1996, the Chairman informed the General Council that Mr. Harbinson (Hong Kong) had agreed to chair the Working Party.

(l) Vanuatu (WT/GC/M/11)

In July 1995, the General Council had established a working party to examine Vanuatu's request 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 Vanuatu.

At its meeting on 16 April 1996, the Chairman informed the General Council that Mrs. Syahrudin (Indonesia) had agreed to chair the Working Party.

12. Brazil - Provisional safeguard measures concerning imports of toys (WT/GC/M/13)

At the General Council meeting on 18 July 1996, the representative of the European Communities expressed concern at Brazil's recent initiation of a safeguard investigation and the imposition of a provisional safeguard measure on imports of toys originating in all third countries.

13. Hungary - Invocation of Article 48 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of the Treaties (WT/GC/M/11)

At its meeting on 16 April 1996, the representative of Hungary informed the General Council of Hungary's invocation, on 9 April 1996, of Article 48 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties with respect to Section II of Part IV of Schedule LXXI, and expressed his Government's readiness to hold consultations with any Members on this matter.

14. United States - Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act of 1996 (WT/GC/M/11)¹⁰

At the General Council meeting on 16 April 1996, the representative of Cuba expressed concern that the US Helms-Burton Act of 1996 was a violation of international trade rules and international law, as well as of undertakings entered into by the United States when signing the Final Act Embodying the Results of the Uruguay Round, and noted that his Government had recently circulated a communication on this matter (WT/L/142).

15. Compliance with the obligations of Articles 70.8 and 70.9 of the TRIPS Agreement (WT/GC/W/10)

At the General Council meeting on 6 February 1996, the representative of the United States expressed concern that a number of countries had not complied with the obligations of Articles 70.8 and 70.9 of the TRIPS Agreement and reserved his delegation's rights for future action in this regard.

¹⁰Carried in General Council Minutes as "Statement by Cuba on the United States' Helms-Burton Act of 1996."

16. Notification requirements (WT/GC/M/11)

At the General Council meeting on 16 April 1996, the Director-General noted that Members had recently been reminded of their unfulfilled notification requirements for 1995 and their notification requirements for 1996, and underlined the importance of fulfilling these obligations.

17. World Bank study on MERCOSUR (WT/GC/M/16)

At the General Council meeting on 7, 8 and 13 November 1996, the representative of Brazil expressed concern at a World Bank study on MERCOSUR, which he said raised a problem of World Bank action on a matter under WTO competence and not foreseen under the cooperation established by Article III:5 of the WTO Agreement.

18. WTO Press Release on Trade and Foreign Direct Investment (WT/GC/M/15)

At the General Council meeting on 14 October 1996, the representative of India expressed concern at the recent issuance by the Secretariat of a Press Release entitled "Trade and Foreign Direct Investment -New Report by the WTO", which raised the fundamental and important issue of the role of the Secretariat and its relationship with Members.

19. Procedures for the circulation and derestriction of WTO documents (WT/GC/M/10, 12, 13)

At its meeting on 6 February 1996, the Chairman informed the General Council that no further progress on this matter had been achieved since the meeting of the General Council in December 1995 and that he intended to refer to this matter in a statement he would make under a separate Agenda item.¹¹

At its meeting on 26 June 1996, the Chairman informed the General Council that he was still not in a position to submit a draft decision on this matter for consideration by Members.

At the General Council meeting on 18 July 1996, the Chairman said that following extensive consultations held since the beginning of the year, agreement had now been reached on a compromise text that appeared to be agreeable to a majority of delegations. He proposed that the text of the draft decision on this matter, with paragraph (h) of the Appendix redrafted to reflect the compromise regarding panel reports, be adopted at the present meeting.

The General Council adopted the procedures for the circulation and derestriction of WTO documents (WT/L/160/Rev.1).

The Chairman then made the following statement: "In adopting these procedures on the circulation and derestriction of documents, the General Council takes note that Members attach particular importance to the restricted nature of documents so designated, and that individual governments should proceed accordingly in their handling of such documents."

¹¹See under point 25 - "Election of Chairperson".

20. Status of ratification of the WTO Agreement by certain governments (WT/GC/M/16)

Under the provisions of Article XIV:1 of the WTO Agreement, contracting parties to the GATT 1947 that had otherwise completed the requirements to be original Members were allowed until the end of 1996 to complete their ratification of the Agreement.

At its meeting on 7, 8 and 13 November 1996, the Chairman informed the General Council that he would consult on the question of three governments covered by the provisions of Article XIV:1 of the WTO Agreement that had still not ratified the Agreement and would have to negotiate accession if they failed to ratify by the end of 1996.

21. Arrangements for effective cooperation with other intergovernmental organizations
- Relations between the WTO and the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank (WT/GC/M/13, 16)

At the General Council meeting on 18 July 1996, the Chairman said that informal consultations on draft arrangements for relations between the WTO and the IMF and the World Bank were currently under way, and proposed that the General Council revert to this item at its next meeting.

The General Council so agreed.

At its meeting on 7, 8 and 13 November 1996, the General Council considered draft Agreements on cooperation with the IMF and the World Bank contained in WT/GC/W/43, and a draft decision regarding the approval of these Agreements (WT/GC/W/42 and Addenda). The General Council adopted the draft Decision (WT/L/194 and Addenda) approving the Agreements with the IMF and the World Bank (WT/L/195).

22. Guidelines for arrangements on relations with non-governmental organizations pursuant to Article V:2 of the WTO Agreement (WT/GC/M/10, 12, 13)

At its meeting on 6 February 1996, the Chairman informed the General Council that no further progress on this matter had been achieved since the meeting of the General Council in December 1995 and that he intended to refer to this matter in a statement he would make under a separate Agenda item.¹²

At the General Council meeting on 26 June 1996, the Chairman recalled that approval of the proposed guidelines on this matter had been linked to agreement on derestriction procedures, on which he was still not in a position to submit a draft decision for consideration.

At the General Council meeting on 18 July 1996, the Chairman drew attention to the draft guidelines for arrangements on relations with non-governmental organizations which had been agreed in informal consultations held in 1995 and held in abeyance pending a decision on procedures for the circulation and derestriction of WTO documents. Since the latter had been adopted earlier at that meeting¹³, he proposed that the guidelines on relations with non-governmental organizations also be adopted.

¹²See under point 25 - "Election of Chairperson".

¹³See under point 19 - "Procedures for the circulation and derestriction of WTO documents".

The General Council so agreed (WT/L/162).

23. Administrative matters

(i) Offices of the Deputy Directors-General (WT/GC/M/11)

At the General Council meeting on 16 April 1996, the Director-General proposed that since preparations for the Ministerial Conference in December 1996 would require all the attention of Members, the contracts of the three Deputy Directors-General, Messrs. Hoda, Lavorel and Seade, which were due to expire on 31 July 1996, be extended for a period of one year, and that he initiate consultations on further renewals or new appointments early in 1997, well in advance of the date of expiration of their terms of office.

The General Council agreed to proceed as suggested by the Director-General if this matter were not raised again at its next meeting.

(ii) Staff-related matters (WT/GC/M/10)

At its meeting on 6 February 1996, the Director-General recalled the Decision of the General Council at its meeting on 30 October 1995 with regard to the review of the question of salaries, pensions and other conditions of service of WTO staff (WT/L/91), and outlined reasons for which it was urgent for the General Council to resume consideration of these questions in order to reach decisions as soon as possible. He proposed that informal consultations by the Chairman would be appropriate for this purpose.

The General Council agreed that its Chairman hold informal consultations on these matters.

(iii) Pensions and salaries of WTO staff (WT/GC/M/15)

At the General Council meeting on 14 October 1996, the Chairman said that in informal consultations held recently, no consensus had been possible on the text of a draft proposal on conditions of service for WTO staff that he had circulated, and that he would continue his consultations on this matter.

At its meeting on 7, 8 and 13 November 1996, the General Council adopted a Decision (WT/L/197) to continue its consideration of this matter with a view to reaching a conclusion thereto by 30 June 1997 at the latest. The Chairman said that he would consult shortly to establish a time-table to ensure that a conclusion to this matter was indeed reached by that date.

24. Observer status

(i) Governments
- Georgia (WT/GC/M/12)

At its meeting on 26 June 1996, the General Council granted observer status to Georgia.

(ii) International intergovernmental organizations (WT/GC/M/10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16)

At the General Council meeting on 6 February 1996, the Chairman said it was his understanding that pending agreement on guidelines for observer status for international organizations, the United

Nations, UNCTAD, IMF, World Bank, FAO, WIPO and OECD would be invited to the next meeting of the General Council, in accordance with the *ad hoc* arrangements approved on 16 March 1995.¹⁴

At the General Council meeting on 16 April 1996, the Chairman recalled his earlier understanding on this matter.

At the General Council meeting on 26 June 1996, the Chairman recalled his earlier understanding on this matter.

At the General Council meeting on 18 July 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 July¹⁵, the United Nations, UNCTAD, IMF, World Bank, FAO, WIPO and OECD would be invited to the next meeting of the General Council.

At the General Council meeting on 2 October 1996, the Chairman recalled his previous understanding on this matter.

At the General Council meeting on 14 October 1996, the Chairman recalled his previous understanding on this matter.

At the General Council meeting on 7, 8 and 13 November 1996, the Chairman recalled his previous understanding on this matter.

(iii) Guidelines on observer status for international intergovernmental organizations
(WT/GC/M/12, 13)

At the General Council meeting on 26 June 1996, the Chairman recalled that agreement on guidelines on observer status for international intergovernmental organizations had been awaiting agreement on the participation of organizations as observers in the Dispute Settlement Body and that an essential aspect of this would be the arrangements for cooperation between the WTO and the IMF and the World Bank that were presently under consideration. The guidelines therefore could not yet be finalized.

At the General Council meeting on 18 July 1996, the Chairman recalled that Members had thus far considered that guidelines on observer status for international organizations could not be adopted until agreement had been reached on arrangements for cooperation between the WTO and the IMF and World Bank. Pending the approval of those arrangements, he proposed that Members agree on the text as contained in PC/IPL/W/14, with an amendment to paragraph 3 thereof, which would not prejudice the outcome of the consultations on the above arrangements, but which would at the same time enable the General Council to adopt guidelines at the present time. This would allow the WTO to settle the question of the attendance of international intergovernmental organizations in WTO bodies in time for decisions to be taken regarding the participation of observer organizations at the Ministerial Conference in Singapore.

The General Council adopted the guidelines on observer status for international intergovernmental organizations proposed by the Chairman (WT/L/161, Annex 3).

¹⁴See WT/GC/M/3, Item 3.

¹⁵See under sub-point 24(iii) below - "Guidelines on observer status for international intergovernmental organizations".

25. Election of Chairperson (WT/GC/M/10)

At the General Council meeting on 6 February 1996, as the outgoing presiding officer of the General Council, the Chairman made a statement on the work of the General Council in 1995 (WT/GC(96)/ST/1).

The General Council then unanimously elected Mr. Rossier (Switzerland) to the Chair.