

COMMUNICATION FROM HONG KONG

The following communication, dated 30 May 1997, has been received from the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office with the request that it be circulated to all Members and observers of the World Trade Organization.

---

On 24 April 1986 the Director-General of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade circulated to GATT contracting parties a communication (document L/5986) from the United Kingdom declaring that Hong Kong, being a separate customs territory, possessed full autonomy in the conduct of its external commercial relations and of the other matters provided for in the Agreement. The Director-General then certified that, since the conditions required by Article XXVI:5(c) of the Agreement had been met, Hong Kong had become a contracting party from 23 April 1986.

Simultaneously, the Director-General circulated (as document L/5987) a communication received from the People's Republic of China. This stated that, in accordance with the Joint Declaration of the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Government of the United Kingdom on the question of Hong Kong signed in Beijing on 19 December 1984, the People's Republic of China had decided to resume the exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong with effect from 1 July 1997. Hong Kong would, from that date, become a Special Administrative Region of China. As such it would, *inter alia*, retain the status of a separate customs territory, and would continue to decide its economic and trade policies on its own and could, on its own, using the name of "Hong Kong, China", maintain and develop relations, and conclude and implement agreements, with States, regions and relevant international organizations in the economic, trade and other fields. Attention was also drawn to Section VI of Annex I to the Joint Declaration which provides specifically that the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region may participate in relevant international organizations and international trade agreements such as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

Subsequently Hong Kong, as a contracting party of GATT, was a full participant in the Uruguay Round and assumed all of the corresponding rights and obligations through formally accepting the Final Act Embodying the Results of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations, which was drawn up at Marrakesh on 15 April 1994. By virtue of Article XI of the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization, Hong Kong became an original Member of the WTO.

In accordance with the arrangements described above, Hong Kong will continue to be a WTO Member on and after 1 July 1997, using the name of "Hong Kong, China".