IMPORT DOCUMENTATION INCLUDING CONSULAR FORMALITIES

Note by the Secretariat

This note summarizes recent work by the Economic Commission for Europe and by the Customs Co-operation Council in the field of import documentation. It is hereby submitted to members of Working Group 2 for their information.

1. Economic Commission for Europe

The fourth session of the Group of Experts on Data Requirements and Documentation (a subsidiary body of the Working Party on Facilitation of International Trade Procedures, which is itself a subsidiary to the Committee on the Development of Trade of the ECE) was held in June 1973. The Group considered a report by the representative of France, acting on behalf of Belgium, France, Poland and the United Kingdom (TRADE/WP4/GE.2/R.16). After a general discussion, the following conclusions described in paragraphs 15-18 of the report were adopted.

"IV. Task to be performed: harmonization of commercial invoices at the international level

15. A study of existing rules and practices relating to the use of commercial invoices in foreign trade should be given priority. The basis of such an inquiry could be a questionnaire prepared by the delegations interested in this question.

16. An analysis of replies to the questionnaire, transmitted to several countries selected on the basis of their foreign trade structure, should make it possible to sort out the basic data most frequently used. The data thus determined might then be harmonized by adopting a precise definition of their contents. They could then be put in appropriate form in one or more types of document, which would be the subject of recommendations.

17. Concurrently, and on the basis of the analysis of replies to the inquiry, work on an original document could be undertaken. The purpose of this more ambitious study would be to draw up one or more documents which would meet the maximum number of requirements, both administrative and private, and at the same time be compatible with the development of data transmission techniques."
18. The delegations of Belgium, France, Poland and the United Kingdom, and any other delegations interested in this problem, should therefore continue their work in association with other international bodies such as ICC and ISO Technical Committee 154, which are now studying it."

The fifth session of the same Group of Experts is scheduled for 15-16 October 1973. The Group will at that time examine, inter alia, a "Questionnaire on the Unique Invoice". This questionnaire (TRADE/WP.4/GE.2/R.16/Add.1) is reproduced in the Annex.

2. Customs Co-operation Council

The Permanent Technical Committee of the Customs Co-operation Council is continuing the preparation of the International Convention for the Simplification and Harmonization of Customs Procedures. Forty topics are to be dealt with in annexes to this Convention. Work has already been undertaken on eight of these topics, which relate either to conditional relief procedures and processing traffic, or to the origin of goods. At its meeting in September/October 1973, the Permanent Technical Committee agreed that in its further work it would accord priority to eight additional topics, including three of particular interest to Working Group 2, i.e., the declaration of goods for home use, the examination of goods declared for home use, and the assessment and collection of duty on goods declared for home use. Drafting on these topics is accordingly being put in hand and draft texts will be examined by a Working Party in February 1974. The Permanent Technical Committee noted that questions about which GATT is concerned will be dealt with in part by this work.
ANNEX

COMMITTEE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRADE
Working Party on Facilitation of International Trade Procedures
Group of Experts on Data Requirements and Documentation
(Fifth session - 15-16 October 1973)

QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE UNIQUE INVOICE

The following questionnaire was transmitted by the Delegation of France. It was modified at a meeting which was held at the head office of SEMPROFRANCE in Paris and at which the representatives of Belgium, Poland and the United Kingdom attended.

* * *

1. Are there any other types of invoices beyond the sales invoice such as: pro-forma invoice, customs invoice, consular invoice, specific import invoice, etc.? 1/

2. In the affirmative, please indicate for each type of invoice:
   (a) designation;
   (b) definition;
   (c) destination.

3. For each of these documents please reply to the following questions:
   (a) are the regulations relating to this document:
      (i) of a national character? 2/

      (ii) of an international character? 3/

   (b) Are there any existing standardized formats? 4/

   (c) Are there any specific constraints (weight of paper, spacing, location of data, number of items)?
(d) Is this document part of a standardized series:
   (i) Pad?

   (ii) Reproduction from a master?

   (iii) Other?

(e) Analysis of headings:
   (i) Designation.
   (ii) Definition.
   (iii) Codification.

Are any of the data coded?

If so, what are the codes used: ........................................
.................................................................
.................................................................

4. If answers to question 3 show the existence of standards, please indicate:
   (a) (i) Date and creation of the standard .
        (ii) Percentage of use of the standard.

   (b) If not, state whether any standardization projects are under way?

      If so, by whom?

5. Other remarks: ...........................................................
   ...........................................................................
   ...........................................................................
   ...........................................................................

1/ Please provide one, or several, specimen of the invoices used.

2/ In the affirmative, please state whether the regulations result from legislation
   or private agreement (normal practice, professional or other standards to be
   specified).

3/ In the affirmative, please give the reference of the conventions, recommendations
   or international agreements).

4/ In the affirmative, please give the specifications of the format and say whether they
   refer to national or international standards.