The Ad Hoc Committee on Intersessional Business met at Geneva on January 14 and 15 to consider whether the import restrictions announced by the United Kingdom in November 1951 are such as to require the initiation of consultations between the United Kingdom and the Contracting Parties under the provisions of the Agreement. The Committee considered this question in the light of the fact that discussions between the United Kingdom and the European countries whose trade had been affected had been undertaken in the O.E.E.C., and that the Contracting Parties would in any case be entering into consultations with the United Kingdom Government during the course of 1952 on the discriminatory application of the British restrictions. The Committee decided that in these circumstances the question of the obligation to consult need not be determined in relation to these particular measures and could therefore be deferred for consideration on another occasion.

The Committee also took account of the meeting of Commonwealth countries in London this week to consider the balance-of-payments position of the sterling area as a whole, and of the possibility that the meeting may result in the application of new restrictions by other contracting parties in the near future. The Netherlands representative, Dr. van Blankenstein, laid particular stress on the need for multilateral consultations in order to avoid serious injury to the trade of other countries and possible retaliatory action by them.

The Committee agreed that any further developments of this character should be reported to the Contracting Parties, and if there should be a substantial intensification of restrictions by one or more contracting parties, this should be discussed at the next meeting of the Committee.