Sub-Group IV A

German Proposal to insert Obligations concerning Foreign Trade Statistics into the General Agreement
(See Document L/261/Add. 1)

Note by the German Delegation

In the course of a general discussion of all proposals, on 9 December 1954, Working Party II referred the aforementioned German proposal to Working Party IV. Working Party IV assigned the proposal to Sub-Group IV A for consideration.

The German proposal was discussed by the Sub-Group on 19 January 1955, on which occasion a representative of the German delegation was called in as observer who was assisted by a German statistical expert. The German representative made detailed explanations as to the German proposal, which intends to create certain obligations in the field of foreign trade statistics in order that, in the interest of the contracting parties participating in the activity of the General Agreement, especially the tariff negotiations, a collective reduction of tariff levels etc., as well as in the interest of the international commercial world, adequately detailed statistics on foreign trade (imports and exports) as well as on customs revenues be established and published. The proposal is based on Article 39 of the Havana Charter, but limited to its most important provisions. Moreover, in the opinion of the German delegation, the somewhat rigid wording of the proposal might be replaced by a more flexible wording (e.g. instead of "the contracting parties shall publish...": "the contracting parties will endeavour to publish...").

The aim pursued by the German proposal was, on principle, welcomed during the discussion; but it appeared that for the time being, for want of adequate statistical services, a considerable number of countries is not yet in a position to assume the obligations envisaged.

The German delegation has endeavoured to find a realistic solution corresponding to the given conditions. It has modified its opinion expressed at the meeting of the Sub-Group held on 19 January 1955 as stated hereunder, and proposed to insert the following views into the report of Working Party IV:

Considering the present conditions, it is not yet possible to insert the proposed Article 4(a) into the General Agreement. For the same reasons and also for formal legal reasons (this is not a matter of functions of the Organization, but of obligations of the Member States) it appears not to be possible, either, to insert obligations corresponding to the German proposal into the Protocol of Organizational Provisions (see Document Spec/2/55 Article 3 - Functions -).

Spec/47/55

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Though in the course of the present review negotiations many contracting parties are not yet able to assume obligations in the meaning of the German proposal, it is considered desirable to give in a near future a start to this proposal which is of importance to the General Agreement and to all those concerned with international trade and, to this effect, to create the necessary technical prerequisites in the individual countries as far as need exists. In this connection, the countries having well-developed foreign trade statistics should agree to place their experiences at the disposal of other countries within the framework of a technical assistance through the General Agreement.