PROPOSALS FOR EXPEDITEING THE WORK OF
REGULAR SESSIONS OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

Note by the Executive Secretary

During the course of the discussions among Heads of Delegations, some suggestions were made with the object of shortening the regular sessions of the CONTRACTING PARTIES. I have therefore thought it would be useful to circulate to Heads of Delegations some suggestions of my own which might usefully be discussed before the end of this session.

The principal point which I should like to underline is that hitherto the Intersessional Committee has made little or no contribution to facilitating the work of the sessions, although this was one of the reasons for it being established. In particular the meeting which is held four to six weeks before each regular session was intended to give an opportunity for delegations to exchange views on the principal items on the agenda, and thus to clarify and define the issues in advance of the session. At the Review Session the CONTRACTING PARTIES went further and instructed the Intersessional Committee to do preparatory work on the items suggested for the agenda and if necessary to establish working parties. Neither the working methods nor the representation at meetings of the Intersessional Committee have been appropriate for these purposes and the result has been that the meeting has served little other purpose than to draw up a provisional agenda.

The Intersessional Committee was also expected to ensure that there would be full documentation available for all items submitted for the agenda. In this purpose, too, it has failed to prove an effective mechanism.

In these circumstances I feel that the efforts of the CONTRACTING PARTIES should be directed towards increasing the effectiveness of the Intersessional Committee along the following lines:

1. The provisional agenda for each regular session should be drawn up and circulated to contracting parties at least six weeks before the opening of the session.

2. The Intersessional Committee should meet three weeks before the opening of each regular session.

3. Additional items proposed for the agenda should be submitted to the CONTRACTING PARTIES under "Other Business", and their inclusion should depend upon the agreement of the CONTRACTING PARTIES.

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4. The Intersessional Committee should examine the provisional agenda and, if it considers that the accompanying documentation is not adequate to enable any item to be dealt with readily by the CONTRACTING PARTIES, should recommend that the item be excluded from the agenda.

5. The Intersessional Committee should examine all the items included in the provisional agenda with a view to clarifying and defining the issues involved.

6. The Intersessional Committee should establish:

(a) a Balance-of-Payments Working Party to begin work on the balance-of-payments items;

(b) a technical Working Party to begin work on questions relating to Trade and Customs Regulations and Schedules;

(c) a Budget Working Party;

(d) Working Parties to begin detailed examination of any items which require lengthy consideration, and

(e) a panel on complaints to examine questions submitted under Article XXIII.

The Working Parties established under paragraph 6 above should continue if necessary until the opening of the regular session.

In the period between the Eleventh and Twelfth Sessions these arrangements should be modified so as to take account of the special arrangements agreed upon for balance-of-payments consultations during that period.