Note by the Secretariat on the Meeting of 13 December 1972

1. The Working Parties on the Agreements between the European Communities and Austria, Iceland, Portugal, Sweden, and Switzerland and Liechtenstein met jointly on 13 December 1972, under the Chairmanship of Mr. P. Nogueira Batista (Brazil) to organize their work.

2. The Chairman recalled that the Contracting Parties had established these Working Parties to examine, in the light of the relevant provisions of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the provisions of the Agreements between, on the one hand, the European Economic Community and the European Coal and Steel Community and its member States and, on the other hand, the Governments of Austria, Iceland, Portugal, Sweden, and Switzerland and Liechtenstein, signed on 22 July 1972, and to report to the Council. The texts of the Agreements between the Communities and Switzerland and Liechtenstein had been circulated in document L/3758, Add.1. The text of the Interim Agreement between the Communities and Austria was contained in L/3755, Add.1. It was expected that the remaining texts would be circulated before Christmas.

3. The Chairman proposed that the Working Parties should follow the question-and-answer procedure used traditionally when examining agreements of this nature. If this was accepted, those governments wishing to ask questions might consider it practical to divide them into two groups: questions concerning the common elements of the Agreements and questions concerning aspects which were particular to an individual Agreement. He suggested that the Working Parties should conduct the examination in the same order in which the Agreements had been negotiated. If this was accepted the Working Party on the Agreement between the Communities and Switzerland and Liechtenstein would meet first, to be followed by the Working Parties on the Agreements with Sweden, Austria, Portugal and Iceland in that order.

4. Several members of the Working Parties indicated their desire to have the examination completed prior to 1 April 1973, the date on which the first tariff reductions to be made pursuant to the Agreements (other than the Austrian Interim Agreements) would become effective. In this respect, one member of the Working Parties stressed that, even though tariff cuts might have been implemented before the examination of the Agreements had been concluded, this would be without prejudice to the right of the Contracting Parties to obtain modifications of the respective Agreements if in fact the examination should show that these Agreements were not compatible with the GATT.
5. All members of the Working Parties supported the proposal to utilize the question-and-answer procedure and to conduct the examination in the same order in which the Agreements had been negotiated. With regard to the timing, the parties to the Agreements noted that they needed eight weeks to prepare the answers to the questions that would be put to them. Some members of the Working Parties suggested 20 January 1973 as a possible deadline for the submission of questions. One member of the Working Parties was of the opinion that the time-limits for submitting questions should be 12 January 1973. He recalled that the Agreement between the Communities and Switzerland and Liechtenstein had been circulated on 10 November 1972. In his view, contracting parties had had ample time to examine this particular Agreement and he proposed that in this case the time-limit should be brought forward to 5 January 1973. The majority of the members of the Working Parties considered these dates to be too early.

6. A member of the Working Parties noted that in practically all of the examinations of prior similar agreements between the EEC and other countries, the same questions concerning statistical data on their trade coverage had been asked. He felt that questions relating to statistical data could be prepared and transmitted to the parties to the present Agreements without waiting for the preparation of the questions relating to policy matters. This would permit the parties concerned to start the time-consuming process of compiling statistical data immediately. The parties to the Agreements stressed that they would make all possible efforts to shorten the time-period for the preparation of answers, but they could not undertake to answer statistical questions and policy-type questions separately. The member who had made the proposal said he failed to see any connexion between the provision of purely statistical data on the trade coverage of the Agreements and other questions of a policy or interpretative nature. He asked why the compilation of statistical material could not be started right away and circulated by the end of January 1973, in advance of the replies to other questions.

7. The Working Parties agreed to utilize the question-and-answer procedure and to conduct the examinations of the Agreements in the following order:

- European Communities/Switzerland and Liechtenstein
- European Communities/Sweden
- European Communities/Austria
- European Communities/Portugal
- European Communities/Iceland

The time-table for these examinations would be as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time-limit for the submission of questions</th>
<th>European Communities/Switzerland and Liechtenstein</th>
<th>Other Agreements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transmission of questions to the parties to the Agreements</td>
<td>12 January 1973</td>
<td>22 January 1973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time-limit for the submission of answers</td>
<td>19 January 1973</td>
<td>29 January 1973</td>
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<tr>
<td>Circulation of questions and answers in L/documents</td>
<td>16 March 1973</td>
<td>26 March 1973</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23 March 1973</td>
<td>2 April 1973</td>
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8. The Chairman noted that the time needed by the secretariat for processing the answers could be shortened if the answers were provided simultaneously in English and French. Members of the Working Parties would need from 7-10 days to consider in capitals the answers given by the parties to the Agreements before the opening of the first substantive meetings of the Working Parties.

9. The Working Parties agreed that countries wishing to put forward questions of a statistical nature could submit them earlier than at the dates set out in paragraph 7 above to the secretariat to be transmitted informally to the parties to the Agreements. Such early transmittal could facilitate and expedite the task of the parties to the Agreements and might allow for the shortening of the eight-week period envisaged for the preparation of the answers. The parties to the Agreements would not, however, be under any obligation to answer these questions separately.

10. It was agreed that the dates for the first separate meetings of the five Working Parties be fixed by the Chairman, in consultation with delegations.