Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade

REGIONAL STANDARDS-RELATED ACTIVITIES

Note by the Secretariat

1. At its meeting of 20-22 October 1981, the Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade agreed that the secretariat should transmit a number of agreed questions to regional bodies (TBT/M/8, paragraph 55). A list of agreed questions was circulated informally to signatories on 15 January 1982.

2. In order to allow members of the Committee sufficient time to consider the replies from regional bodies, these are being circulated as they arrive. The replies received from the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe are reproduced below. Replies from the other bodies to which questions have been addressed will be circulated as addenda to the present document.

Question:

Is the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe involved in a product certification program of any kind?

If so, for what products and who is participating in the programme?

Reply:

The Agreement concerning the Adoption of Uniform Conditions of Approval for Motor Vehicle Equipment and Parts done at Geneva on 20 March 1958 and which entered into force on 20 June 1959, may be considered as a kind of product certification programme. As of 1 July 1981, 21 countries (listed on page 1 of document TRANS/SC1/WP29/82) were parties to this Agreement to which 47 Regulations (listed on pages i-v of document TRANS/SC1/WP29/82) were annexed. The up-to-date situation as regards the application of these Annexes is described in document TRANS/SC1/WP29/82, which also contains two annexes listing the administrative and technical services concerned and information regarding the unilateral application of some uniform provisions. In practice, the Agreement works as follows:

The Motor Vehicle and its Equipment or Parts, tested and approved in one participating country on the basis of one of the Regulations established within the ECE, is certified and thereafter admitted for trade in the territory of any other participating country applying the regulation concerned.

A copy of the documents referred to in this paragraph is available for consultation in the GATT secretariat, Centre William Rappard, Room 1073.
For information, the Group of Experts on Standardization of Seed Potatoes, a subsidiary of the ECE Committee of Agricultural Problems, is considering whether or not to proceed with the elaboration of a certification scheme for seed potatoes, including back-up provisions of the type used in the OECD schemes for cereal grains and forages. Up-to-date information concerning the scheme under consideration is given in document AGRI/WP.1/GE.6/R.18.¹

The Working Party on Building, a subsidiary body of the ECE Committee on Housing, Building and Planning, is working on the international harmonization of approval and control rules for building products. Although this project (08.4.11) has not yet resulted in a certification programme for any specific product and is, for the time being, limited to fact-finding and reviews it is mentioned here as an example of the interest which ECE subsidiary bodies have in international agreements and control principles and their application in specific fields.

¹A copy of the documents referred to in this paragraph is available for consultation in the GATT secretariat, Centre William Rappard, Room 1073.