MEETING OF 31 OCTOBER 1990

Note by the Secretariat

1. The meeting was convened by GATT/AIR/3127 of 22 October 1990 and chaired by H.E. Mr. L. Duthie. The Group adopted the following agenda:

(A) Stock-taking of the situation concerning the submission of tariff proposals;
(B) Status of review and assessment of tariff proposals;
(C) Uruguay Round Tariff Protocol;
(D) Other business;

No matters were proposed under "Other business".

Present situation regarding the submission of proposals

2. The Chairman referred to document NG1/W/36/Rev.5 dated 29 October 1990 and noted that to date, forty-eight tariff proposals had been received and distributed according to the Procedures for the Negotiations adopted by the Group on 30 January 1990. He told the Group that since the last meeting, four new proposals had been submitted and that a preliminary offer was available for consultation. In addition, seventeen revised or additional proposals had been received and were being distributed according to the Procedures for the Negotiations, unless otherwise requested. He then invited delegations who intended to submit revised or improved proposals in the near future to indicate this to the Group.

Review and assessment of the proposals

3. The Chairman reported that a total of six meetings had been held to review and assess the available proposals. Thirty-seven out of the forty-eight proposals so far received had been examined. He referred to document IDB/INF/1/Rev.18 which gave information on the situation of the submission of tariff and trade data and explained that due to either the late submission of proposals or the lack of tariff and/or trade data, not all the proposals had been analysed.
4. Several delegates expressed appreciation for the documentation prepared by the secretariat and also for the tariff and trade data that had been provided by the participants.

5. One delegate urged participants to provide both tariff and trade data in the same nomenclature as this would facilitate his delegation's analyses of the tariff proposals.

Uruguay Round Tariff Protocol

6. The Chairman stated that at the request of the Group at the 19 September 1990 meeting, the secretariat had prepared, subsequent to informal consultations with interested participants, a technical note regarding the establishment of the Uruguay Round Tariff Protocol, circulated as document MTN.GNG/NG1/W/56 and dated 24 October 1990. He pointed out that the note was meant to guide delegations in their future work in relation to the tariff negotiations, and that its contents were not for approval or adoption. However, an agreement on the precise contents of the Protocol itself had to be reached by those delegations which intended to annex their tariff schedules to the Protocol, prior to the TNC Ministerial Meeting. He suggested that the secretariat organize further consultations among the interested delegations before the Brussels meeting.

7. General concern was voiced regarding the timetable set out in the note by the secretariat. The deadlines envisaged, in the view of several delegations, left very little time to advance with and in some cases start negotiations. The point was also raised that the note, if used in some other context, would suggest greater progress in the tariff negotiations than actually existed. Attention was also called to the fact that many of the offers were conditional and subject to results achieved in other negotiating groups, but that the note did not appear to deal with this point. It was the opinion of some delegations that as there were more general issues related to the question of the Protocol, it might be advisable to discuss this item in a broader context.

8. Another delegate remarked that the technical note had neither to be adopted nor approved at the present meeting. He stated that one of the subsidiary points related to the Protocol was a proposal put forward by his delegation in the negotiating group on non-tariff measures. His delegation intended to bring up this proposal which consisted of the establishment of a schedule of concessions in the non-tariff measures area, at the joint meeting of the market-access negotiating groups to be held on 1 November 1990.

9. One participant shared the concern expressed by many delegations regarding the deadlines established in the technical note. It remained unclear to his delegation how the results reached in the other negotiating groups would be reflected in the final Protocol and in the tariff schedules. He also felt that the amendments which were to take place on 1 January 1992 to the Harmonized System Convention should already be
incorporated into the Uruguay Round tariff schedules. He stated that his
deployment had no specific views with regard to the period of
implementation.

10. One delegate recalled that certain problems related to the Protocol
had been discussed previously. A decision regarding the inclusion of the
results of the negotiations on certain product sectors in the Protocol
should be made in the relevant negotiating group and by the TNC. He said
that his delegation had already given its reasons for not wanting to
incorporate into the Uruguay Round tariff schedules future changes of the
Harmonized System. His authorities preferred the period of
implementation of tariff concessions to be eight years.

11. Another participant said that for certain product sectors, his
government would prefer an implementation of the results in stages of
different importance, to be decided in the particular negotiating groups.

12. Mr Kautzor-Schröder (secretariat) referred to paragraph 6 of the
technical note and explained that the Protocol would provide for a general
period of implementation for all products. However, exceptions were
allowed and could be indicated in the schedules, either in a general note
if whole product sectors were involved, or through a footnote if there were
a limited number of product items. With respect to the target dates
indicated in the technical note, he stated that these had been
established on the basis of the date agreed upon for the final TNC
Ministerial Meeting. However, in view of the time constraint, a certain
degree of flexibility had been introduced into the timetable. He
referred to paragraph 1 of the technical note and said that unlike the
procedures followed in previous Rounds, delegations were required to
submit before the final Ministerial Meeting only a comprehensive record
of tariff commitments and not necessarily their final schedules.

13. The Chairman stated that the dates established in the technical note
were indicative. He recommended that the discussion on the incorporation
into the Protocol of the results obtained in other negotiating groups be
pursued at the joint market-access group meeting, to be held on
1 November 1990.

Date of the next meeting

14. The Group agreed that the next meeting would be held within the
context of a future meeting of the joint market-access group.