

## TARIFFS AND TRADE

---

### GATT INTEGRATED DATA BASE

#### (Draft) Progress Report by the Director-General

1. In its decision of November 10, 1987 (L/6290) the Council agreed that the Secretariat could begin work on setting up an integrated data base. It noted that the Informal Advisory Group - which had been established earlier in 1987, under the Chairmanship of Mr. M.G. Mathur - is open to all contracting parties, and that it would continue to guide the Secretariat in settling the details of the design and operation of the GATT Integrated Data Base.
2. In order to assess the amount of work that will be involved, the Council invited contracting parties to inform the Secretariat, by the end of March 1988, whether they will be participating either in the Integrated Data Base or in the present Tariff Study data base and in which form and time frame they intend to do so. The Council also agreed to keep under review progress in establishing the Integrated Data Base.
3. The Informal Advisory Group has held four meetings since the Council's decision (22 January, 19 February, 7 March and 18 April). A total of 44 delegations (counting the 12 members of the European Communities as one delegation) attended one or more of the four meetings.
4. The meetings of the Informal Advisory Group were devoted primarily to three activities:
  - (a) A review of the Secretariat's initial work on the basic design of the Integrated Data Base, in particular concerning the precise nature of the trade, tariff and QR data to be submitted, and the format and timetable for the submissions. In order to facilitate this review, the Secretariat prepared two notes: "Note by Secretariat on Data Requirements and Format of Submissions" dated 18 February 1988, and "Technical Note by the Secretariat" dated 25 February 1988.
  - (b) Delegations raised a number questions, made several comments and suggestions on material in the Secretariat's notes, and described particular problems of a technical nature that would have to be solved in their respective national capitals in order to supply the required data in the designated format.
  - (c) Delegations which were in a position to do so announced their intention to participate in the Integrated Data Base, while others reported on the progress of decision making in national capitals.

5. Two related points were stressed by delegations in each of the four meetings. First, that participation in the Integrated Data Base will pose a certain number of technical problems for all delegations; none of these problems would seem insurmountable, but in each capital it will be necessary to improve and extend existing procedures in order to comply with the data and format requirements. Second, these efforts in national capitals would be facilitated by a well-organized and comprehensive Secretariat programme for providing technical assistance to all interested delegations. One suggestion, which received strong support from many delegations, was that the Secretariat organize a week-long seminar in Geneva for technical experts from national capitals. At the request of the Informal Advisory Group, therefore, the Secretariat is exploring the possibility of holding such an expert level seminar in Geneva before the end of July.

6. To date, a total of 23 contracting parties plus the European Communities (representing 12 contracting parties) have indicated their intention to participate in the Integrated Data Base, and one contracting party (Austria) has indicated its intention to continue participating in the Tariff Study. The appropriate timetable and format for participation in the Integrated Data Base are set out in the two Secretariat notes referred to in paragraph 4 above (subject to revisions agreed to in the Informal Advisory Group). The 35 contracting parties in question are:

Argentina	Hong Kong	New Zealand
Australia	Hungary	Norway
Brazil	Iceland	Poland
Canada	India	Sweden
Chile	Jamaica	Switzerland
Colombia	Japan	Turkey
European	Korea, Rep.	United States
Communities (12 CPs)	Mexico	Uruguay
Finland		

These contracting parties account for 87.3 per cent of the total merchandise trade of GATT contracting parties.<sup>1</sup>

7. It is my understanding, in light of the discussions in the Informal Advisory Group, that the question of participation in the Integrated Data Base is receiving active and positive consideration by many of the contracting parties which have not yet indicated their intention to participate. It is thus to be expected that several of them will soon be in a position to announce their intention to participate. Work on the Integrated Data Base is progressing, and the Informal Advisory Group will have a full schedule in the coming months in giving guidance to the Secretariat on the details of the design and operation of the Data Base. Both the Secretariat and the delegations would benefit from the widest possible participation in this process.

<sup>1</sup>The percentage is based on the sum of exports and imports for a three-year period, in most instances 1984-86.