

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON

RESTRICTED

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TARIFFS AND TRADE

COMMITTEE ON BUDGET, FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

Information Paper on the GATT Documents Data Base (DDB)

The Project

1. Since 1988 the Translation and Documentation Division (TDD) has been working on the creation and storage of documentation in electronic form in the three official languages. The main purpose of this project is gradually to provide access to all GATT documentation in this form by staff members and delegations.

2. Benefits to be derived are twofold:

- (a) easier, speedy and more efficient access to documentation: staff members and delegations will be able to access documentation as it is produced, thus avoiding the time lag entailed by conventional distribution and mailing; and consultation and retrieval of information will be substantially improved.
- (b) savings on the purchase of paper and printing material, as well as on staff costs and mailing expenses.

3. Once the project is completed, staff members and delegations will have various means of access to documentation:

- (a) on diskette;
- (b) online via the network;
- (c) on compact disc.

Documents Collections

4. To achieve a smooth, phased implementation of the project, the documentation has been organised in four **Collections**¹ as follows:

- GATT General (GG). All documents circulated since 1988;
- Uruguay Round (UR). All documents circulated since 1986;
- Jurisprudence, Council and Related (JCR). This collection contains five "series": Text of the General Agreement, Tokyo Round Codes, Havana Charter, MFA; Panel Reports since 1947; Council Minutes since 1960; Summary Records Index; and the new Analytical Index;
- Basic Instruments and Selected Documents (BISD) since 1947.

¹The four collections contain about 36,000 documents in the three working languages, comprising a total of approximately 300,000 pages.

Implementation Plan

5. The project will be implemented in stages, evolving from a relatively simple system in 1993 into a more comprehensive and sophisticated one by 1995. Before moving from one stage to the next, care will be taken to ensure that the different services proposed reflect both users' needs and their hardware facilities.

Stage One (Starting April 1993)

6. Staff members will be able to consult online, through the network, the GG and UR collections and part of the JCR collection. Initially, at least one staff member from each division will be connected to the network.

7. Delegations will have access to GATT documentation on diskette, and online from an office in Centre William Rappard equipped with two computers connected to the network. This will allow delegations to perform searches and copy data to diskette; TDD staff will provide assistance. Delegations will be able to consult and retrieve any document circulated not later than the previous day.

8. The UR Collection has been available to delegations on diskette (over 150 diskettes) since September 1990. The JCR Collection (some 30 diskettes) should be available to delegations from October 1993.

Stage Two (first half of 1994)

9. Provisional software will be replaced and staff members connected to the network, as well as delegations using the computers provided in Centre William Rappard, will be able to use the final, DDB programme, customised to suit GATT particular requirements.

10. Delegations may connect their own computers to GATT's final computers for accessing online the UR, GG and JCR Collections (using DDB software). This service will be free of charge, but will entail some costs for delegations (modem, telephone charges, etc.).

Stage Three (second half of 1994)

11. The BISD collection will be available to staff members and delegations.

12. Delegations will be able to acquire GATT documentation on compact disc. (Given the size and space occupied by certain collections, the use of diskettes is not feasible). It is envisaged that a CD-ROM containing all collections will be pressed periodically, probably every six months.

Stage Four (1995)

13. Delegations so wishing - and appropriately equipped - will be able to receive online, in their offices, the daily production of documentation.

14. Stages two to four will be reviewed as necessary.

Action

15. An L series document will be issued shortly informing delegations of the above.