

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON

RESTRICTED

TBT/W/101

22 June 1987

Special Distribution

TARIFFS AND TRADE

Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade

PREPARATIONS FOR THE FOURTH MEETING ON PROCEDURES
FOR INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Note by the Secretariat

1. The fourth Meeting on Procedures for Information Exchange will be held on 13 October 1987 in conjunction with the twenty-sixth meeting of the Committee on 12-14 October 1987. The present note contains some suggestions on procedural arrangements and a draft agenda with explanatory notes for that meeting.

PROCEDURAL ARRANGEMENTS

2. It is expected that arrangements similar to those made at previous meetings will be followed.

A. Chairmanship and participation

3. The Committee might wish to designate the Chairman of the Fourth Meeting on Procedures for Information Exchange at its meeting on 22 June 1987.

4. It is recalled that the Committee decided to schedule the next Meeting on Procedures for Information Exchange in the same week as the meeting of ISO/Information Committee (ISO/INFCO), to be held on 15-16 October 1987, in order to facilitate a wider participation of persons responsible for information exchange from capitals in these meetings. As in the past, the Meeting will also be open to representatives of interested observers.

B. Organization of the meeting

5. In accordance with the established practice, the Chairman will present an oral report on the meeting to the Committee on his own responsibility. He will also forward the texts of any proposals for recommendations and conclusions approved by the meeting to the Committee for its adoption.

DRAFT AGENDA

6. The following draft agenda has been drawn up by the secretariat on the basis of the points raised at the 1985 Meeting and of the discussions in the Committee relating to the procedures for information exchange since then (TBT/M/19 - TBT/M/24).

7. The items proposed for the agenda are:
- A. Description of activities and facilities of enquiry points
 - (i) General,
 - (ii) Electronic data bases,
 - (ii) Publicity on enquiry points.
 - B. Enquiries received and answered by enquiry points
 - C. Notification procedures
 - (i) General,
 - (ii) Procedures at the national level for gathering information on proposed technical regulations and rules of certification systems,
 - (iii) Length of time allowed for comments,
 - (iv) Handling of comments.
 - D. Access to Information
 - (i) Processing of requests for documents relating to notifications,
 - (ii) Translation of documents relating to notifications.
 - E. Technical Assistance
8. As in the past, any text provided in connection with agenda items will be circulated to signatories in advance of the meeting.

EXPLANATORY NOTES ON THE DRAFT AGENDA

Item A. Description of activities and facilities of enquiry points

(i) General

9. This sub-item is intended to provide participants with an opportunity to share their experience on the operation of national enquiry points and to discuss the adequacy of services provided by enquiry points in meeting the information needs of interested parties. A note by the secretariat summarizing the submissions made at the previous meetings will be circulated in advance of the Meeting. Participants are therefore invited to report on the recent activities of enquiry points and in particular on any problems that they have encountered since the 1985 Meeting.

(ii) Electronic data bases

10. At the 1985 Meeting on Procedures for Information Exchange, participants from several signatory countries gave information on the use of electronic data bases in their respective enquiry points. Under this

sub-item, participants will inform the meeting of any further developments in this area. Participants may also wish to discuss the possibilities of access to these data bases.

(iii) Publicity on Enquiry Points

11. Under this sub-item participants will present any new booklets and brochures on the operation of national enquiry points issued by Parties in accordance with the relevant Committee recommendation (TBT/16/Rev.3, page 10). They may also wish to give an account of any promotional activities undertaken to advise appropriate parties in their countries on the operation of the Agreement and on the services provided by enquiry points.

Item B. Enquiries received by Enquiry Points

12. Data provided by Parties who responded to the invitation of the Committee to report the number of enquiries received and answered by their respective enquiry points (TBT/M/19, paragraph 35(a)) are included in the basic document for the annual reviews (section 8.3) TBT/22 and Suppl.1, TBT/22/Corr.1, TBT/25 and Suppl.1 and TBT/28 (to be issued by the time of the meeting)). In order to assess the extent of the work undertaken by the enquiry points under the relevant provisions of the Agreement, participants may wish to give details on the origin of the enquiries received from interested parties in other Parties (trade, industry, business, other enquiry points) and to describe the nature of enquiries received (in terms of 10.1.1, 10.1.2 and 10.1.3 or 10.2.1 and 10.2.2). Under this item, participants could also give information on the share of domestic enquiries in the total number of enquiries adressed to national enquiry points.

Item C. Notification Procedures

(i) General

13. A table on the total number of notifications by individual Parties over the period 1980-1987 will be before the Meeting (Section 3 of the Basic Document for the Eighth Annual Review, to be issued as TBT/28). The purpose of the discussion on this point is to identify particular problems which give rise to inconsistencies in the frequency of notifications made by individual Parties.

(ii) Procedures at the national level for gathering information on proposed technical regulations and rules of certification systems

14. The Committee agreed that statements by Parties on their implementation and administration of the Agreement should also specify the measures and arrangements to ensure that national authorities preparing new technical regulations or certification systems, or substantial amendments to existing ones, provide early information on their proposals in order to enable the Party in question to fulfil its obligations on notifications under Article 2.5, 2.6, 7.3 and 7.4 of the Agreement (TBT/16/Rev.3, page 2). Under this sub-item, participants are invited to exchange information on any such measures and arrangements.

15. In connection with this sub-item, participants will also recall that seventeen Parties have provided information on the procedures followed in their respective countries to determine which draft technical regulations should be notified.¹

(iii) Length of time allowed for comments

16. Attention of participants is drawn to the section 3.2.1 of the basic documents for the last two recent annual reports (TBT/25 and TBT/28 to be issued) which indicate that Parties have allowed a comment period of sixty days in about 40 per cent of the total number of notifications made in 1985-1987. Participants may wish to explain the difficulties that Parties may have in implementing the relevant Committee recommendation more effectively.

(iv) Handling of comments

17. Participants are referred to the procedures adopted by the Committee in order to improve handling of comments received by Parties (TBT/16/Rev.3, page 8) and also to document TBT/W/87 and Add.1-3 which contains the names, addresses, telex and telephone numbers of the authority or agency that Parties have designated to be in charge of the handling of comments. The purpose of this item is to review the application of these procedures.

Item D. Access to Information

(i) Processing of requests for documents covered by notifications

18. The purpose of this item is to discuss ways of reducing the delays involved in obtaining copies of documents relating to notifications. Communication facilities for transmitting documents and any fees charged could also be discussed in this connection.

(ii) Translation of documents relating to notifications

19. A draft recommendation for exchange of translations of documents is being discussed in the Committee. Other proposals which have been put forward by several Parties on this subject since the 1985 meeting are contained in documents TBT/M/19, paragraph 36(iii), TBT/M/21, paragraph 20 and 22, TBT/M/22, paragraph 21, TBT/M/24, paragraphs 23 and 24.

Item E. Technical Assistance

20. Under this item, participants may wish to focus on areas of information exchange where provisions of Article 11 could be made more operational.

¹This data was circulated to Parties informally. Additional copies are available in the TBT Division.