

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

RESTRICTED

AG/M/2

8 August 1983

Special Distribution

Committee on Trade in Agriculture

MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 29 JUNE 1983

Chairman: Mr. A. de Zeeuw (Netherlands)

1. The meeting was opened by the Chairman ad interim, the Director-General, who recalled that a meeting could be held in June, if necessary. And, as this had appeared necessary, an airgramme convening the meeting was sent out on 24 May 1983 (GATT/AIR/1916). In that communication the following agenda for the meeting was proposed:

- (a) Election of Chairman
- (b) Documentation - situation as of 15 June
- (c) Organization of work at the Committee's meeting in October 1983

2. The agenda was adopted by the Committee.

(a) Election of Chairman

3. The Chairman ad interim informed the meeting that further consultations with a number of delegations had now made it possible for him to make a formal proposal to the Committee. He accordingly proposed Mr. Aert de Zeeuw (Netherlands) as Chairman of the Committee on Trade in Agriculture. Mr. de Zeeuw was elected by acclamation.

4. On assuming the Chairmanship, Mr. de Zeeuw thanked the Director-General and the members of the Committee for the confidence they had shown in him. He stressed the importance of wholehearted cooperation of everybody and expressed the hope that all members would participate actively in the work of the Committee.

(b) Documentation

5. The Chairman stressed the necessity of gathering the relevant documentation since it was indispensable to have all relevant facts on the table as a necessary basis on which the subsequent work of the Committee would have to be undertaken. He recalled that the deadline for submitting the information, i.e. 15 June 1983, had been chosen to allow ample time for translation, processing and distribution, as well as examination of the documentation in capitals, and subsequent preparations for discussion in the Committee.

6. According to a note prepared by the secretariat (AG/W/3), eight participants (i.e. the European Communities, Finland, Japan, New Zealand, the Philippines, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States) had submitted information according to the format adopted at the first meeting of the Committee (AG/1, Annex II), as of 24 June 1983. Since then, four more countries (i.e. Australia, Austria, Canada and Chile) had submitted such information.

7. The Chairman invited delegations who had not yet submitted the information, as had been agreed, to inform the Committee as to when they would be making their submissions.

8. The representative of Norway said that the information for his country would be submitted in the course of the day. The representatives of Argentina, Brazil, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Israel, the Republic of Korea, Peru, Portugal, Romania, South Africa, Spain, Turkey, Uruguay and Yugoslavia said that the information for their respective countries was being prepared and would be submitted fairly soon.

9. The Committee took note of the statements, and the Chairman urged all participants who had not yet submitted the required information to do so by not later than 15 July 1983.

10. The Chairman suggested that the secretariat should go ahead with the processing of the documentation and prepare for the distribution of it by 1 September 1983.

11. The representative of the Commission of the European Communities suggested that the distribution of this documentation should be restricted to delegations which had themselves submitted such information. The representative of Switzerland supported this idea and said that in submitting the information his delegation had made the reservation that the information for his country should until further notice only be distributed to participants who had themselves submitted the required documentation. The representatives of Austria and the United States expressed sympathy with the idea advanced by the European Communities and supported by Switzerland, as it was important to encourage participants to provide the information. But, as it was essential to have the full participation in the work of all countries from the beginning, they were not in favour of restricting the distribution of documents.

12. The representatives of Argentina, Chile, India, Malaysia, New Zealand, Romania, Uruguay and Yugoslavia felt that such a limitation on the distribution of documentation would be contrary to GATT practice and they could not understand the rationale for the suggestion made by the European Communities.

13. The representative of Australia, while not in favour of limiting the distribution of documentation, said that, if the intention of the Community's proposal was to encourage wider and more active participation in the work of the Committee, then he understood why it had been put forward. However, if the intention was to restrict the work of the Committee to a select group, then the proposal was to be regretted, particularly as it would introduce a divisive element and an uncooperative spirit so early in the life of the Committee.

14. In summing up the discussion on this point, the Chairman said that it seemed to be a prevailing opinion in the Committee that all members should submit the required information by 15 July 1983 at the latest, and that delegations should inform their governments about this and accordingly urge them to give the necessary priority to this work. The secretariat was asked to go ahead and make the documentation ready for

distribution by 1 September 1983 assuming that the most important participants had made their submissions in time. If it were felt appropriate, the secretariat could at that time contact delegations about the distribution of documentation.

15. The Chairman also drew the attention of the Committee to other documentation contained in AG/W/3, namely various notifications normally circulated to contracting parties in regular series such as the AG/DOC/- series and the L/- series, in particular notifications pursuant to Article XVI:1 as regards subsidies. He invited participants who had not already done so to submit such notifications by no later than 15 July 1983.

(c) Organization of work at the Committee's meeting in October 1983

16. The Chairman recalled that, according to the work programme adopted by the Committee in March 1983, it had been agreed to devote two full weeks in October 1983 to the examinations referred to as exercises A and B, with the intention of continuing the examinations later and to have them completed by mid-March 1984 (AG/1). At the time of the first meeting of the Committee in March 1983, it had been envisaged to start on Monday, 3 October. However, it had been decided subsequently that the Council would meet on that day and in the morning of the following day. In the light of this, the Chairman suggested that the Committee should begin its October session on Tuesday, 4 October 1983, in the afternoon.

17. He furthermore suggested that the Committee should begin with exercise A : Examination of trade measures affecting market access and supplies, including those maintained under exceptions or derogations, and that this exercise should be made country-by-country in an alphabetical order. Subsequently, the Committee would proceed to exercise B : Examination of the operation of the General Agreement as regards subsidies, especially export subsidies and including other forms of export assistance.

18. In order to guide and facilitate the organization of the discussion in the Committee in October the secretariat might prepare an introductory note to the submissions circulated in the AG/FOR/- series, notably for exercise A, but any documentation prepared for that exercise might also serve as background material for exercise B. The latter exercise, however, would be based mainly on a draft analytical index to be prepared by the secretariat, covering references to the drafting history of Article XVI and relevant past cases of panels and working parties; and, on contributions submitted by participants.

19. The Chairman invited the members of the Committee to prepare themselves carefully, by studying the submissions and other documentation to be examined in October. He also suggested that officials in charge of policy making on these matters, as well as officials responsible for the implementation of the measures being examined, should be present during at least a part of the meeting in October.

20. The representative of the Commission of the European Communities agreed that the work programme contained in AG/1 should be reconfirmed. He considered the presence of high level officials to be more an idea than a suggestion and felt that it was not justified for such officials to be present for more than a day or two. He furthermore drew attention to the date of the meeting and the possibility of conflict with other meetings, notably the United Nations Sugar Conference, and suggested that the exact dates remained subject to confirmation. The representative of Australia also felt that the country-by-country examination of trade measures would not necessitate the presence of top-level officials. He would have preferred to look at reverse notifications with a view to focusing the work more directly and rapidly on the purpose of the whole exercise, namely to look for solutions. The representative of Argentina felt that there was little room for manoeuvre with respect to the dates but that it was important for the Committee to reserve two full weeks in October for this purpose. He shared the concern expressed by the European Communities with respect to high-level representation during the whole exercise of discussing trade measures. The representative of Canada agreed that senior officials should not be expected to participate in a detailed examination of measures on a country-by-country basis, but it was, nevertheless, his intention to have a top-level official present in October for at least a part of the time. The representative of New Zealand felt that it might be difficult to justify the presence of a high-level official at the October meeting, but would, nevertheless, try to persuade his authorities to make available a high-level representative for a limited time period if others did the same. The representatives of Finland and Switzerland felt that the presence of high-level officials could be useful at some stage, while the United States representative said that a meeting of officials in charge of policy making could perhaps be useful towards the end of the October session.

21. The representatives of Canada and New Zealand felt it to be useful if the secretariat could prepare introductory notes to the documentation, thus establishing some sort of country profiles and attempting to summarize or categorize the information, but in doing so it was important not to deflect from the main task, namely to look at problem areas and solutions to the problems. The representative of Chile, while agreeing with the usefulness of secretariat notes on the documentation, thought that this could be more appropriately done at a later stage. He felt that, for the October meeting, countries should be encouraged to provide general reviews of their national agricultural policies, and perhaps submit for circulation written statements on their policies ten to fifteen days ahead of the meeting. This would permit examination of specific measures in the context of the objectives of national policies and consideration of the trade effects thereof, as provided for in the Ministerial Decision. The representative of the Commission of the European Communities stressed that the Committee should stick to the work programme as originally defined in AG/1, paragraph 10, and did not find any interest in having a presentation of agricultural policies, as the objectives and aims of those were sufficiently known. The New Zealand representative supported the views expressed by the European Communities with regard to the work programme as stated in AG/1, paragraph 10.

22. A representative of the secretariat, in an answer to questions raised, said that a draft analytical index was in preparation and a secretariat note regarding the analytical index concerning Article XVI could be circulated in early September. With respect to the exact date and other meetings possibly taking place simultaneously he said that nothing had been decided yet as to when the UN Sugar Conference would reconvene. The secretariat, however, would seek the necessary information and try to avoid conflicting with other meetings.

23. In summing up the discussion, the Chairman made the observation that the work programme as contained in AG/1 was confirmed. The Committee would start with Exercise A, and undertake a country-by-country examination of measures listed in the respective AG/FOR/- documents. The examination would take place in alphabetical order according to country names in French. Some time before the meeting the secretariat would prepare and circulate an introductory note to the documentation in order to guide and facilitate the discussion in the Committee. The Chairman hoped that the discussions would be an orderly examination of the content of the documentation and not a confrontation. With respect to reviewing agricultural policies, the Chairman said that this should be limited to possible effects such policies had on agricultural trade. Following a round of discussion under exercise A, the Committee would then proceed to exercise B and devote sufficient time for a comprehensive discussion of the subject matter to be covered by that exercise. That examination would be based on a draft analytical index to be prepared by the secretariat, covering references to the drafting history of Article XVI and relevant past cases of panels and working parties; and, on contributions submitted by delegations, in accordance with AG/1 paragraph 9. With respect to the question of whether it would be useful to have a meeting of high-level officials, the Chairman concluded that a decision on this could be taken following further consultations which he intended to have with delegations mainly concerned.

24. The meeting was closed at 1.10 p.m.