

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

RESTRICTED

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Special Distribution

Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade

MEETING OF THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR NATIONAL ENQUIRY POINTS

Note by the Secretariat

1. At its sixth meeting, on 4-5 February 1981, the Committee agreed to the Chairman's suggestion that "a meeting might be held for those responsible for national enquiry points so that they could compare their experiences and how they have dealt with their problems", and that the secretariat should draw up a feasibility study in order to prepare adequately for such a meeting (TBT/M/6, paragraphs 25-26).

2. The secretariat has written to delegations to get their reactions on this subject and to obtain their suggestions regarding a possible agenda for such a meeting and the organization of the meeting. Delegations responding to this enquiry were, in their great majority, favourable to the idea and many suggestions were made. The secretariat would therefore like to make the following suggestions which are based on these responses. It is hoped that at its meeting of June 1981, the Committee might discuss these suggestions and approve them, subject of course to any changes that it may agree.

3. A large number of suggestions have been made as to points which should be discussed at the meeting. The secretariat would like to suggest the following agenda for the meeting and has indicated a number of questions which might be discussed under each agenda item, the aim being to fix the areas for discussion but not to tie participants down too rigidly to a list of detailed points.

(a) Organization of enquiry points.

- What problems have been encountered in organizing and administering enquiry points? How have they been solved?
- How do the enquiry points function and how are responsibilities distributed? Number of people and expenditure involved?
- What are the relationships of the enquiry points to their host body and/or to central government authorities?
- If more than one enquiry point exists, how are responsibilities distributed between them and how is their work coordinated?

(b) Scope of standards collection and dissemination of information.

- Does a centralized information system exist. How is it organized?
- Does this system cover standards classification, indexing and document identification?
- How is data collected?
- What data is in the data bank and who has access to it?
- Role of and procedures followed by the enquiry point in issuing notifications?
- How are notifications received from other signatories circulated?.
- What delays have been experienced in the processing and distribution of notifications; in particular handling of regulations with short comment periods?
- What are the possibilities of establishing cooperation arrangements among enquiry points to meet the needs of respective national industries?

(c) Documentation.

- Procedures to be followed to obtain texts of regulations?
- What problems have been experienced with providing requested copies and/or obtaining copies requested from enquiry points of other signatories?
- What translation facilities are available, if any, and what are the costs and delays involved?
- In what languages can enquiries be handled?
- Is any charge required for documentation supplied?
- What arrangements for payment of charges are proposed?
- To what extent should enquiry points be expected to reply to questions about existing technical regulations and standards?

(d) Communication facilities and publicity.

- How are enquiries and replies to enquiries transmitted from one signatory to another?
- What difficulties of communication and correspondence between different national enquiry points have been experienced to date?
- How could channels of communication be improved?
- What would be the usefulness of editing a manual on the Standards Code for use by the usual correspondents of enquiry points, i.e. enterprises, business organizations?

(e) Conclusions

4. It is suggested that delegations indicate to the secretariat the names of the officials responsible for the day-to-day running of the enquiry points.¹ Attendance at the meeting would not, of course, be restricted to these officials who could be accompanied by advisers. It is suggested that participants should come to the meeting prepared to make a statement on the various points on the agenda and if possible to supply any relevant documentation at the meeting.

5. It is suggested that two days should be set aside for the meeting, the first day being devoted to statements on the agenda items and the second to informal contacts and the discussion of any conclusions that the Group might wish to draw from the meeting. It is finally suggested that the meeting should be held in the autumn. As it will be difficult to program a meeting before the session of the CONTRACTING PARTIES when so many other meetings must be held, the meeting might take place in the second half of September.

¹Listed on pages 67 to 78 of TBT/6.