
Negotiating Group on Trade Facilitation

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

Held in the Centre William Rappard
on 15 November 2004

Chairman: Mr. Muhamad Noor Yacob (Malaysia)

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The proposed agenda was adopted by the Negotiating Group as contained in document WTO/AIR/2441/Rev.1.

A. AGREEMENT ON WORK PLAN AND SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

1. **Work Plan**

1. The Chairman recalled that Annex D, paragraph 10, of the General Council's Decision of 1 August 2004 required the Negotiating Group to agree on its work plan and schedule of meetings at the Group's first session. He had been consulting as broadly as possible with delegations on that matter over the past weeks. All Members had received an invitation to contact him in that regard with several of them actually having shared their views on those questions, for which he was thankful. In those consultations, he had detected a number of common elements in Members' thinking.

2. With respect to the Work Plan, there seemed to be a desire for it to be short and concise, with sufficient flexibility to adapt the substantive discussion at each meeting to the Group's respective needs. Members had also expressed their wish for a balanced approach, that reflected all the elements of the July mandate in an equitable manner, with no judgements on priority. Furthermore, he had sensed a need for the process to be member-driven, with work proceeding on the basis of Members' contributions and other input the Group might request.

3. Those were the commonalities he had found in Members' views. And those were also the principles that had guided him when putting together a chairman's text. His proposal sought to incorporate all those elements as they had emerged in the consultations. It had been circulated in document TN/TF/W/1 dated 5 November 2004. The suggested Work Plan called for work to proceed

on the basis of Members' contributions and other input that the Negotiating Group might request. The agenda of the Group was proposed to cover all elements of Annex D. Those had been grouped into six clusters, without that in any way altering the mandate of the Negotiating Group.

4. In taking up those items, he suggested it to be understood that work would be pursued in a flexible way, without being bound by a particular sequence. Delegations would be free to address items in an integrated way, and to raise issues in a cross-cutting manner. The Work Plan would also be without prejudice to the possibility for the Group to have formal or informal meetings on particular items.

5. Another element of the suggested Work Plan covered the attendance of relevant international organizations, including those mentioned in paragraph 8 of Annex D (namely the IMF, OECD, UNCTAD, WCO and the World Bank), at each formal meeting of the Negotiating Group on an *ad hoc* basis. That would greatly facilitate their contribution to the Group's work while at the same time offering Members a maximum of flexibility as to the extent of those institutions' involvement in the negotiating process.

6. The representative of Zambia apologized for his delegation not having been able to participate in the consultations on the Work Plan Members were discussing and requested to take a decision on. He congratulated the Chairman on the work he had done so far. It was not his intention to delay the process. Zambia would agree with whatever Members who had been participating in the consultations would agree on. He was just seeking some clarification on one particular point. While it seemed clear what Members were supposed to undertake under the Plan's first bullet point, Zambia would wish to obtain more clarity as to what exactly was envisaged under the second and third bullet.

7. The Chairman clarified that the Work Plan listed all the elements of the July mandate as set out in Annex D. It provided for a member-driven process, with work being guided by Members' wishes. The idea was for delegations to put forward proposals – either through oral interventions or in written form - with those inputs then being considered by the membership.

8. The representative of Zambia expressed his hope that, when adopting the Work Plan, the understanding would be for Members to be free to pursue their areas of interests under bullet points two and three, in the sense that they could not be prevented from doing so on the grounds of those issues not being covered by those bullets.

9. The Chairman assured the delegate of Zambia that the suggested Work Plan was merely a short version of Annex D of the July package. The Work Plan would in no way modify the modalities adopted in July, and not alter the negotiating mandate.

10. The representative of the Philippines thanked the Chairman for his proposed Work Plan and for the series of informal consultations conducted in its preparation. Members had arrived at Annex D as a result of constructive cooperation and consultation. The decision had been to limit the negotiations to Articles V, VIII and X of the GATT 1994. The Philippines welcomed the suggested agenda of the Negotiating Group and shared Zambia's interpretation of the two bullet points. His delegation was committed to cooperating constructively under the suggested Work Plan.

11. The representative of Tanzania congratulated the Chairman on having come forward with the suggested draft Work Plan. His delegation associated itself with the statements made by Zambia and the Philippines. The proposed Work Plan and schedule of meetings had helped Members focus on the issues at stake. It showed the real aspects of crucial importance to everyone. Tanzania was encouraged by the Chairman's remarks on the negotiations being member-driven and the Work Plan being flexible.

12. He expressed his hope for all meetings of the Negotiating Group to be formal, as a general rule. The conduct of informal meetings should be undertaken only in exceptional circumstances as agreed upon by participants. Notices of all formal and exceptional informal Negotiating Group meetings and consultations as well as of their agenda should be circulated to all participants no later than three working days before the date of the meeting to which the notice pertained. All participants should be free to decide whether to participate in those meetings or consultations. The needs of smaller delegations like the one of Tanzania with its thin representation should be taken into account by scheduling meetings in sequence and not in parallel. Minutes of all formal and informal meetings relating to the negotiations on trade facilitation should be recorded. Such minutes should be circulated to all participants three working days before the next scheduled formal or informal meeting of the Negotiating Group. Finally, all decisions taken by the Negotiating Group in connection with the negotiations should be by explicit consensus.

13. The representative of Chinese Taipei expressed his thanks for the efforts made in developing the suggested Work Plan. Members had already had the opportunity to discuss issues related to trade facilitation to a certain extent, based on the common belief that it could benefit all Members in terms of their economic development. A few concerns remained, however.

14. Members needed to clarify and improve relevant aspects of GATT Articles V, VIII and X. The proposed agenda seemed to be well-balanced. It was reassuring to find it contain most of the issues Members still had some concerns on, such as the ones relating to special and differential treatment, to LDC Members, the identification of trade facilitation needs and priorities and to technical assistance and capacity building. It was also encouraging to see this being done in a way that ensured that those concerns were actually addressed. The Work Plan further proposed to invite relevant international organizations to each formal meeting on an *ad hoc* basis, which would not only save Members from repeating their work, but also allow for the generation of additional input to the discussions. It was Chinese Taipei's believe that the Work Plan would provide Members with a good framework for future negotiations. His delegation was more than happy to give the Plan its support.

15. With the Doha Development Agenda being a Single Undertaking, it was vital to achieve an overall balanced outcome in all areas for the adoption of the final package. As substantive discussions on trade facilitation had not taken place before the July deal, the top priority for the near future was to catch up with progress on other fronts. His delegation would therefore like to suggest establishing a high frequency of meetings as of next year, in order to have a chance to cover the ground and catch up with progress in other areas of the Round. Chinese Taipei had every confidence in the leadership of chair and would like to pledge its support for working towards a successful completion of the negotiations.

16. The representative of Djibouti noted that the issue raised by Zambia had to be given special attention before moving on any further. With respect to the future work, things had to be very clear with respect to the issues mentioned in bullet points 2 and 3 to avoid any confusion. More clarifications would be required.

17. The representative of Pakistan noted that, in suggesting the present Work Plan, the Chairman had tried to be non-controversial by simply listing the all the elements of Annex D as they had already been agreed upon by Members. The Chairman's draft text merely reproduced what was already there. Pakistan saw no problem in that context. With respect to the question of formal and informal meetings, his delegation was of the view that Members should approach that as they went along. Other Negotiating Groups such as the one on agriculture had started with formal meetings, with Members eventually realizing that this would not deliver results, and the Group therefore moving towards informal meetings, which then started to bring the previously missing results. Pakistan would not call for one way or the other, but rather wished for Members to adopt a flexible approach that

would allow them to find out what worked best in the trade facilitation context and would enable the Group to adapt its mode of operation accordingly.

18. With respect to the discussions on some of the other items of the agenda, Pakistan considered it a little early to address them in depth, as there were no documents or papers available yet. All that existed were some previous submissions. The Group needed to be more prepared to take them up in a meaningful manner. Discussions at the present meeting should therefore be limited to the Group's Work Plan and schedule of meetings.

19. The representative of Romania commended the Chairman on his proposed Work Plan and schedule of meetings. Romania supported the principle of work proceeding on the basis of Members' contributions and other input that the Negotiating Group requested. This would be fully in accordance with the July package. With respect to the agenda of the Negotiating Group, her delegation was of the view that the suggested six bullet points represented most of the subjects of interest to the Negotiating Group. All those issues were interlinked and had to be given attention in a flexible manner. Furthermore, Romania also supported the idea of inviting relevant international organizations to attend the formal meetings of the Negotiating Group on an *ad hoc* basis. This would ensure coherence and deliver positive results. For those reasons, her delegation supported the proposed Work Plan.

20. The representative of Jamaica noted that, as indicated in the informal consultations of 2 November 2004, his delegation considered the Chairman's proposal for the Group's Work Plan and meeting schedule to be a good one. Jamaica also endorsed the call for a flexible approach in determining the Group's working method. Such an approach would assist in ensuring that the process was educational and transparent, while seeking to achieve the objectives of the Trade Facilitation negotiations as set out in their modalities. That was particularly important as Annex D called for the negotiations to aim at clarifying and improving relevant aspects of Articles V, VIII and X of the GATT 1994, and required for that to be done without prejudice to the possible format of the final results, and the form of the outcome. Jamaica supported the suggested Work Plan and schedule of meetings. His delegation had heard the comments regarding some of their elements, but the Chairman's cross-reference to the relevant paragraphs of Annex D should help alleviating the concerns raised. Jamaica was committed to working towards an outcome of the negotiations that would strengthen the efforts it had already undertaken in this area, and to ensure that they would not result in obligations that represented an additional burden to its resource-constrained economy. His delegation expected the negotiations to lead to the elaboration of effective provisions on special and differential treatment as well as on technical assistance and support for capacity building. Jamaica's full support for trade facilitation was reflected in its ongoing national programme for the modernization of customs systems and procedures, which was now in its final implementation phase.

21. With respect to meetings of the Negotiating Group, Jamaica awaited the evolution of the schedule, anticipating that the human resource constraints of developing and least-developed countries would be fully taken into account. His delegation was looking forward to working with Members towards arriving at an outcome that was beneficial for all.

22. The representative of Egypt reiterated the importance of bullet 4 of the Work Plan (identification of trade facilitation needs and priorities and concerns related to cost implications of proposed measures) as already stressed by his delegation in the informal consultations preceding the present meeting. He agreed with the suggestion for work to proceed on the basis of Members' contributions, but was of the view that, whenever a contribution was made, the first step should be the identification of trade facilitation needs and priorities, as the other aspects of the Work Plan (improvement and clarification of relevant aspects of GATT Articles V, VIII and X, capacity building, special and differential treatment for LDCs etc.) would depend on it.

23. The representative of Nigeria welcomed the Chairman's draft Work Plan. It reflected the modalities set out in Annex D of the July package text. His delegation had taken note of the Chair's remarks on all issues being important and given the same priority. As stated by Nigeria in the process leading to the adoption of modalities for negotiations on trade facilitation, as well as in the informal consultations conducted by the Chairman following his appointment last month, his delegation wished to underscore the need for giving adequate priority to technical assistance and capacity building. Some Members had only agreed to the modalities for negotiations after explicit reference to those issues in Annex D. He hoped that Members, particularly the developed ones, would match those words with actions.

24. Nigeria agreed with the Work Plan having to be flexible and completely supported the Chairman's draft. His delegation was fully committed to the negotiating process and hoped that it would actually be beneficial to all.

25. The representative of Rwanda expressed her thanks for the extensive consultations the Chairman had conducted with Members. Her delegation was also thankful for him having come up with a draft Work Plan and schedule of meetings, which reflected Rwanda's main concerns. As a landlocked country, Rwanda's interest in trade facilitation rules was particularly great. Improved facilities in areas such as the clearance of goods at ports and other entrance points represented positive opportunities for Rwanda's business community. Due to its landlocked-status, Rwanda's transport costs were 50 per cent above those of neighbouring countries with access to the sea. Therefore, for Rwanda, transport costs were a more prohibitive trade barrier than tariffs. This had been reflected in a report by the Secretariat that year which had shown that in Africa, transport costs almost doubled the world average. Her delegation therefore liked to underscore the need for a national assessment to identify the trade facilitation needs, which would greatly assist negotiations in this area.

26. With respect to the scope of the negotiations, Rwanda would like to emphasize that it had to be limited to the delineations contained in paragraph 1 of Annex D. Her delegation would also wish to stress that technical assistance and support for capacity building were vital in all stages of the negotiations and an eventual implementation phase. Rwanda looked forward to the implementation of the relevant parts of Annex D, particularly paragraphs 5 and 8. Special and differential treatment was an integral element of the negotiations, and Rwanda was very happy to see that reflected in the Work Plan. Her delegation expected an outcome that would take the principle of such treatment into consideration by coming up with meaningful provisions to that end. Rwanda was fully committed to those negotiations in order to make them useful for the entire membership.

27. The representative of Nepal noted Members had had extensive deliberations on trade facilitation during the work on the July package. When accepting trade facilitation as an area for negotiations, Nepal had thought - and still thought - that that was one of the areas where capacity building would be essential. As a landlocked country, Nepal attached great importance to trade facilitation. But it had to be based on support for capacity building, and not be carried out in a manner which would make it difficult for least-developed countries to implement.

28. Nepal supported the suggested Work Plan and schedule of meetings. His delegation had also taken note of the Chairman's proposal for work to be member-driven and carried out in a transparent and flexible way. Nepal supported Zambia's call for the Work Plan not to exclude the addressing of any issues Members may wish to take up during the negotiations. His delegation had always held that trade facilitation matters had to be looked at in a comprehensive manner in view of countries' development, financial and trading needs, especially those of LDCs and landlocked countries such as Nepal.

29. The representative of China noted that the current meeting had been rendered possible by the efforts and the hard work of all participants since the adoption of the July package. China was

grateful for having been able to participate in the informal consultations preceding the present meeting which had led to the elaboration of the draft Work Plan and schedule of meetings. His delegation was prepared to continue working in a constructive and flexible manner so as to allow for concrete progress to be made. China would also like to take the opportunity to make a few comments on the suggested Work Plan and schedule of meetings.

30. The circulated draft consisted of two parts: one relating to the Work Plan and one to the schedule of meetings. Part one could be understood as a reproduction of Annex D, as some Members had already mentioned, while part two did not form part of the July package text and represented a new element. During the consultations, China had expressed some concerns with respect to the frequency of the Group's meetings. During this month alone, the Group was scheduled to meet twice, which represented quite a record for a Negotiating Group. But after some bilateral consultations, which had shown the difficulties faced by the Chair and the Secretariat in scheduling the second meeting, he had been able to convince his capital of the impossibility to change the dates for the current year. China was prepared to show some flexibility in that respect but hoped that, in the future, meetings could be arranged in way that allowed capacity-constrained delegations to take part in higher frequency. China was not the only delegation facing those difficulties in that regard.

31. Another issue he would like to raise in that context and that he would like to see taken into account when scheduling meetings next year was the question of desirability of having more meetings than other groups. He wondered whether Members could ensure that a high frequency of meetings would actually lead to faster results and more progress. China was not convinced by that argument. There were differences in opinion as to whether the Trade Facilitation Group had to catch up with others, or whether others would not actually have to catch up with the present Group. The Negotiating Group on Trade Facilitation had already some agreed modalities, while others were still struggling to get there. There were differences between the respective Negotiating Groups that should also be taken into account when scheduling the meetings for 2005. That would facilitate the functioning of the TF Group.

32. The Chairman explained that he intended to share the suggested schedule for next year at a later stage of the meeting with some explanations on the points that the Chinese representative had raised.

33. The representative of Uruguay thanked the Chairman for his draft Work Plan. Her delegation supported it and was committed to working constructively in the Negotiating Group. Uruguay associated itself with the comments made by the Philippines, Chinese Taipei and Pakistan.

34. The representative of Indonesia noted that much had been said on what had to be the focus of attention in those negotiations. He supported the statements made by the Philippines, Nepal and others in that context. His delegation also supported the Chairman's Work Plan and schedule of meetings. He was however seeking some clarification as to how Members were expected to conduct meetings of the Negotiating Group. The agenda provided for six bullets. He wondered whether the intention was to have a parallel discussion or whether those points were to be taken up one by one. The second clarification he was seeking pertained to the suggested *ad hoc* attendance of relevant international organizations. He was wondering whether they would attend the whole sessions or whether they would just brief Members on issues that had been requested. That was important to Indonesia as his delegation might have different positions on various issues. Indonesia wanted to work constructively with the Chair and all Members for the negotiations to achieve good results.

35. The Chairman replied that it would be his intention to pursue work in a flexible manner without being bound by a particular sequence. His proposal was to allow delegations to address items in an integrated way, and to raise issues in a cross-cutting manner, and for the Work Plan to be without prejudice to the possibility of the Group to hold formal or informal meetings that were

dedicated to particular items. That would also address the concerns raised by Tanzania with respect to informal meetings. Informal meetings were important at some stage. If the concern was about transparency, he would propose to stick to his already started approach of informing all delegations of the possibility to contact him whenever necessary. With respect to the suggested rules on the notification of meetings and their participation therein, as well as regarding to preparation of minutes etc. Members should stick to existing rules already applied in the WTO rather than try to establish new ones for that particular body. Otherwise, Members would get bogged down with procedural matters which would delay substantive work.

36. With respect to the issue of participation by relevant other international organizations raised by the representative of Indonesia, the normal practice was for them only being allowed to attend formal meetings. They would not be permitted to attend informal sessions. But even here, the process would be member-driven, and Members may request to also have them participate in informal meetings. His proposal was to approach all those questions in the spirit of flexibility based on Members' wishes.

37. The Chairman invited Members to agree on the proposed Work Plan on that basis.

38. It was so agreed.

2. Schedule of Meetings

39. The Chairman noted that, with respect to the scheduling of meetings, his proposal allowed for work to proceed expeditiously, while reflecting the resource constraints of small delegations. It provided for two formal sessions that year, with the second one being scheduled for 22 and 23 November. He was grateful to the delegation of China for having shown flexibility on the question of when that final meeting for 2004 was supposed to take place. He also wanted to express his thanks to the African Group, which had indicated its willingness to go along with those dates even though they coincided with a retreat the Group was holding in Tunis, keeping many of its members from participating. In this context, he wanted to recall that he would be available for consultations upon the Group's return from Tunisia and that he stood ready to offer any possible assistance to the African Group in order to update them on the events of the second meeting.

40. The intention would be for that meeting to be devoted, at least in part, to an educational and stocktaking process in response to the requests he had received from a relatively large number of delegations for such work. Members could invite the WTO Secretariat to brief the Group on relevant issues, and organizations like UNCTAD, the WCO and the World Bank to present the work they were doing and the programmes and facilities they were able to offer to support developing countries and LDCs through technical assistance and capacity building in that area.

41. With respect to meetings of the Negotiating Group in 2005, Members would all be aware of the need to bear in mind two practical considerations: the availability of meeting rooms and interpreters, and the need to avoid, as far as possible, placing small delegations in the position of being faced with more WTO meetings being held consecutively than their limited resources would allow them to cover effectively. With those considerations in mind, the WTO Secretariat had drawn up a tentative list of dates for meetings of all Negotiating Groups for the first half of 2005. In doing so, the Secretariat had tried as far as possible to respond to requests the Chair had received from many delegations to schedule meetings of the Trade Facilitation Negotiating Group back-to-back with meetings of the Group on NAMA, so as to allow for the cost-effective participation of capital-based officials. For the period up to July, the Secretariat had reserved facilities for meetings of the TFNG on the following dates: 7 and 9 February, 21-23 March, 2-4 May, 13-14 June and 25-26 July. Having that list of meeting dates was important for planning purposes, particularly back in capitals, and to allow delegations and the Secretariat to make the necessary preparations to ensure for work to proceed

smoothly. At the same time, Members had all expressed the view that the Work Plan should be approached in a flexible manner, so that it would be responsive to their respective needs as they emerged, and he would like to encourage delegations to approach the question of scheduling of meetings with the same spirit of flexibility. He hoped for their understanding when saying that he did not believe one could entirely rule out the possibility of there being subsequent modifications to the schedule at the present stage. As next year unfolded, there might be a need for the Group to shift a meeting from one date to another. Equally, as the negotiations progressed, Members might find it helpful to the substance of their work to consider postponing a session, or adding an additional meeting. With those considerations in mind, he proposed for the Group to agree on the formulation regarding the scheduling of meetings as set out in document TN/TF/W/1. As the Group proceeded with its negotiations, that would provide Members with the necessary flexibility to consult on the schedule of meetings for 2005 he had just read out.

42. The representative of India noted that it was not her intention to hold up the proceedings but that she was seeking clarification on the tentative list of dates for next year. She was wondering whether this was merely an indicative list, with none of its dates having been firmed up, or whether the proposed dates would also be the ones actually applied. She had noted that the Chairman's proposal provided for meetings to take place almost at a monthly basis, which might need modification. She would like to know whether in agreeing on his proposal, Members would still have the opportunity to modify the schedule later on, as it was supposed to be a member-driven process.

43. The representative of Nigeria shared India's concerns with respect to the indicative number of meetings in 2005. Looking at the list the Chairman had suggested, he found it to provide for meetings to take place almost every month. Also, he had heard that those meetings were supposed to take place back-to-back with NAMA. He was not sure whether the proposed dates would actually be in line with the schedule of the NAMA meetings. He had no problems with the dates, but if there was the possibility to have three instead of the suggested five meetings, with them being held alongside the NAMA ones, that would be helpful.

44. The representative of Jamaica noted that he also had concerns with respect to the schedule of meetings for 2005, which was very heavy. The suggested five meetings were not even the meetings for the whole next year, but only for its first half. That was really very difficult to service, particularly for small delegations. Given the fact that it was to be a member-driven process with work proceeding on the basis of Members contributions, it would be necessary to prepare inputs for the respective meetings, which might not be possible under the suggested rapid schedule, so that the indicative list of meetings would actually be counterproductive in this context. Jamaica knew that this was an indicative schedule but would still want to be able to revisit it.

45. Jamaica took note of the effort to hold meetings of the Negotiating Group on Trade Facilitation back-to-back with those of NAMA so as to facilitate participation of capital-based experts. But unfortunately, for quite a large number of countries, there was no possibility of having people from capitals attend those meetings anyway, which would have to be serviced by the regular Geneva staff instead. And that placed a great deal of strain on the resources of small missions. The WTO might carry out a study to find out how many people would actually come from capital for many of those meetings.

46. The representative of the Philippines supported India's statement and noted that it would be best to take the suggested schedule as an indicative one. It would be necessary to talk about the schedule further in the future. He also supported Jamaica's comments and stressed that very often, small staffed delegations had the burden of following all meetings related to the Doha Development Agenda. Therefore, one should not just look at the NAMA meetings, but also at the schedule of other Negotiating Groups such as, for example, the one on Rules, which seemed to have frequent meetings next year.

47. The representative of Japan remarked that, while it might be right to say that the proposed schedule provided for 5 meetings in 7 months, a calculation of the overall meeting sequence since the time of the launch of the negotiations in July would show that the Group would have had only 7 meetings in a year, which was a good basis. Everything was relative and could be looked at from different perspectives.

48. The representative of Sri Lanka noted that his delegation had never been represented by an expert from capital over the last years, as his country could not afford it. This would also continue to be the case in the future. He therefore fully supported the statement made by Jamaica with respect to the scheduling of future trade facilitation meetings, which were very important for Sri Lanka to attend. The capacity constraints of smaller delegations had to be taken into account. The suggested schedule should therefore be relaxed to allow his delegation to take part in the negotiating meetings.

49. The representative of Antigua and Barbuda noted that the problem of small delegations having to deal with a variety of meetings was a very frequent one for his country. It was very difficult for his delegation to cover that many meetings. At the moment, he was one person representing not only Antigua and Barbuda but also six other small countries with similar interests, which made it very difficult for him and many other of his colleagues from small delegations to service those meetings efficiently. Antigua and Barbuda certainly could not afford participation from capital-based experts. He therefore fully supported the intervention made by Jamaica.

50. The representative of Trinidad and Tobago joined Antigua and Barbuda, India and Jamaica in their concerns about the suggested meeting schedule. Her delegation was also very small, and the proposed schedule for the first half of 2005 would be extremely onerous for her country and would make it difficult for them to participate in negotiations they considered critical. Trinidad and Tobago would therefore take the proposed schedule as a merely indicative one.

51. The Chairman reminded delegations of the possibility for modifications to the suggested schedule to which he had already referred to earlier. He called upon Members to see how the Group progressed over the course of next year. There might be a need for postponements and rescheduling at some stage, but at the moment, that was simply too early to tell. What he was seeking the Group to agree on at the present meeting was merely the content of the circulated document (TN/TF/W/1), which only specified the dates for the current year. The possible dates for 2005 he had referred to did not form part of that document.

52. On the question of the indicated dates actually being set back-to-back with those for the NAMA Group, he noted that, while the Secretariat had tried to ensure such linkage on the basis of the indications of the likely dates of the NAMA sessions as they had currently been available, he did not want to make a final declaration to this end as that would amount to him announcing the dates of the NAMA Negotiating Group, which was something he clearly wanted to avoid.

53. He asked Members whether they could agree on the suggested schedule of meetings on that basis.

54. It was so agreed.

B. *AD HOC* ATTENDANCE OF RELEVANT INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, INCLUDING THE IMF, OECD, UNCTAD, WCO AND THE WORLD BANK, AT THE NEXT MEETING OF THE NEGOTIATING GROUP

55. The Chairman noted that, under this final item, the Group would take up the issue of attendance of relevant international organizations, including those mentioned in paragraph 8 of Annex D, at the next meeting of the Negotiating Group. The Work Plan provided for them to be invited on an *ad hoc* basis.

56. He asked Members whether they would invite representatives of the IMF, OECD, UNCTAD, WCO and the World Bank to attend the Group's next meeting on such basis.

57. It was so agreed.

58. The Chairman noted that the next meeting of the Negotiating Group would take place on 22 and 23 November as agreed by Members.

59. The meeting was closed.
