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Committee on Market Access

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 18 DECEMBER 2000

Chairman: Mr. Christophe Kiener (Switzerland)

<b>1. Review of the Operation of the IDB and IDB related technical assistance activities (G/MA/IDB/W/7) .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Other Business.....</b>	<b>3</b>
(a) Release 5 of the IDB CD-ROM.....	3
(b) List of publications/studies on market access and tariff-related issues.....	3
(c) Tariff Seminar.....	4
(d) Date of the next meeting.....	4

The above agenda as reproduced in document WTO/AIR/1461 was adopted with the addition of items under 2 (a), (b), (c) and (d).

**1. Review of the Operation of the IDB and IDB related technical assistance activities (G/MA/IDB/W/7)**

1.1 The Chairman recalled that at the 2 October 2000 informal meeting of the Committee, a discussion had ensued from a Canadian proposal to have a special informal session of the Committee dedicated to the review of the status of IDB submissions. While the proposal had received general support, some questions were raised regarding the modalities. As a result, it was agreed that the Chairman along with the Secretariat should put together a proposal for a possible modality to undertake a multilateral review of the operation of the IDB and related technical assistance activities taking into account the various viewpoints expressed at the informal meeting. A draft proposal (Job No. 7080) was circulated to delegations on 9 November 2000 and considered at an informal meeting of the Committee on 23 November 2000. While, general support for the draft proposal was expressed at that meeting, certain amendments were suggested. In light of those comments, the draft proposal was revised and circulated as document G/MA/IDB/W/7 for the Committee's consideration. He informed the Committee India had indicated to him that her capital had not yet had the time to review the document. He proposed to adopt the document on an *ad referendum* basis and give the Indian delegation until 22 January 2001 to provide comments.

1.2 The representative of Canada supported the proposal as reflected in document G/MA/IDB/W/7. His delegation thought that it dealt properly with the various elements that needed to be covered in such an appraisal, both in terms of the kinds of problems Members were having and the possible solutions in the way of technical assistance. It would also allow Members to indicate what had assisted them in providing their IDB submissions. His delegation could support the proposal for the *ad referendum* adoption of the document, although Canada would have preferred a

decision at this meeting so that the process could start immediately. Canada was in the first group of countries to be reviewed.

1.3 The representative of India stated that document G/MA/IDB/W/7 incorporated a number of changes that her delegation had suggested at the informal meeting. However, some had not been included, and her capital was considering them further. This reflected the importance India attached to this exercise: Her delegation looked at this multilateral appraisal in terms of the maximum possible benefits to be drawn by all Members. India had provided more data on the IDB to the Secretariat towards the end of November 2000. Queries had been received from the Secretariat on this additional data. Her delegation did understand the need to look at fulfilling the IDB submission requirements in a complete and efficient manner, which in turn had motivated her capital to look at the multilateral appraisal in greater detail. She thanked the Committee for giving India time until 22 January 2001 on an *ad referendum* basis. She also noted that the timetable as set out in the document indicated a three-month time delay period before the review started.

1.4 The representative of the European Communities stated that his delegation could accept the proposal as it stood, although he would have preferred a procedure which was less laborious and more targeted. His delegation was more interested in an improvement in the status of IDB submissions than in the procedure. His delegation could accept the *ad referendum* adoption of the document. However, he enquired as to the implications on paragraph 10 which envisaged a delay of three months in order to organize the first regional meeting. He hoped that this three-month delay period would start immediately, and not as of 22 January 2001.

1.5 The Chairman stated that this was an indicative deadline. Even if the Committee had been able to adopt the document today definitively, i.e. 18 December 2000, it did not mean that the Committee could have met on 18 March 2001 to undertake the first review. He requested some flexibility regarding timing so as to enable the Secretariat to prepare the meeting. If the Committee adopted the document on an *ad referendum* basis today, he understood that the idea should be that the three-month delay period envisaged in paragraph 10 of the document would begin as of today.

1.6 The representative of India stated that as regards the three-month deadline, she had no problem if the Secretariat started doing its work and Members theirs. However, it was not possible for her delegation to start a formal clock ticking with a decision not fully taken. That had been the intent of her previous statement. She had no problem with the Chairman's comments that the Committee maintain flexibility as to when it started the first round of regional meetings. However, at the present meeting, the Committee should not bind itself to a deadline.

1.7 The Chairman thanked the Indian delegation for its flexibility and noted that other Members would keep in mind the fact that the Indian delegation might have comments to make and might wish to have changes introduced to the document.

1.8 The representative of Chile hoped that the three-month deadline would begin as of today, and that the *ad referendum* adoption would not prejudice this process.

1.9 The representative of the European Communities stated that his statement had less to do with the launching of the programme itself than the spirit in which Members were approaching this exercise. He noted that once this programme was launched Members would be committed to a long-term and complex process which would require the organization of a series of meetings in order to enable Members to examine country-by-country the situation of notifications to the IDB. The first one of these meetings would not take place before March 2001 at the earliest. Nevertheless, his delegation wanted to place on record the fact that this programme was only being undertaken to enable the Committee to identify and resolve problems which existed presently in each country to make IDB submissions. It did not mean that deadlines for the submission of the IDB notifications had

been revised. Members should not feel that they were exempt from making their IDB submissions until such a time that their country was being reviewed. In this connection, he wished to appeal to all delegations, especially to capital-based delegations responsible for making IDB submissions to meet their IDB notification obligations. The obligation to submit to the IDB remained and Members had to continue to respect the deadlines.

1.10 The Committee took note of the statements and agreed to adopt the document on an *ad referendum* basis, giving India until 22 January 2001 to submit comments, if any.

## **2. Other Business**

### **(a) Release 5 of the IDB CD-ROM**

2.1 The Chairman informed Members that two copies of Release 5 of the IDB CD-ROM was distributed to Heads of Delegations on 12 December 2000. Release 5 contained tariff and import information for 160 country periods. It also contained the PC application for analysing the information. Release 5 replaces Release 4. Extra copies would be available on request.

2.2 The Committee took note of the statement.

### **(b) List of publications/studies on market access and tariff-related issues**

2.3 The Chairman recalled that the Committee at its informal meeting of 24 November 2000 had requested the Secretariat to compile a list of publications/studies pertaining to market access and tariff-related issues. This list was circulated to all Members by fax dated 6 December 2000. As indicated in that fax, the list was not exhaustive and would be updated in light of any new information reaching the Secretariat.

2.4 The representative of Singapore thanked the Secretariat for compiling the list following her delegation's specific request.

2.5 The representative of the European Communities thanked the Secretariat for compiling this useful list. He enquired whether it would be possible to give to those delegations, who would be willing to give an e-mail address for this purpose, an electronic version of the list with the internet addresses in hypertext format thereby enabling the documents to be downloaded from the internet.

2.6 The Chairman stated that the Secretariat had informed him that technically this would be possible.

2.7 The representative of India stated that her delegation had found this list very useful. She wished to add that delegations knew about India's preference and firm avowal for the multilateral trading system.

2.8 The representative of Indonesia stated that his delegation had also raised this particular issue and thanked the Secretariat for compiling the list. He also supported the EC's suggestion and wished to receive this list in electronic form.

2.9 The representatives of Chile and Pakistan thanked the Secretariat for the list and supported the EC suggestion.

2.10 The Committee took note of the statements and requested the Secretariat to prepare an electronic version of the list with internet links next to those documents which could be downloaded from the internet.

(c) Tariff Seminar

2.11 The Chairman stated that at the informal meeting of 24 November 2000, the Committee had requested the Secretariat to organize a seminar on tariff matters to assist delegations in light of the complex and technical issues under discussion. In accordance with this, in consultation with the Secretariat he had prepared a proposal for such a seminar which was circulated to all Members by fax dated 7 December 2000. A certain time-period was given for comments. Three comments were submitted. The first concerned the date of the seminar, where it was proposed that this seminar be organized back-to-back with the next formal Market Access Committee meeting in order to facilitate participation of capital-based delegations. The second concerned the participants to the Seminar. The participation in the present proposal was limited to Members and observer countries. It had been suggested that because the UNCTAD and the WCO would be making contributions to this seminar, it would be useful if all the observers to this Committee could be invited. The third comment, related to the second line of the proposal which stated that "Lectures would be given by WTO staff unless otherwise indicated". It had been suggested that the word "Presentations" instead of "Lectures" might be more appropriate.

2.12 The representative of Pakistan thanked the Secretariat for this proposal on a tariff seminar because it was at his delegation's specific request.

2.13 The Committee agreed that the Secretariat organize the seminar on the basis as set out in its fax with the modifications outlined by the Chairman.

(d) Date of the next meeting

2.14 The Committee took note that its next meeting was scheduled for 20 March 2001, subject to confirmation.

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