

# WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

RESTRICTED

**G/MA/IDB/W/3/Rev.1**

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## **Committee on Market Access**

### IDB TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

#### Note by the Secretariat

#### Revision

#### **I. BACKGROUND**

On 24 June 1997, the Committee on Market Access approved a draft decision on the Supply of Information to the Integrated Database for Personal Computers which was forwarded to the General Council and adopted on 16 July 1997 (WT/L/225).

The Council decision states:

- "1. That WTO Members shall supply to the Secretariat, on an annual basis, the information referred to in document G/MA/IDB/1/Rev.1.
2. That the Secretariat shall, upon request, provide technical assistance to Members in relation to the submission of the data required for the Integrated Data Base for Personal Computers.
3. That the submission of the data required for the Integrated Data Base for Personal Computers shall not prejudice the rights and obligations of Members under the WTO agreements."

As described in G/MA/IDB/1/Rev.1, IDB submissions would consist of imports and tariffs for year n-1, tariffs for year n and reference information. The information under "References" would be used by the Secretariat to standardize certain data from submissions received from individual Members. National tariff correlation tables would be furnished by Members showing differences between the tariff nomenclatures for year n and year n-1 where the nomenclature changed. For MFN duties, the following will be provided:

- current bound duties; and
- current applied duties.

The prime focus would be on accepting what is readily available in national capitals in order to minimize their response burden. When computerized data are not available in capitals or are being set-up, the Secretariat would provide technical assistance to Members in the form of the existing PC data entry application once revised to include new facilities requested by Members. This would take place after the basic system is operational.

The primary objective is to improve the participation in the IDB with useful, quality and timely data. Thereafter, the Secretariat would concentrate on creating an IDB "Data Warehouse" containing raw data and summary files for the creation by users of IDB reports using standard PC software such as Lotus, Excel, PC DBMS for distribution to Members. The PC IDB design is deliberately flexible so that additional data elements could be added at a later date.

## II. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME FOR THE IDB

This document examines the possibilities for establishing a technical assistance programme for the PC IDB. Elements covered include:

- a PC software for submission preparation;
- participation in WTO seminars to provide IDB training;
- conducting IDB seminars tailored to regional requirements and to WTO Members;
- establishment of contacts in missions and national capitals;
- collaboration with other international organizations and regional secretariats for follow-up; and
- Internet assistance.

### (a) PC Software for preparation of IDB Submissions

To facilitate the receipt of data from Members, the software application developed by the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) in the context of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) would be used. The application provides data entry and update facilities, features to import data from external files, validation facilities, and the matching of nomenclature between tariffs and imports. Although this software is only available in DOS version and was designed to prepare full IDB submissions, Member countries could use it to prepare their PC-IDB submissions. Discussions would be held with IADB regarding future updates of the software, for example, a Windows version.

### (b) Participation in WTO Seminars to provide IDB Training

Technical assistance for the IDB would include the participation by IDB staff in seminars organized on market access issues, as well as in workshops already scheduled in the three-year plan (1998-2000) of the WTO Programme for Technical Cooperation.

National representatives at these seminars could consult with IDB staff on the methodology and technical aspects of their national tariffs and import submissions to the WTO, in order to ensure that the requirements of the IDB are understood. IDB staff would obtain feedback from countries on the difficulties encountered in the preparation of their IDB submission and to reinforce established contacts for later submissions. Briefings could be conducted for those officials who are not involved in the collection of tariffs and import statistics for them to convey the IDB requirements to the relevant authorities. Furthermore, the guidelines for the preparation of IDB submissions could be circulated to participants along with the contact points in the Secretariat for the IDB.

Moreover, presentations of the IDB CD-ROM might be organized at those seminars. This would demonstrate the possibilities of extracting information which could be used by countries in bilateral negotiations, and for analysing their export opportunities and other means of trade diversification.

As well, the Secretariat staff involved in technical cooperation, in conducting seminars or in collecting data in national capitals could provide training on IDB requirements. When

on mission, these staff could establish IDB contact points, and if possible, collect the available information for the IDB.

(c) Conducting IDB Seminars tailored to regional requirements and to WTO Members

The Secretariat would analyse in the first instance the problems encountered in the submissions received during the first four months of the year. Missing or incomplete submissions would be considered to identify the most common problems. This analysis would constitute the basis for organizing individual missions or seminars.

In the first half of 1998, after the first submissions have been analysed, a number of missions to individual developing Member countries with significant importance in world trade would be organized. These activities would target the officers responsible for the collection of customs tariff data and import statistics. General information on IDB requirements would be presented, and contacts with national representatives for further follow-up and collection of data would be established.

Starting in mid-1998, regional seminars could be organized on the IDB. These seminars could cover all aspects of data requirements, use of the IADB PC submission preparation software, the setting-up of tariff and trade data bases in national capitals, the use of the IDB Internet file transfer facility, and the use of the IDB CD-ROM. These seminars could be organized by region and language groups and in cooperation with IADB where possible.

It would be useful if participants at such seminars brought with them the latest tariff and imports data on electronic media for submission or review by IDB staff.

(d) Establishment of contacts in missions and national capitals

IDB contact points have already been established in some national capitals. However, this needs to be extended to cover a larger number of developing and least-developed countries. One of the objectives of any mission, carried out by IDB staff or by staff from other divisions would be to update this list regularly. The Secretariat would also obtain this information from the missions in Geneva.

(e) Collaboration with other international organizations and regional secretariats

For some developing countries, the collection of import and tariff data may prove to be extremely difficult since the basic infrastructure may not be in place. In this regard, the need exists for the Secretariat to establish contacts with such organizations as UNDP, WCO, the World Bank, and Regional Development Banks to establish the basic requirements for setting-up this infrastructure and for its financing.

IDB submissions, however, would be the responsibility of the reporting country and would be provided directly by the Member country to WTO, notwithstanding where the information was assembled.

Some international organizations involved in the collection and processing of tariff and import statistics have already been identified. The following is a short summary of their programmes:

UNCTAD: (ASYCUDA - Automated System for Customs Data)

In 1984, UNCTAD distributed a computerized system to facilitate customs operations to assist developing countries in the collection and compilation of foreign trade data. It was created to meet the requirements of international trade and to promote trade efficiency. It takes into consideration the interlinked roles of trade, service providers and transport users. The main objectives of the ASYCUDA project are to shorten delays at border crossings, increase Customs revenue, simplify formalities, and enhance trade. However, UNCTAD's ASYCUDA project does not have as an objective the collection of trade and tariff data from these countries.

At present, UNCTAD is responsible for ensuring some technical assistance for a period of two years after implementation of the ASYCUDA system in a country. There are three training centres at the countries' disposal - Malta, Kuala Lumpur, and Lusaka. A fourth centre is foreseen for the Caribbean for 1998.

As a starting point, the WTO Secretariat could request tariffs and imports from those countries where the ASYCUDA project has already been implemented.

EUROSTAT: (EUROTRACE project)

The EUROTRACE project is implemented by EUROSTAT and covers both a national and regional dimension.

EUROTRACE National is intended for Government Statisticians responsible for the production, dissemination and analysis of external trade statistics. It is presently installed in 48 countries, mainly in the national statistical offices. More specifically, the system is used to collect external trade data, check their reliability, correct the data when necessary, and produce external trade statistics.

EUROTRACE Regional is designed for regional organisations. Current sites where it has been implemented are ECOWAS (Economic Community of Western African States) and COMESA (Common Market for Eastern and South Africa). The system is used for the production of intra and extra-regional statistics on external trade. It compiles aggregate data from the regional member states, which are then transferred into a common statistical databank, from which figures on regional external trade statistics are produced.

The data generated by ASYCUDA can be imported into EUROTRACE. Statistical information such as imports, exports, re-exports including customs value, net weight can be selected by commodity, country and period. EUROTRACE permits the definition and use of standard commodity nomenclatures such as the Harmonized System (HS) and the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC).

For the IDB, the WTO Secretariat could request imports from those countries where the EUROTRACE project has been implemented and initiate contacts with the regional organizations.

WCO

The WCO conducts seminars and workshops in developing countries. Regional seminars are organized to explain developments occurring in the HS, to enhance its acceptance,

and to ensure its uniform application. Workshops are conducted for individual countries on request and usually pertain to problems in the application of the HS, as well as assisting countries on questions of transposition of classifications (i.e. from CCCN to HS) and in dealing with correspondence issues from the old to the new version of the HS.

More recently, the Council of the WCO adopted a resolution recommending the reporting of trade data at the 6-digit HS level to the United Nations Statistics Division by national customs administrations or national statistical offices.

Inter-American Development Bank (IADB):

In March 1995 and in the context of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), the Working Group of the Market Access Committee requested the IADB to construct a Hemispheric Market Access Data Base. In 1995 and 1996, the IADB requested and received assistance from the WTO Secretariat regarding training on IDB requirements, preparation of submissions, and clarification of IDB contents and formats.

Although the WTO IDB information was the basis for the FTAA database, FTAA countries agreed to provide tariff and trade information in a PC format.

Countries have supplied this data to the FTAA. Submissions of that same data by these countries to the WTO would fulfil the IDB notification obligation.<sup>1</sup> However, thus far, most FTAA members have not supplied this information to the WTO.

Regional Secretariats

It is expected that regional secretariats such as CARICOM, ASEAN, APEC and ESCAP could be strategic allies in familiarizing their member countries with the requirements of the IDB and in following-up on the collection of tariff and imports data. The IADB has carried out several workshops concerning requirements for the FTAA data which have met with considerable success.

(f) Internet assistance

For those countries connected to Internet and/or electronic mail, part of the technical assistance could be provided via these media, once the contacts in capitals are established.

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<sup>1</sup>With the exception of the current bound duties which are not always provided to the FTAA.