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Committee on Market Access

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 31 OCTOBER 1995

Chairman: Mr. Jean Saint-Jacques (Canada)

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Introduction

Before proceeding to the adoption of the agenda, the **Chairman** stated that as concerned observers, in addition to the countries which were acceding to the WTO and, as agreed at the last meeting of the Committee, the same international organizations had been invited to this meeting. He welcomed the representatives present of the FAO, IMF, UNCTAD, WCO and the World Bank. He suggested that, until the criteria and conditions for observer status were agreed, these same international organizations would be invited to attend the next meeting of the Committee in the capacity of observers.

The Committee so agreed.

The above agenda, which was contained in WTO/AIR/190 dated 20 October 1995, was adopted.

1. **Rules of procedure**

1.1 The **Chairman** recalled that, as agreed at the meeting of the Committee on Market Access of 25 April 1995, the Secretariat had prepared and circulated document G/MA/W/2 dated 11 October 1995 containing the Draft Rules of Procedure for the meetings of the Committee based on the Rules of Procedure adopted by the Council for Trade in Goods and approved by the General Council on 31 July 1995 (document WT/L/79). He suggested that the Draft Rules of Procedure for the meetings of the Committee on Market Access be adopted by the Committee.

1.2 The representative of the **United States** drew the attention of the Committee's members to the footnote which would be added to Rules 2, 3 and 4 and stressed that, as indicated, it would be highly desirable that the notice convening a meeting could be available three weeks in advance.

1.3 The Rules of Procedure were **adopted** by the Committee and will be forwarded to the Council for Trade in Goods for formal approval at its meeting of 1 December 1995.

2. **Tariff Matters**

2.1 **Introduction of HS96 changes on 1 January 1996.**

2.1.1 The **Chairman** noted with concern that, as concerned the submission of the documentation related to changes to the Harmonized System (HS) that would come into force on 1 January 1996, only three Members (Hong Kong, Japan and the European Communities) had to date submitted the required documentation to the Secretariat for circulation and that, at present, only the changes to the Schedule of Hong Kong had been approved. He drew the attention of the Committee Members to a revised list of Members, circulated by the Secretariat in document G/MA/TAR/W/3/Rev.1, which indicated the work that needed to be done in connection with the introduction of HS96 changes into their schedules.

2.1.2 The Chairman explained that from the informal consultations carried out recently, it appeared that a large number of WTO Members intended to implement the HS96 changes in their HS tariff nomenclatures on 1 January 1996 in accordance with the Recommendation by the Council of the World Customs Organization to amend the HS. Most of these Members would, however, not have previously carried out the necessary procedures related to the implications of those changes for their WTO schedules. Moreover, because of the time constraints, those Members would not be in a position, where necessary, to complete the procedures to introduce those changes in their schedules before implementing them. Under these circumstances, all the Members finding themselves in the situation described above would have to request a waiver from their obligations under Article II of the GATT 1994, in accordance with Article IX of the WTO Agreement. The informal consultations had also indicated that Members were in favour of a collective waiver. The Decision granting such a waiver would indicate clearly the nature of the waiver and list the individual Members having requested such a waiver.

2.1.3 The **Chairman** invited the representative of the World Customs Organization to give information on the situation regarding the introduction of the HS96 changes in the national tariffs and their implementation on 1 January 1996.

2.1.4 The representative of the **World Customs Organization** (Mr. Kusahara) recalled that his Organization, formerly known as the Customs Cooperation Council, was responsible for the administration and maintenance of the HS which was now used by over 140 countries in the world (of which 83 were contracting parties to the HS Convention) for their tariff and statistical nomenclatures. The HS Convention required contracting parties to bring their tariff and statistical nomenclatures into

conformity with any subsequent amendments on the date at which the amendments were to come into force. The next amendments to the HS would enter into force on 1 January 1996. He noted that practically all WTO Members had annexed to the Marrakesh Protocol schedules in the HS nomenclature of either the 1998 or 1992 versions. He therefore urged WTO Members to complete as soon as possible the WTO procedures to bring their schedules into conformity with the HS96 changes. He added that if any WTO Member had difficulty in introducing the HS96 changes into its national tariff, his Organization would be ready to provide the necessary technical assistance to the authorities concerned.

2.1.5 The representative of **Egypt** indicated that he had no information from his authorities concerning the implementation of HS96 changes and could thus not undertake any commitment for his country.

2.1.6 The representative of **Hungary** explained that for her country the preparation of the required documentation would be complicated because it not only had to introduce HS96 changes but also to align its tariff to the European External Tariff as of 1 January 1996. Her delegation therefore welcomed the idea of a collective waiver. She suggested a twelve-month duration of the waiver with the possibility of submitting the required documentation three months after the adoption of the waiver by the General Council.

2.1.7 The representative of the **United States** stated that his Government's preference would be to limit the duration of a collective waiver to six months and Members requesting to be covered would have to submit the required documentation before the waiver was granted. Moreover, the waiver would have to focus clearly on those items that would be subject to HS96 changes.

2.1.8 The representative of **Uruguay** said that, while his delegation would not object to a collective waiver, he could not take any position as to whether the documentation would have to be presented before the waiver was granted.

2.1.9 The representative of **India** supported the idea of a collective waiver and was open as far as its duration was concerned. It was the intention of his government to introduce the HS96 changes on 1 January 1996 and to submit documentation by mid-November.

2.1.10 The representative of **Venezuela** indicated that his government intended to implement the HS96 changes on 1 January 1996. To this end, technical work had been initiated in connection with the transposition of his country's commitments under the WTO. In view of the technical difficulty of this work, it would not be possible to finalize it before January 1996. For this reason, his Government would support the idea of a collective waiver of a duration of twelve months.

2.1.11 The representative of **Argentina** felt it desirable to have a collective waiver of 12 months' duration. He expressed doubt regarding the submission of the required documentation before the adoption of the waiver. It was important to develop a constructive approach and to choose procedures and time-limits that could be acceptable to Members concerned.

2.1.12 The representative of **Bolivia** pointed out that her country was still in the stage of transposing its pre-Uruguay Round concessions into the HS. Thus, although her delegation was in favour of a collective waiver, it was clear that developing countries like hers would not be in a position to present the documentation related to the introduction of the HS96 changes before adoption of the waiver.

2.1.13 The representative of **South Africa** indicated that his authorities had started the process of transposition, but due to technical difficulties, there would be problems in meeting the proposed deadline for the submission of the required documentation.

2.1.14 The representative of **Norway** supported the concept of a collective waiver and the idea that only countries that could commit themselves to submitting the required documentation before the adoption of the waiver should be entitled to be covered. As concerned the duration of the waiver, he felt that further consultations were necessary.

2.1.15 The representative of the **Côte d'Ivoire** explained that, with the technical assistance of the Secretariat, her country was in the process of transposing its schedule into the HS. As regards the HS modifications to be introduced on 1 January 1996, she was not in a position to give any indication concerning the exact date of their implementation. She favoured a collective waiver.

2.1.16 The representative of **Costa Rica** supported the idea of a collective waiver and agreed with the delegate of Argentina that the requirements should be realistic. There should be some flexibility regarding the time to prepare the documentation and a twelve months duration should be envisaged.

2.1.17 On behalf of the ASEAN countries present, the representative of the **Philippines** indicated that ASEAN countries supported the idea of a collective waiver of a one-year duration. Referring to the US proposal, she enquired whether it was his view that the whole documentation needed to be presented before the meeting of the General Council, i.e. by 13 December 1995. If that were the case, that requirement would be very difficult to fulfil.

2.1.18 The representative of the **United States** confirmed that his delegation had envisaged that the documentation would have to be available at the time of adoption of the waiver. He added that this should not be a great burden since the countries intending to implement HS96 changes on 1 January 1996 would essentially have done the work in their national tariffs. The US delegation was only asking that this information be shared with WTO Members before implementing the changes.

2.1.19 The representative of **Korea** confirmed that his country would introduce the HS96 changes on 1 January 1996 and that the required documentation would be submitted for circulation very soon.

2.1.20 The representative of **Senegal** said that his country was presently working on the transposition of its schedule into HS92. In view of the heavy workload involved in the introduction of the HS96 changes, he was in favour of a collective waiver for a period of twelve months. His country would request technical assistance from the Secretariat to undertake this work.

2.1.21 The representative of **El Salvador** informed the Committee that work on the introduction of the HS96 changes in national tariffs was underway at Central American level but had yet to be approved by the Council of Ministers. Therefore, no specific date for the exact entry into force of the HS96 changes could be given. It was thus clear that it would not be possible for the Central American countries to present the documentation at the time when the waiver would be requested. The waiver should cover a period of twelve months.

2.1.22 The representative of the **European Communities**, referring to the various comments made, said that while his delegation was in favour of a collective waiver, the Members wanted to benefit from such a waiver should commit themselves to provide the required documentation as early as possible. He believed it would be realistic to expect Members wishing to be covered by the collective waiver to submit the documentation relating to their WTO schedules within a period of three months.

2.1.23 The representative of the **Philippines**, on behalf of the ASEAN countries, reiterated that it would not be realistic to expect the documentation from all the countries requesting a waiver by 13 December 1995. The suggestion made by the delegate of the European Communities, i.e. to have three months to provide the documentation, would seem acceptable.

2.1.24 In summarizing the discussion, the **Chairman** outlined the two options that were before the Committee regarding the submission of the documentation: (1) the US proposal to present the required documentation at the time of adoption of the waiver and, (2) the suggestion by Hungary to provide the documentation within three months following the adoption of the waiver. Concerning the duration of the waiver, there had been support for either six or twelve months. He therefore suggested holding further informal consultations on these issues with a view to finding an agreement on the methodology to be adopted. He requested delegations to enquire with their respective capitals about the possible options.

2.2 Establishment of consolidated loose-leaf schedules

2.2.1 The **Chairman** reported to the Committee that he had carried out a series of informal consultations with respect to the preparation of consolidated schedules in loose-leaf format. The consultations had raised several technical issues which he had tried to address in a revised version of his note, dated 26 October 1995. Before submitting these issues to the Committee for decision he asked Members for their comments on his revised note in document G/MA/TAR/W/4/Rev.1.

2.2.2 The representative of **Egypt** indicated that, as a general remark, he could not commit his country to submit a consolidated loose-leaf schedule without the technical assistance of the Secretariat and that he could not assume any new obligation in this respect.

2.2.3 The representative of **Canada**, referring to the question of **rates and staging**, suggested that, in order to avoid indicating the base rates and the Uruguay Round final rates in an annex to the schedules, it would be preferable to replace in the text the words "such information" with "supplementary information on staging... could be provided in an annex to the schedules".

2.2.4 The representatives of the **United States**, **Argentina** and **Canada** expressed their preference for a **sequential presentation of agricultural products in the loose-leaf schedules** and felt that the separation between agriculture and industry was a useful innovation in the context of the Uruguay Round negotiations but that for future users, it would be easier to have to a sequential presentation. There should, however, be flexibility and the presentation of schedules could be left to the countries themselves.

2.2.5 The representatives of the **European Communities** and of **Uruguay** were in favour of keeping the separation of sectors that were established as negotiating modalities in the Uruguay Round which, in their views, reflected more clearly the situation. For the delegate of Uruguay, it was important that all the commitments on agricultural commitments, staging periods and special safeguards would be clearly reflected in the loose-leaf schedules.

2.2.6 On the question of the treatment of **historical Initial Negotiating Rights** (INRs) the representative of the **United States** said that his authorities had carefully considered potential advantages and disadvantages of the various strategies and had come to the conclusion that they would not be willing to agree to any method that would result in the loss of historical INRs. On the other hand, they were not ready to go through the burden of searching records of past negotiations to identify the INRs to be kept and then to launch a transposition exercise from previous nomenclatures into the HS in order to preserve historical INRs. His delegation could therefore not agree to the proposal to follow a reverse notification procedure. In his view, an alternative would be that historical INRs should remain in effect in case Article XXVIII actions were initiated.

2.2.7 The representative of **Canada** stated that his Government's views were similar to those of the United States and suggested, in order to preserve historical INRs in case of a dispute or Article XXVIII negotiations, wording which would read: "historical INRs not specifically identified in a Member's loose-leaf schedule would remain valid should that Member modify its bindings to the level of the

historical INR". He also suggested that instead of referring to "existing INRs" it would be better to refer to "current INRs", which means INRs at the current bound rates. The Canadian authorities would in principle agree to indicate in their loose-leaf schedule all current INRs.

2.2.8 The representative of New Zealand expressed concern with respect to INRs on agricultural products that had been subject to tariffication during the Uruguay Round. Where there was an INR on a product which was now subject to a higher outside tariff quota rate (OTQR), or even a higher in-tariff quota rate (ITQR), there should be an indication of that historical INR on the tariffied product and that right should encompass the ITQR, the OTQR and the TQ quantity. In this context, he suggested the following language: "as a minimum, existing and historical INRs on products subject to tariffication would be converted into INRs on the in-quota rate and the applicable quota level as well as the out quota rate".

2.2.9 Referring to the statements by the American and Canadian delegates, the representative of the European Communities indicated that he would prefer to maintain the existing language with the addition of the proposal made by New Zealand. He believed that historical INRs on the products which had been subject to tariffication should be considered as historical and should not be modified to lead to commitments not covered at that time. In view of what had been said on historical INRs, he questioned the legal value of paragraph one in the Chairman's note reading "these schedules would be replacing all previous schedules".

2.2.10 The representative of Argentina added that although his country had not granted nor received any INRs, he was concerned with respect to the objective of the whole exercise which was to replace all existing records. His delegation would favour a solution that would allow to conclude the process without leaving any space for further discussion on this outstanding issue.

2.2.11 With respect to the concern expressed by the delegates of Argentina and of the European Communities, the representative of Canada suggested adding, in paragraph 1 of the Chairman's note, the following words: "with the exception of historical INRs, for which there would be no time-limit".

2.2.11 The Chairman noted the comments made and suggested that a second revision of document G/MA/TAR/W/4 should be prepared for examination by the Committee at its next meeting.

3. Non-tariff Matters

3.1 Notification procedures of quantitative restrictions

3.1.1 The Chairman recalled that a Draft Decision concerning Notification Procedures of Quantitative Restrictions had been circulated to all delegations and that the text of the Draft Decision had been examined by the Members of the Committee during an informal meeting on 23 October 1995. Following comments made at that meeting, a revised version was prepared and circulated in document G/MA/NTM/W/1 dated 26 October 1995.

3.1.2 Referring to the revised version of the draft decision, the representative of New Zealand suggested that, in order not to exclude the possibility of reverse notification possibility, the following provision be added to the text: "It would be open to Members to make reverse notifications where they deem necessary".

3.1.3 The Chairman proposed to take note of this amendment and to include it in a revision of document G/MA/NTM/W/1 which would be submitted to the Council for Trade in Goods for its formal approval.

3.1.4 The Draft Decision was approved by the Committee with the proposed change.

3.2 Reverse notification of non-tariff measures

3.2.1 The Chairman referred to the Draft Decision on Reverse Notification of Non-tariff Measures which had been circulated and examined in an informal meeting of the Committee on 23 October 1995. A slightly revised text was contained in document G/MA/NTM/W/2 dated 26 October 1995 and was now before the Committee for its approval. A new revised version adding the word "other" before "reverse notification possibilities" in the second paragraph would be submitted to the Council for Trade in Goods for formal approval at its meeting of 1 December 1995.

3.2.2 The Draft Decision was approved by the Committee.

4. Integrated Data Base

4.1 The Chairman recalled that a note by the Secretariat on Issues Regarding the Future of the Integrated Data Base had been circulated in document G/MA/IDB/W/1, dated 22 August 1995. He asked the representative of the Secretariat, Mr. Léger, to explain the purpose and contents of the Secretariat's note.

4.2 Mr. Léger emphasized that the Secretariat was facing major problems with regard to the IDB. First, very few participants had submitted updated data since the end of the Uruguay Round. Second, the Secretariat encountered many problems in processing the submissions received from participants. The format/layout of the files was not in line with the one agreed for IDB Submissions. The conversion of submissions to PC files in ASCII characters was often difficult and sometimes impossible because of the software used to prepare the files in capitals. The content of submissions was incomplete and important data elements were often missing: MFN bound duties, pre-Uruguay and post-Uruguay duties, preferential duties, etc. Finally, the files provided contained errors pertaining mainly to the coding of the tariff line numbers (some 5 to 10 per cent error rate) and identification of the codes (e.g. nature, bindings, etc.) associated with the duties (around 25 per cent error rate).

4.2.1 He recalled that the IDB had been used extensively during the Uruguay Round by the Secretariat in reviewing the interim and final results of the Market Access negotiations and by participants during their negotiations. The IDB was also used in Article XXIV and Article XXVIII negotiations and in the context of accession negotiations. In 1994, the Secretariat had responded to some 1,200 requests for information by Members and thus far, some 600 requests had been answered in 1995. In June 1995, the Secretariat had released a test version of a CD-ROM containing information on 34 countries applying the HS together with an application developed jointly with the World Bank to permit the compilation of reports.

4.2.2 To improve the viability of the IDB, he proposed a number of actions in several areas. To increase the number of participants and to improve the quality of IDB submissions, the format of submissions could be simplified and a PC application developed to check the data entry taking place in capitals. The Secretariat proposed the establishment of contacts with technical experts responsible in capitals for the preparation of IDB submissions while keeping Permanent Missions in Geneva aware of developments. To reduce the costs of processing the IDB, the Secretariat would initiate a feasibility study on the costs/benefits of downsizing the IDB from a mainframe to a PC environment. Finally, it was perhaps preferable at this stage to concentrate efforts in the areas of tariffs and imports before adding to the IDB non-tariff measures (e.g. QRs) and other new elements resulting from the Uruguay Round.

4.2.3 Regarding the future access to the IDB data, he recalled that IDB information on tariffs and trade was already in the public domain. Giving access to international organizations would avoid the creation of unverified data bases similar to the IDB and would alleviate the administrative burden placed on the Secretariat whereby individual written authorization of participants was now requested. Giving access to the private sector, for example via the CD-ROM, could be an important source of revenue.

4.2.4 In concluding, he recalled that if the WTO were to be the international organization in charge of maintaining an up-to-date data base on tariffs and imports at the tariff line level, it was vital that Members provided the Secretariat with timely and quality import and tariff data in the format required.

4.3 The **Chairman**, thanking Mr. Léger for his detailed presentation, pointed out that Members had invested quite a lot of time and resources in the IDB which had been a useful instrument during the negotiations. Mr. Léger's presentation highlighted some six points that the Committee needed to be concerned about. The first concerned data deficiencies. Delegations had to supply timely information in the format required to the IDB. The second point was the suggestion of simplifying the formats of submissions to the IDB and developing PC applications to prepare the data in capitals. The third point concerned the undertaking by the Secretariat of a feasibility study on downsizing the IDB from a mainframe to a PC environment. The fourth point concerned the information recorded in the IDB. It might be preferable just looking at the basic information on tariffs and trade and getting the IDB up and running before broadening the scope of the IDB to include QRs and other types of restrictions. The fifth point related to access to the IDB data. The present IDB information was available in the public domain and other organizations were developing data bases similar to the IDB. The question was whether the WTO should be the organization that has up-to-date and verified information on tariffs and trade and whether access to the IDB data could be given to international organizations and even the private sector. The last point concerned the managerial aspect of the IDB. It might be useful for Delegations to authorize the Secretariat to contact for technical information the persons in capitals dealing with these technical matters. The Chairman opened the floor for comments on these six points.

4.4 The representative of the **United States** said that his government attached a great deal of importance to the IDB and wanted it to reach its full potential. The 1994 trade data of the United States would be submitted for the IDB within the next couple of weeks. Concerning the management of the IDB in a mainframe or in a PC environment, it was his government's contention that conversion to a PC environment was crucial for the IDB's future functioning and that it should be done as quickly as possible. With regard to the simplified formats for IDB submissions, they should be available in a PC format and should not be limited to the "minimum list of data elements". Additional information was very necessary, for example, the preferential duties applicable on a tariff line basis. On the issue of information release, although his government was favourable to the idea of commercializing the IDB, this should not distract the Secretariat from the first priority which was to get the system up and running on PCs for participating governments. He commented that the control of exchanging information might have to be revisited in order to provide encouragement for governments to submit information.

4.5 The representative of the **European Communities** said that his Delegation was very committed to the efficiency of the IDB. As regards the simplified formats and the transfer of applications to a PC environment, he thought that it should be the responsibility of the Secretariat to decide on these specific issues. The Committee could only take a stand on the results of such an action. Concerning the coverage of the information, he agreed that in the first stage Members should be asked to provide essentially tariff and trade data by customs tariff lines. The door should be left open to use all the possibilities which may be harnessed in the future. As regards the management of this information he felt that it was absolutely essential for the WTO to be the organization responsible for the maintenance of the IDB information. Concerning direct contacts with the capitals for technical servicing, he thought it was the best way to maximise the work of the Secretariat. Concerning the use of the information,

the commercialization of the IDB was an interesting proposal even though this should not be the main objective of the IDB. Members who did not take part in the IDB should be conscious of the importance for other Members to have access to this information. The Committee should emphasize the broadest possible participation in the IDB so that it may become a complete and efficient tool.

4.6 The representative of **the World Bank** recalled the importance which the Bank placed on having timely, accurate and analytically relevant data on trade restrictions covering, as a minimum, recent trade and tariff data and data on preferential tariffs at a tariff line level including data on ceilings to which certain preferences might be subject.

4.7 The representative of **Malaysia (on behalf of the ASEAN countries)** said he would welcome any move to simplify the format for submission of inputs. He endorsed that the WTO should be the main focal organization to deal with statistics on trade, tariffs and other trade restrictions. ASEAN countries would have no difficulties if a focal point in the capitals was established to deal with technical matters on the IDB. Finally, he agreed with the representative of the United States who proposed that some kind of encouragement be given for submission of inputs to the IDB by all Members.

4.8 The representative of **Argentina** supported the idea of coming up with a simplified format which would be suitable for the PC environment. This simplified format should be a top priority for the Secretariat. He agreed with others speakers that in view of the critical status of the IDB the inclusion of new data elements was certainly not a priority. Concerning the access to the IDB, his Delegation had an open position as regards the sharing of information by the Member countries of the WTO and access by other users including the possibility of generating revenues with the IDB.

4.9 The representative of **Hong Kong** said that his Delegation would continue to support the IDB by submitting up-to-date data. Greater participation in the IDB should be encouraged to make the data themselves more attractive. In this connection, a simplified format should be encouraged to make it easier for new Members to submit the data. Concerning access to the IDB, he had no problem with sharing the data base with other international organizations. On the question of commercialization, it was a very interesting idea but this could be considered later when the data were attractive enough.

4.10 The representative of **Poland** said he was in favour of a broad participation in the IDB and his Delegation was providing statistical information as soon as it was available in the capital. He was very much in favour of developing PC applications to permit in capitals the formatting, checking and integration of data to be included in IDB submissions. He thought that direct links between the WTO Secretariat and persons responsible in capitals for providing national statistical information would be quite useful and would probably put greater pressure on authorities to provide such information.

4.11 The representative of **Korea** said that the essential element for the IDB exercise was participation. The IDB should include information for as many WTO Members as possible. He also agreed with the representative of the United States that the IDB operations should be transferred from the mainframe computer to a PC environment as a matter of priority. He agreed that the information recorded in the IDB should not be expanded at this stage and that direct contact by the Secretariat with the capitals would be useful. Finally, the commercialization of the IDB would also be acceptable.

4.12 The representative of **Switzerland** thought that the main element which should be discussed was the matter of efficiency of the data base and a number of proposals made by the Secretariat were going in the right direction. He was referring to direct technical contacts between the Secretariat and experts in the capitals, the downsizing of the IDB to a PC environment and simplifying the formats, and also the concentration on a limited number of components to be recorded in the IDB. As regards commercialization and opening access to the IDB, he thought that the top priority for the IDB should be to provide useful information for the Members. After this presentation and as a follow-up to this

discussion, it might be useful to have more concrete proposals from the Secretariat to establish a linkage with the funding of these activities.

4.13 **Mr. Léger** clarified two points concerning the downsizing of the IDB to a PC environment. The first priority of the Secretariat was to develop for Members a simplified format for submissions and some software that would enable Members to supply the required information by entering it on a PC. The second priority was to transfer to PC the IDB system which ran presently on the mainframe. The system consisted today of roughly 1,000 computer programs that would take a long time to rewrite into a PC environment. The second point related to the cost involved. The Secretariat had already requested in the 1996 budget the funds necessary for undertaking a feasibility study. As regards the funds for the actual downsizing exercise, the Secretariat would report to the Committee when the costs, benefits, etc. had been identified.

4.14 The **Chairman** stated that the Committee seemed to agree on the crucial points for the IDB in the short-term. Delegations expressed very strong support for making the IDB work in a PC environment, to have the Secretariat examine the idea of a simplified format and undertake a feasibility study of moving the IDB to a PC-based environment. There was a preference for keeping the IDB simple at this point in time so that at least it could produce the information needed on trade and tariffs statistics, while at the same time allowing for the possibility of expansion in the long-term to include other kinds of data. As regards the managerial aspect of the IDB, Delegations agreed that the Secretariat establish contacts in capitals on technical matters concerning IDB submissions. As regards the access to the IDB information, the Secretariat could release the data to WTO Members and to international organizations. Concerning the commercialization of the IDB, the matter would be discussed again when the IDB was up and running and included up-to-date information for as many WTO Members as possible.

5. **Other Business**

5.1 **Verification of the schedule on goods of the Solomon Islands**

5.1.1 The **Chairman** referred to the revised draft final schedule on goods of the Solomon Islands which had been available for collection since 14 August 1995 and asked delegations whether this schedule could now be considered verified.

5.1.2 The representative of **New Zealand** reserved the rights of his country on this schedule since this item had not been included in the annotated agenda.

5.1.3 The **Chairman** declared the schedule on goods of the Solomon Islands **verified** subject to the confirmation by New Zealand¹.

¹New Zealand lifted its objection by telephone on 1 November 1995.

5.2 Procedure for decisions having financial implications which may be taken by WTO bodies

5.2.1 The **Chairman** drew the attention of the Committee to a recommendation of the Committee on Budget, Finance and Administration, approved by the General Council and contained in document WT/L/76.

5.2.2 The Committee **took note** of this recommendation.

5.3 Date of the next meeting of the Committee

5.3.1 The **Chairman** pointed out to the Committee that in view of the various issues that needed to be considered by the Committee before the last sessions of the Council for Trade in Goods and the General Council this year, scheduled for 1 and 13 December 1995 respectively, it would be desirable to meet again on 22 November 1995 at 3 p.m.

5.3.2 The Committee **agreed**.