

# GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

RESTRICTED

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Limited Distribution

## CONFERENCE AND SECRETARIAT ACCOMMODATION

### Note by the Executive Secretary

1. In the past two years there has been increasing difficulty in securing adequate and suitable conference accommodation. The European office of the United Nations has obligations to other United Nations bodies and has not always been in a position to provide conference accommodation in the Palais at certain periods of the year. To some extent these difficulties have been relieved through the very helpful assistance we have been extended by the ILC and the WMO, but there is need for facilities to be available throughout the year, as is indicated by the fact that in 1963 we had 226 meeting days. So far as secretariat accommodation is concerned, we have now outgrown the Annex constructed in 1961, our staff having gone up from seventy-one established posts in 1960 to 137 established posts in 1964. The present facilities - Villa and Annex - provide only ninety-nine offices, including the Library, roneo room and trainees' room. We have also to provide accommodation for temporary officers including consultants, statisticians, and numerous temporary linguistic and stenographic staff during sessions. Furthermore, it would seem appropriate in considering the secretariat accommodation problem to make some provision for further increases of staff. I have already proposed (L/2223 and Add.1) the construction of a new Annex to meet the secretariat accommodation problem until longer-term arrangements can be made. This paper therefore concentrates on solutions which by their nature will need some time to become effective.

### Longer-term solutions

2. The following alternative longer-term solutions exist:
  - A. construction of new GATT headquarters containing secretariat and conference accommodation;
  - B. construction of a GATT conference building, leaving until later the addition of permanent secretariat facilities which would remain centred on the Bocage and Annexes, and if necessary in rented office space;
  - C. acceptance of Montbrillant project set forward by Geneva authorities;
  - D. acceptance of a Geneva Conference Centre tentatively proposed by Geneva authorities;
  - E. acceptance of facilities elsewhere than Geneva.

Alternative A

Construction of new GATT headquarters

3. The construction of GATT's own headquarters would appear the most desirable solution. It would provide independence and room to expand for many years to come. In the short term it could be the most costly solution but in the long term it might well turn out to be an excellent investment.

4. Preliminary plans for such a building have already been drawn up and explained in Spec(63)315 and Addendum 1 of December 1963. This document also provides information on the cost of construction and on the budgetary aspects. The figures given, however, did not include the cost of land and it was indicated that the question of a suitable site and the conditions on which land would be made available would have to be discussed after the Federal and Cantonal authorities had formally agreed to the establishment of the permanent headquarters.

5. On the assumption that suitable land would be available, the building described in Spec(63)315 would provide the following:

1. one conference room to seat 500 persons
2. two conference rooms for 250 persons each
3. office space for a staff of 375 with the possibility of structural additions for further growth
4. adequate library, repro/typing, storage space
5. good reception facilities
6. parking in the underground garage and outside parking facilities for several hundred cars.

On the basis of a twenty-five-year amortization plan and taking the cost (without land) at \$10,000,000, the annual budget element would be between \$482,634 (1 1/2 per cent) and \$674,400 (4 1/2 per cent) depending on the rate of interest payable.

Alternative B

Construction of GATT conference building

6. At the December 1963 meeting of the Council the architect indicated that it would be possible to proceed with the construction of a conference block leaving the secretariat block until later. According to figures presented by

the authorities the cost of a conference block would be in the vicinity of Sw.Fr. 16,600,000. The annual budgetary cost on a twenty-five-year amortization basis would be some \$200,000, without, however, taking account of rent which might be recovered if a policy of letting conference rooms to suitable organizations at appropriate times were followed.

### Alternative C

#### Montbrillant project

7. This project, in a revised form which takes account of certain modifications likely to be required, envisages the construction of a large office building providing some 500 offices, the size of which to be determined by the future tenants, and the necessary space for reproduction and distribution services, registry, supplies, archives, workshops, etc. It also provides for three large conference rooms, one for 470 delegates and two for approximately 250 delegates, plus six small committee rooms, all fully equipped and self-contained, with conference offices, cloakrooms, lavatories, lounges, etc. It further includes underground and outside parking facilities for over 300 cars. The project, which is sponsored by the Canton of Geneva, would involve the use of private capital and it has been indicated that the rental would have to be fixed on a semi-commercial basis.

8. Whilst full and detailed financial information on the Montbrillant project is still awaited, it would appear from the rental figures mentioned so far, i.e. Sw.Fr. 3,000,000 per annum for the whole building (5,000 per day for the conference facilities alone) that reserving these buildings exclusively for GATT would be too onerous a proposition. It would also be uneconomical and questionable in other respects as part of this conference accommodation would remain vacant through much of the year, while the need for conference space in Geneva on the part of other organizations would continue to be pressing.

9. It should be understood that the rental figure of Sw.Fr. 3,000,000 referred to above is to cover the entire conference part of the building and two towers each of fourteen storeys. As the office space needed by the secretariat, including a margin for growth, would not exceed one tower, the total rental figure would be proportionately less.

### Alternative D

#### Conference centre proposed by Geneva authorities

10. The question of a separate conference centre to be shared with other international agencies has been raised by the Geneva authorities as an alternative to GATT's participation in the modified Montbrillant project. The authorities are still exploring the financial aspects of such a centre but provided the GATT could be offered a certain degree of priority in the use of such facilities this solution would appear to be one worth very serious consideration especially as it would prima facie cost considerably less than the other alternatives listed above.

Alternative E

Accommodation outside Geneva

11. In June 1963 in putting before the Council the accommodation problem, I invited contracting parties to consider what possibilities existed in this direction, so that such possibilities could be considered at the same time as my own suggestion for the construction of self-contained secretariat and conference facilities. So far there has been no response from any contracting party to this suggestion. It seems that the majority of contracting parties are well equipped to operate in Geneva and many would have difficulty in providing facilities for their delegations in other countries.

12. Submitted for information.