WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

S/GBT/W/2/Rev.1
16 January 1997

(97-0173)

Group on Basic Telecommunications

Note by the Chairman

Revision

It has been suggested by a number of delegations that it might be helpful to produce a brief and simple note on assumptions applicable to the scheduling of commitments in basic telecoms. The purpose of the attached note is to assist delegations in ensuring the transparency of their commitments and to promote a better understanding of the meaning of commitments. This note is not intended to have or acquire any binding legal status.

NOTES FOR SCHEDULING BASIC TELECOM SERVICES COMMITMENTS

1. Unless otherwise noted in the sector column, any basic telecom service listed in the sector column:

(a) encompasses local, long distance and international services for public and non-public use;

(b) may be provided on a facilities-basis or by resale; and

(c) may be provided through any means of technology (e.g., cable[10], wireless, satellites).

2. Subsector (g) --private leased circuit services -- involves the ability of service suppliers to sell or lease any type of network capacity for the supply of services listed in any other basic telecom service subsector unless otherwise noted in the sector column. This would include capacity via cable, satellite and wireless network.

3. In view of points 1 and 2 above, it should not be necessary to list cellular or mobile services as a separate subsector. However, a number of Members have done so, and a number of offers have commitments only in these subsectors. Therefore, in order to avoid extensive changes in schedules, it would seem appropriate for Members to maintain separate entries for these subsectors.

[10] Including all types of cable.

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CHAIRMAN'S NOTE

Market Access Limitations on Spectrum Availability

Many Members have entries in the market access column of their schedules indicating that commitments are "subject to availability of spectrum/frequency" or similar wording. In light of the physical nature of spectrum and the constraints inherent in its use, it is understandable that Members may have sought to rely on these words to adequately protect legitimate spectrum management policies. There is, however, doubt that words such as "subject to availability of spectrum/frequency" as listed in the market access column of many Members' schedules achieve that objective.

Spectrum/frequency management is not, *per se*, a measure which needs to be listed under Article XVI. Furthermore under the GATS each Member has the right to exercise spectrum/frequency management, which may affect the number of service suppliers, provided that this is done in accordance with Article VI and other relevant provisions of the GATS. This includes the ability to allocate frequency bands taking into account existing and future needs. Also, Members which have made additional commitment in line with the Reference Paper on regulatory principles are bound by its paragraph 6.

Therefore, words such as "subject to availability of spectrum/frequency" are unnecessary and should be deleted from Members' schedules.