SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 52ND MEETING OF THE STEEL COMMITTEE
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Summary record

1. The meeting was opened by Mr. Hübner, Head of the Division of Transport, DSTI.

Election of the Chairman and preliminary remarks

2. The Committee re-elected Mr. Colliander, Ambassador of Sweden, as Chairman.

3. Taking the Chair, Ambassador Colliander thanked the Committee for the confidence they had once again shown by re-electing him. The two-day Workshop with non-member economies that had just taken place had been a success. He noted that Brazil had completed the membership process and was now a full member of the Committee. Brazil’s contribution to the Committee’s work had always been extremely worthwhile and would be all the more so in the future.

Adoption of the Agenda

4. Before proceeding with the adoption of the Agenda [DSTI/SU/SC/A(98)1], the Chairman said that Item 5, which addressed discussions with China and India, had been moved to the second part of the meeting. Thus amended, the Agenda was adopted.

Approval of the summary record of the 51st Meeting

5. The summary record of the 51st Meeting of the Committee [DSTI/SC/M(97)2] was approved.

Comments by the Director of DSTI

6. Mr. Nezu, Director of DSTI, congratulated the Chairman on his re-election and thanked him for once again accepting the Chairmanship of that important Committee. He also welcomed the representatives of Brazil, who were attending as full members for the first time. The Director wanted to inform the Committee of developments regarding the Organisation’s budget and the structure of the DSTI, which was to undergo substantial change in the coming months. Referring to the OECD budget, he reminded the meeting of the cuts that had been made in total appropriations to achieve a 10 per cent reduction over a period of three years (1997-1999). In 1997 the budget had been cut by 3 per cent; in 1998 the reduction was to be around 5 per cent, and the remaining 2 per cent would have to be cut from the 1999 budget. The Organisation was therefore halfway through the adjustment process. The impact so far on the Steel Committee, which came under Part II of the budget and was funded by special country contributions, had been relatively limited. The Committee’s budget for 1998 had fallen from FF 4.9 to 4.8 million, a minor reduction that could be absorbed without too great an impact on the Committee’s activities. However, it was best not to be too optimistic as there would be further reductions in 1999 and the Steel Committee’s budget was likely to be affected.
7. In tandem with these cut-backs, the Secretary-General had launched a restructuring process within the OECD Secretariat, which obviously included the DSTI. The Director presented the main changes affecting the Division, in particular the establishment of a new Division of Transport (DoT) — grouping Shipbuilding, Maritime Transport, Road Transport Research and Tourism — to be headed by Mr. Hübler, also head of the Steel Unit. The Director stressed the growing policy relevance of transport in the economy. The main aim was to gain an overarching view of the transport sector, in particular from the standpoint of regulatory reform, sustainable development and the environment. There was of course the issue of whether the Steel Unit should remain attached to the Division of Transport. This issue was part of the broader review of the committee structure.

8. The committee structure was now in the Council’s hands. The Secretary-General had decided to commission an independent review of the structure, activities and attendance levels of all OECD committees, with a view to rationalising their structure. As the report was now ready, the Director suggested that delegates consult their delegations about it and forward any remarks to their ambassadors, who would be in charge of discussing the report in the Council. As for horizontal work such as employment strategies, electronic commerce, regulatory reform, corporate governance and population ageing, the Ministers had added an important theme at their last meeting, namely sustainable development, including the problem of climate change caused by carbon dioxide emissions. Here the Steel Committee could make an important contribution to the Organisation’s work, which might be one of the most appropriate ways for the Committee to ensure that its political significance was appreciated and its visibility enhanced.

9. With regard to the activities of non-member countries, the OECD ought to take a global approach to problems, even if membership were limited to 29 countries. For years it had been clear that steel was a global industry and that the Steel Committee should be open to non-members. In conclusion, the Director of the DSTI stressed that, in spite of all the problems facing the Organisation, the Steel Committee had a promising future.

10. During the ensuing debate, the Delegate of Switzerland emphasised that sustainable development rested on three pillars, namely its economic, social and environmental aspects, and that sustainable development should accordingly be reflected in all of the Committee’s work. The Director pointed out that sustainable development was the Organisation’s leading horizontal project for the three years ahead, but that it was to be conducted without additional resources. The Committee agreed that there should be a two-way exchange of policy proposals between the Committee and the Secretariat on this subject.

Activities with non-member economies

11. As the discussion on the status of contacts with China, India and other non-member countries with an important role in the steel sector had been moved to Part 2 of the agenda, the Chairman wanted this item to focus on the outcome of the Workshop with non-member economies on steel trade problems, which had taken place over the previous two days. The Chairman first thanked the Secretariat for its excellent preparations for the Workshop. During the subsequent discussion, the Committee unanimously acknowledged that the Workshop had been most interesting and that others ought to be arranged. Several comments and suggestions were made by the Delegates of the CEC, United States, Japan and Canada, in particular to the effect that in future there should be fewer presentations to leave more time free for discussion. It would also be useful to group, and possibly reduce in number, the topics on the agenda; this would slightly alter the focus of the debate and possibly lead to outline solutions, even if workshops did not, by their very nature, have practical results. As the discussion on globalisation in the steel industry
was deemed excellent, the impact of globalisation on employment was suggested as a topic for a future workshop.

12. With regard to follow-up to the Workshop, the Committee specifically requested that all the relevant documents be made available on the Internet as soon as possible. Furthermore, the Committee asked the Secretariat to produce, for the next meeting in November, a paper focusing on developments in the steel market as a result of the Asian crisis, with an update on trends on the iron and steel product market and possibly an indication of any restructuring taking place. Finally the Committee, stressing the economic importance of a sectoral approach, endorsed the idea of holding a similar type of seminar in a year’s time.

Steel trade and trade-related issues

13. The Committee took stock of the response rate for the questionnaire on trade and trade-related issues [DSTI/SI/SC(97)56] which was poor, as indicated in DSTI/SU/SC(98)9 and Room Document No. 2. The Secretariat explained that more responses had been received just before the Committee meeting but there had not been enough time to prepare an overview report. The Committee emphasised how much importance it attached to this exercise on the transparency of support, which was to be as broad, serious and comprehensive as possible. Questions had been raised as to which aid was to be carried forward and to which period it should relate. The Committee agreed to postpone this discussion until the next meeting; the steering group that was to meet in the meantime would have to answer the questions and inform Committee members as soon as possible.

Situation on the steel market

14. The Secretariat presented a report on the situation in the East Asian steel industry [DSTI/SU/SC(98)7], focusing on six key non-OECD steel-consuming countries in East Asia, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand (ASEAN5), plus Chinese Taipei. The report showed that the very steep rise in steel consumption in these countries since the mid-1980s had been only partially offset by a smaller rise in output, hence a large increase in imports. The economic crisis affecting these countries was expected to cause a sharp drop in steel imports, and in the specific case of Chinese Taipei the country might even become a net exporter of steel. Furthermore, major currency devaluations in these countries might make their exports very competitive but, more importantly, were expected to make the main countries exporting to the area, headed by the NIS, switch their exports to other markets, thereby putting heavy pressure on the price of iron and steel products. The Committee noted that the report was extremely useful and asked for follow-up and an update, in particular on reduced investment and capacity in the area, which would thus constitute an analysis of potential steel supply in East Asian countries.

15. The Committee discussed the situation regarding the steel market in Member and observer countries. The situation was relatively good for Europe and the Americas, but difficult for Member countries in the Asian area. A statement on the situation in the OECD area would be approved under the written procedure for publication as a news release [see SG/COMM/NEWS(98)71].
Assessment of Steel Committee activities

16. The Committee took stock of ongoing work and completion of the points in the Programme of Work for 1997 and 1998. All of the work was well under way, except that on world developments in steel, but this work would continue in 1999 and 2000. The Committee also discussed a paper [DSTI/SU/SC(98)6] on the Committee’s current and future role, which showed that the Steel Committee was following the general policy line recommended by the Secretary-General.

Programme of Work for 1999 and 2000

17. The Secretariat presented the proposed Programme of Work for 1999 and 2000, as set out in DSTI/SU/SC(98)5. The paper proposed a number of new activities, but not all of them could be carried out with existing resources, which meant that the Committee would have to set priorities. Those already indicated by Member countries had been compiled by the Secretariat and were set out in Room Document No. 3. Five activities had been given top priority. Activities (1.1): steel trade and trade-related policies and measures; (2.1) world market and industry developments in steel; (2.2) world steelmaking capacity developments; (2.3) world steel trade developments; and the organisation of a workshop on steel in the NIS area — problems and prospects. Two activities were given lower but still high priority, namely (3.1) policy developments in non-member economies; and (3.4) workshop on steel in China. Four other areas of work were given medium priority, namely steel and the environment, competition, basic steel statistics and the proposed workshop on supply/demand prospects. The lowest priority went to activities (1.2) on steel policy guidelines and (1.4) global alliances in steel.

18. At the Chairman’s invitation, Mr. Powell of the International Metalworkers Federation presented the TUAC’s comments on the Programme of Work. First, the TUAC would like more Committee time to be given over to employment issues in the iron and steel industry, and to the dramatic impact of restructuring on certain employment areas. Furthermore, when workshops were being organised, the Committee should look at the issue of workers’ rights since, in the TUAC’s view, enterprises that failed to respect those rights enjoyed quite a strong comparative advantage. With regard to the NIS, the obvious need for future restructuring in the iron and steel industry there would have a very great impact on employment, giving the TUAC serious cause for concern. Furthermore, the TUAC was still concerned about the substantial overcapacity in the NIS and would like the Secretariat to prepare a report on future steel demand in the NIS, to establish with greater accuracy how much overcapacity there was there and gain a clearer idea of the scope of the restructuring required. The TUAC reiterated its concerns about workers in the iron and steel industry being exposed to radioactive ferrous scrap and would like the Secretariat to participate in work undertaken on this subject by other organisations. Finally, the TUAC would be interested in a study of the impact that the development of regional free-trade blocks was having on the global steel trade, and in work to identify in advance how many jobs would be lost and what could be done to combat this problem.

19. After a lengthy debate on priorities for the various activities in the Programme of Work and collaboration with other OECD Directorates on a range of horizontal projects such as sustainable development, the environment, trade and employment, the Committee agreed to remove activities deemed to be low-priority from the Programme of Work, and to focus on an in-depth analysis of developments in the NIS, a subject to which it would be devoting much of its autumn meeting. Preparations for this discussion should be based on close collaboration between the Secretariat and the Russian and Ukrainian authorities, and should address not only the problems faced by the iron and steel industry in the NIS, and the adjustments that would be required, but also the problems faced by steel consumer industries with a view to improving domestic demand. Finally, as the Steel Committee’s Programme of Work was soon to
go before the Secretary-General, the Committee agreed that the Secretariat would prepare a revised version of the Programme for submission to the Delegations for approval under the written procedure.

### Steel and the environment


21. The Committee then discussed documents DSTI/SU/SC(98)11 and DSTI/SI/SC(97)46, presented by the Environment Directorate. The first analysed the outcome of the Kyoto Conference on Climate Change and outlined the possible implications for the iron and steel industry in Member countries. The second presented and analysed in depth the potential impact of environmental policies on costs and competitiveness in the iron and steel sector in various countries. The report appear to imply that, while there was no linkage between prevailing regulations and competitiveness, there was a link between environmental expenditure and competitiveness. At the request of several countries, the Committee agreed that written comments should be addressed to the Secretariat, which could then draw up a revised version of these documents, and that this item would also be placed on the agenda of the Committee’s next meeting.

### Recent policy developments

22. Several delegates reported on steel industry developments in their countries since the last meeting, including those from Canada, Japan, the United States and the European Union. The debate focused on the following issues: steel trade measures and regulations; regional and bilateral trade agreements; import monitoring; anti-dumping procedures and countervailing duties; monitoring the legislation on raw materials. The Delegation of Korea also asked about a recent decision in the United States against an international cartel of graphite electrode manufacturers. Information on the implications of this decision would be forwarded directly to the Korean Delegation by the countries involved.

### Consultations with the Trade Union Advisory Committee

23. Mr. Powell gave a statement on behalf of the TUAC Delegation. The TUAC was pleased to be able to contribute to the work of the OECD Steel Committee which it considered to be a most important forum playing a major role in the steel sector and taking on increasing significance. Confirming the success of the Workshop on steel trade and related issues over the previous two days, he hoped that there would be more such workshops in the future and that trade-union organisations from non-member countries would also be able to attend. With regard to the crisis in Asia, the TUAC drew the Committee’s attention to the growing number of job-losses in those countries hardest hit, particularly Korea, Indonesia and Thailand, and hoped there would be more information on the subject.

24. The TUAC was concerned by the fact that the globalisation and deregulation of the economy appeared to be encouraging the exploitation of workers, natural resources and the environment, serving only to widen the gap between rich and poor and to drag wages into a downward spiral. Furthermore, economic crises such as that in Asia, or previously in Mexico, were always accompanied by currency devaluation, steeply rising unemployment and sharply falling wages. In fact, the current problems were not due to globalisation _per se_ but rather to the lack of global institutions and regulations to keep the
process under control. The TUAC wished to stress how important it was for any international trade agreement to include a section on respect for trade-union rights and the mechanisms to enforce it. This would ensure that the additional benefits accruing from globalisation enhanced the quality of life and living standards of all concerned, rather than a small minority. The TUAC would continue to bring pressure to bear so that the leading working standards were respected and international regulations were established recognising trade union organisations, a factor which it deemed crucial to sustainable development.

25. With regard to the situation in the iron and steel industry, while some steel production and consumption forecasts in 1998 suggested that both might remain at the record levels reached in 1997, consumption levels were expected to drop sharply in most Asian countries, and this was expected to cause a slowdown in production capacity-building. Nevertheless, the TUAC was concerned about the possible emergence of overcapacity in Asia, due to the current fall in demand. The situation in the NIS also gave cause for concern, inasmuch as the decline in their Asian markets was likely to make them switch their exports to the United States and Europe, giving rise to keener competition and lower prices. These additional problems also threatened to make NIS iron and steel manufacturers even more vulnerable to exploitation by international steel traders. The need for further restructuring in NIS iron and steel industries, and the impact this would have on employment, were of particular concern to the TUAC. Another concern was that several enterprises in the NIS, and now in Korea too, were unable to pay their workers’ salaries.

26. With regard to trade policies, TUAC regretted that it had not been possible to ratify the multilateral steel trade agreement or the multilateral agreement on special steels and found it hard to comprehend why, when everyone was declaring their support for free trade, it was so difficult to adopt the institutional agreements that would set international trade on a sound footing. The problems of subsidies and tax relief were also addressed. Globalisation in the iron and steel industry over the past ten years had reduced the number of enterprises and made competition between them keener, forcing them to reduce labour costs; this in turn had led to more job-losses and a decline in job security. Technological change had also had a considerable impact on the number and type of jobs required by the iron and steel industry. In the TUAC’s view, pursuing a low-wage policy was increasingly incompatible with the well-trained, motivated staff that the iron and steel industry would require in the 21st century. During the short debate that ensued, several delegations replied to these questions and the TUAC would subsequently be receiving more detailed answers in writing.

Draft report to the Council on the activities of the Steel Committee in 1997

27. The Committee approved the Annual Report to the Council on the activities of the Steel Committee [DSTI/SU/SC(98)8], without amendment.

Analytical and statistical work on steel


29. As there was no time to discuss the other draft reports under this item, the Committee decided to postpone until its next meeting the discussions on the half-yearly report on developments in steelmaking.
capacity in the non-OECD area [DSTI/SU/SC(98)14], and on recent investment and disinvestment notifications [DSTI/SU/SC(98)15].

**Other business**

30. The Committee discussed the dates of its next meetings. The dates chosen were 4 and 5 November 1998.

**Other issues**

31. The Secretariat reported to the Committee on developments regarding discussions with China and India on the possibility of the two countries attending the Steel Committee as observers. China had declared its interest in this possibility over 18 months ago. The point had in fact been raised in Council, but no agreement had been reached, largely on procedural grounds. Since then, the Organisation’s recommended stance on China had been the subject of much thought and debate within the OECD and a special programme had been set up with China. During the Workshop with non-member economies prior to the Committee meeting, the Chinese participants had informed the Secretariat that China was particularly interested in submitting a request for observer status in the Steel Committee. It was also clear that China appeared to meet the various criteria required to obtain that status, that this would clearly be mutually beneficial, that China was a major player on the global steel market (the leading producer), that there would be no adverse impact on the Programme of Work or the Committee’s budget and, last, that a “step-by-step” approach had been taken over the past 18 months, including China’s participation in the last two workshops.

32. As for India, it had officially requested observer status to attend the Steel Committee and the Council had asked the Committee for a technical opinion. To date, one delegation had said that it needed more time to consider India’s request. That delegation had nevertheless undertaken to give its decision as soon as possible and in any case before the Committee’s next meeting. Provided that its decision was received early enough and that the Council was in a position to approve India’s request in the autumn, India might be able to attend the Committee’s next meeting as an observer.
ANNEX

LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS/LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

REUNION DU COMITE DE L’ACIER/STEEL COMMITTEE MEETING

29-05-1998

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(Item on Consultations with the TUAC)

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