



ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT



DRAFT CONTENTS OF THE 2008 UPDATE TO THE  
MODEL TAX CONVENTION

21 APRIL TO 31 MAY 2008



CENTRE FOR TAX POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION

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21 April 2008

## THE 2008 UPDATE TO THE MODEL TAX CONVENTION

### *Public discussion draft*

#### **Introduction**

1. This note includes the draft contents of the next update to the Model Tax Convention, which the Committee on Fiscal Affairs intends to finalize in June 2008. As explained below, Part I includes a number of technical changes that have not previously been released for comments, Part II includes all the draft changes to the Articles and the Commentary that are proposed as part of the update and Annexes 1 and 2 show the changes that have been made to earlier versions of the proposals related to the tax treaty treatment of services and to the revised Commentary on Article 7.

2. The contents of the 2008 update result primarily from the following previously released reports:

- “*Improving the Resolution of Tax Treaty Disputes*”. That report was adopted by the Committee on Fiscal Affairs on 30 January 2007 and made public on 7 February 2007 (see <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/17/59/38055311.pdf>) following extensive consultations that included the release of a discussion draft on 1 February 2006 and a public consultation meeting in Tokyo on 13 March 2006.
- “*Revised Commentary on Article 7*”. The revised Commentary on Article 7 that is included in this update was released as a public discussion draft on 10 April 2007 (see <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/0/2/38361711.pdf>). The changes that were made following the comments received on the discussion draft are highlighted in the version that appears in Annex 2. In accordance with earlier decisions by the Committee concerning the implementation of the conclusions from its work on Attribution of Profits to Permanent Establishments, the revised Commentary incorporates those aspects of the conclusions from that work that do not conflict with the existing interpretation of Article 7 reflected in the current version of the Commentary (the second part of the implementation package, i.e. a new Article 7 and related Commentary changes that will fully incorporate the conclusions of the work on Attribution of Profits to Permanent Establishments, will be released later this year).
- “*Application and Interpretation of Article 24 (Non-Discrimination)*”. That report was released as a public discussion draft on 3 May 2007 (see <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/59/30/38516170.pdf>). No substantial changes to the amendments to the Commentary on Article 24 proposed in the report were made as a result of the comments received.

- “*Tax Treaty Issues related to REITs*”. That report, which was released as a public discussion draft on 31 October 2007 (see <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/23/44/39554788.pdf>), was prepared in close co-operation with representatives of the real estate industry. Only a minor clarification was made to the changes to the Commentary proposed in that report; that change is underlined in this note.
- “*The Tax Treaty Treatment of Services: Proposed Commentary Changes*”. That report was released as a public discussion draft on 8 December 2006 (see <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/2/20/37811491.pdf>). A number of changes were made to that report following the comments received on the discussion draft; these changes are highlighted in the version that appears in Annex 1.

The update does not include, however, the revised draft changes to the Commentary on paragraph 2 of Article 15 that were publicly released for comments on 12 March 2007 (<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/36/32/38236197.pdf>). Although these changes had already been revised following their initial release in April 2004, the Working Party has concluded that further discussions of these changes were necessary.

3. The update also includes a number of technical changes to the Commentary on the Model Tax Convention that have not been previously released for comments and on which comments are now invited. For convenience, these changes are reproduced in Part I of this note with a short background. These changes deal with the following topics:

- The concept of “place of effective management”.
- The situation of dual-resident persons who are treaty non-residents under the tie-breaker rule.
- Certain aspects of the definition of royalties.
- An interpretation issue related to the distribution of software.
- Whether days of residence should be taken into account for the purposes of the computation of the 183-day rule of subparagraph 2a) of Article 15.
- A minor drafting change to paragraph 32.6 of the Commentary on Articles 23 A and 23 B.
- A minor updating of paragraph 12 of the Commentary on Article 21.

4. As part of the update, a number of changes and additions will also be made to the observations, reservations and positions of member and non-member countries. These changes and additions are in the process of being formulated and will be included in the final version of the update.

5. Finally, as part of the 2008 update, the reports “Improving the Resolution of Tax Treaty Disputes”, “Application and Interpretation of Article 24 (Non-Discrimination)” and “Application of Tax Treaties to REITs” will be added to the section of Volume II of the electronic and loose-leaf versions of the OECD Model Tax Convention that includes reports on the Model Tax Convention. Also, Appendix I of Volume II, which lists the status of tax conventions between OECD countries, will be replaced as a result of the revision and conclusion of new treaties since 2005.

6. Comments on the 2008 update to the Model Tax Convention, and in particular on the changes included in Part I, should be sent **before 31 May 2008** to:

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## THE 2008 UPDATE TO THE MODEL TAX CONVENTION

### PART I - CHANGES THAT HAVE NOT ALREADY BEEN RELEASED

#### A. PLACE OF EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT

##### *Background*

1. In February 2001, the Technical Advisory Group on Monitoring the Application of Existing Treaty Norms for the Taxation of Business Profits (“Business Profits TAG”), a group composed of business representatives, academics and government officials which had been set up by the OECD to explore certain tax treaty aspects of electronic commerce, released a discussion draft entitled “The Impact of the Communications Revolution on the Application of ‘Place of Effective Management’ as a Tie Breaker Rule” (available at <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/46/27/1923328.pdf>). The purpose of that report was to identify possible limitations that the treaty concept of “place of effective management” (which is used in the tie-breaker rule of paragraph 3 of Article 4) could face in the new technological environment and to identify possible solutions.

2. Based on the comments received, the Business Profits TAG subsequently released, in May 2003, another discussion draft entitled “Place of Effective Management Concept: Suggestions for Changes to the OECD Model Tax Convention”. The discussion draft included two alternative proposals. The first proposal (“Refinement of the place of effective management concept”) sought to refine the concept of place of effective management by expanding the Commentary explanations as to how the concept should be interpreted. The second proposal (“Hierarchy of tests”) put forward an alternative version of paragraph 3 of Article 4 of the Model Tax Convention (the tie-breaker rule for persons other than individuals), together with Commentary thereon. The Business Profits TAG invited comments on these proposals and recommended to Working Party No. 1 to examine these proposals in light of the comments to be received with a view to decide whether and how the OECD Model Tax Convention should be amended.

3. Over the last few years, the Working Party has discussed the proposals formulated by the Business Profits TAG, the comments thereon as well as a number of alternatives. Based on its own discussions as well as on discussions at a session on this topic during the IFA Vienna Congress in 2004, the Working Party has concluded that the proposed expansion of the Commentary put forward by the Business Profits TAG would not be in line with the views of the majority of its member countries as to the meaning of the concept of place of effective management. Many countries, in particular, considered that the TAG’s proposed interpretation gave undue priority to the place where the board of directors of a company would meet over the place where the senior executives of that company would make key management decisions. A majority of countries also considered that the cases of dual-residence of legal persons that they encountered in practice did not justify replacing the current concept of “place of effective

management” by the approach based on a hierarchy of tests that was put forward by the Business Profits TAG.

4. A significant number of countries, however, indicated that, increasingly, they adopt bilaterally a different approach, based on the facts and circumstance of each case, to solve cases of dual residence of legal persons. Under that approach, such cases are to be solved by the competent authorities. After further discussion, it was agreed that given the number of countries that are prepared to agree bilaterally to that approach, it should be added to the Commentary on Article 4 as a possible alternative to the place of effective management concept.

#### ***Changes to the Commentary on Article 4***

5. Replace paragraph 24 of the Commentary on Article 4 by the following:

24. As a result of these considerations, the “place of effective management” has been adopted as the preference criterion for persons other than individuals. The place of effective management is the place where key management and commercial decisions that are necessary for the conduct of the entity’s business ***as a whole*** are in substance made. ~~The place of effective management will ordinarily be the place where the most senior person or group of persons (for example a board of directors) makes its decisions, the place where the actions to be taken by the entity as a whole are determined; however, no definitive rule can be given and~~ All relevant facts and circumstances must be examined to determine the place of effective management. An entity may have more than one place of management, but it can have only one place of effective management at any one time.

***24.1 Some countries, however, consider that cases of dual residence of persons who are not individuals are relatively rare and should be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Some countries also consider that such a case-by-case approach is the best way to deal with the difficulties in determining the place of effective management of a legal person that may arise from the use of new communication technologies. These countries are free to leave the question of the residence of these persons to be settled by the competent authorities, which can be done by replacing the paragraph by the following provision:***

***3. Where by reason of the provisions of paragraph 1 a person other than an individual is a resident of both Contracting States, the competent authorities of the Contracting States shall endeavour to determine by mutual agreement the Contracting State of which such person shall be deemed to be a resident for the purposes of the Convention, having regard to its place of effective management, the place where it is incorporated or otherwise constituted and any other relevant factors. In the absence of such agreement, such person shall not be entitled to any relief or exemption from tax provided by this Convention except to the extent and in such manner as may be agreed upon by the competent authorities of the Contracting States.***

***Competent authorities having to apply such a provision to determine the residence of a legal person for purposes of the Convention would be expected to take account of various factors, such as where the meetings of its board of directors or equivalent body are usually held, where the chief executive officer and other senior executives usually carry on their activities, where the senior day-to-day management of the person is carried on, where the person’s headquarters are located, which country’s laws govern the legal status of the person, where its accounting records are kept, whether determining that the legal person is a resident of one of the Contracting States but not of the other for the purpose of the Convention would carry the***



*risk of an improper use of the provisions of the Convention etc. Countries that consider that the competent authorities should not be given the discretion to solve such cases of dual residence without an indication of the factors to be used for that purpose may want to supplement the provision to refer to these or other factors that they consider relevant. Also, since the application of the provision would normally be requested by the person concerned through the mechanism provided for under paragraph 1 of Article 25, the request should be made within three years from the first notification to that person that its taxation is not in accordance with the Convention since it is considered to be a resident of both Contracting States. Since the facts on which a decision will be based may change over time, the competent authorities that reach a decision under that provision should clarify which period of time is covered by that decision.*

## **B. DUAL-RESIDENT PERSONS WHO ARE TREATY NON-RESIDENTS UNDER THE TIE-BREAKER RULE**

### ***Background***

6. A person, such as an individual or company, who is resident of two Contracting States under each State's domestic tax laws is considered to be resident of only one of these States (the "winning State") under paragraphs 2 or 3 of Article 4 (the "tie-breaker" rule) of the treaty between these two States. The changes below are primarily intended to clarify that this will affect the status of "resident" of that person for purposes of treaties that the other State (the "losing State") may have concluded with third States since the effect of the treaty between the winning State and the losing State will be that the person will not be subject to the most comprehensive liability to tax in the losing State.

### ***Changes to the Commentary on Article 4***

7. Replace paragraphs 8 to 8.4 of the Commentary on Article 4 by the following:

8. Paragraph 1 provides a definition of the expression "resident of a Contracting State" for the purposes of the Convention. The definition refers to the concept of residence adopted in the domestic laws (cf. Preliminary remarks). As criteria for the taxation as a resident the definition mentions: domicile, residence, place of management or any other criterion of a similar nature. As far as individuals are concerned, the definition aims at covering the various forms of personal attachment to a State which, in the domestic taxation laws, form the basis of a comprehensive taxation (full liability to tax). It also covers cases where a person is deemed, according to the taxation laws of a State, to be a resident of that State and on account thereof is fully liable to tax therein (e.g. diplomats or other persons in government service). *[the remaining part of paragraph 8 becomes new paragraphs 8.1, 8.2 and 8.3]*

**8.1** In accordance with the provisions of the second sentence of paragraph 1, however, a person is not to be considered a "resident of a Contracting State" in the sense of the Convention if, although not domiciled in that State, he is considered to be a resident according to the domestic laws but is subject only to a taxation limited to the income from sources in that State or to capital situated in that State. That situation exists in some States in relation to individuals, e.g. in the case of foreign diplomatic and consular staff serving in their territory.

**8.2** According to its wording and spirit the ~~provision would~~ **second sentence** also excludes from the definition of a resident of a Contracting State foreign-held companies exempted from tax on their foreign income by privileges tailored to attract conduit companies. ***It also excludes companies and other persons who are not subject to comprehensive liability to tax in a Contracting State because these persons, whilst being residents of that State under that State's tax law, are considered to be***

*residents of another State pursuant to a treaty between these two States.* [next two sentences of existing paragraph 8 moved to the next paragraph] The exclusion of certain companies **or other persons** from the definition would not of course prevent Contracting States from exchanging information about their activities (cf. paragraph 2 of the Commentary on Article 26). Indeed States may feel it appropriate to develop spontaneous exchanges of information about ~~companies which persons who~~ seek to obtain ~~unintended treaty benefits~~ ~~treaty benefits unintended by the Model Convention.~~

**8.3 The application of the second sentence** This, however, has inherent difficulties and limitations. ~~Thus it has to be interpreted restrictively~~ **It has to be interpreted in light of its object and purpose, which is to exclude persons who are not subjected to the most comprehensive liability to tax generally imposed by a State**, because it might otherwise exclude from the scope of the Convention all residents of countries adopting a territorial principle in their taxation, a result which is clearly not intended.

**8.41** It has been the general understanding of most Member countries that the government of each State, as well as any political subdivision or local authority thereof, is a resident of that State for purposes of the Convention. Before 1995, the Model did not explicitly state this; in 1995, Article 4 was amended to conform the text of the Model to this understanding.

**8.52** Paragraph 1 refers to persons who are "liable to tax" in a Contracting State under its laws by reason of various criteria. In many States, a person is considered liable to comprehensive taxation even if the Contracting State does not in fact impose tax. For example, pension funds, charities and other organisations may be exempted from tax, but they are exempt only if they meet all of the requirements for exemption specified in the tax laws. They are, thus, subject to the tax laws of a Contracting State. Furthermore, if they do not meet the standards specified, they are also required to pay tax. Most States would view such entities as residents for purposes of the Convention (see, for example, paragraph 1 of Article 10 and paragraph 5 of Article 11).

**8.63** In some States, however, these entities are not considered liable to tax if they are exempt from tax under domestic tax laws. These States may not regard such entities as residents for purposes of a convention unless these entities are expressly covered by the convention. Contracting States taking this view are free to address the issue in their bilateral negotiations.

**8.74** Where a State disregards a partnership for tax purposes and treats it as fiscally transparent, taxing the partners on their share of the partnership income, the partnership itself is not liable to tax and may not, therefore, be considered to be a resident of that State. In such a case, since the income of the partnership "flows through" to the partners under the domestic law of that State, the partners are the persons who are liable to tax on that income and are thus the appropriate persons to claim the benefits of the conventions concluded by the States of which they are residents. This latter result will be achieved even if, under the domestic law of the State of source, the income is attributed to a partnership which is treated as a separate taxable entity. For States which could not agree with this interpretation of the Article, it would be possible to provide for this result in a special provision which would avoid the resulting potential double taxation where the income of the partnership is differently allocated by the two States.

### ***Change to the Commentary on Article 21***

8. Replace paragraph 1 of the Commentary on Article 21 by the following:

1. This Article provides a general rule relating to income not dealt with in the foregoing Articles of the Convention. The income concerned is not only income of a class not expressly dealt with but also income from sources not expressly mentioned. The scope of the Article is not confined to income arising in a Contracting State; it extends also to income from third States. *Where, for instance, a person who would be a resident of two Contracting States under the provisions of paragraph 1 of Article 4 is deemed to be a resident of only one of these States pursuant to the provisions of paragraph 2 or 3 of that Article, this Article will prevent the other State from taxing the person on income arising in third states even if the person is resident of this other State for domestic law purposes (see also paragraph 8.2 of the Commentary on Article 4 as regards the effect of paragraphs 2 and 3 of Article 4 for purposes of the conventions concluded between this other State and third states).*

## C. CLARIFICATION OF CERTAIN ASPECTS OF THE DEFINITION OF ROYALTIES

### *Background*

9. The application of the definition of royalties in paragraph 2 of Article 12 raises a number of practical questions. For instance, issues arise with respect to the scope of the reference to “plans and designs”, which is found in the definition. Other issues relate to the part of the definition that refers to “payments ... for information concerning commercial or scientific experience” which indirectly refers to the concept know-how: one such issue is whether payments for lists of customers are covered by that part of the definition. Other problems are whether and to what extent the definition covers payments for the transfers of limited intangibles (e.g. the sale, rather than licence, of the right to use a trade name for a limited period of time) and payments made by a distributor to secure the exclusive distribution of a product in a given territory.

10. After discussing these issues, the Working Party concluded that the following clarifications should be included in the Commentary on Article 12.

### *Changes to the Commentary on Article 12*

11. Replace paragraphs 8 and 8.1 of the Commentary on Article 12 by the following:

8. Paragraph 2 contains a definition of the term “royalties”. These relate, in general, to rights or property constituting the different forms of literary and artistic property, the elements of intellectual property specified in the text and information concerning industrial, commercial or scientific experience. The definition applies to payments for the use of, or the entitlement to use, rights of the kind mentioned, whether or not they have been, or are required to be, registered in a public register. The definition covers both payments made under a license and compensation which a person would be obliged to pay for fraudulently copying or infringing the right. *[the rest of the existing paragraph would be included in paragraphs 8.1, 8.2 and 8.3]*

**8.1** The definition does not, however, apply to payments that, whilst based on the number of times a right belonging to someone is used, are made to someone else who does not himself own the right or the right to use it (see, for instance, paragraph 18 below). *[corresponds to the fifth sentence of the current paragraph 8].*

**8.2** *Where a payment is in consideration for the transfer of the full ownership of an element of property referred to in the definition, the payment is not in consideration “for the use of, or the right to use” that property and cannot therefore represent a royalty. As noted in paragraphs 15 and 16 below as regards software, difficulties can arise in the case of a transfer of rights that*

*could be considered to form part of an element of property referred to in the definition where these rights are transferred in a way that is presented as an alienation. For example, this could involve the exclusive granting of all rights to an intellectual property for a limited period or all rights to the property in a limited geographical area in a transaction structured as a sale. Each case will depend on its particular facts and will need to be examined in light of the national intellectual property law applicable to the relevant type of property and the national law rules as regards what constitutes an alienation but in general, if the payment is in consideration for the alienation of rights that constitute distinct and specific property (which is more likely in the case of geographically-limited than time-limited rights), such payments are likely to be commercial income within Article 7 or a capital gains matter within Article 13 rather than royalties within Article 12. That follows from the fact that where the ownership of rights has been alienated, the consideration cannot be for the use of the rights. The essential character of the transaction as an alienation cannot be altered by the form of the consideration, the payment of the consideration in instalments or, in the view of most countries, by the fact that the payments are related to a contingency.*

~~8.3 It should also be noted that~~ The word “payment”, used in the definition, has a very wide meaning since the concept of payment means the fulfilment of the obligation to put funds at the disposal of the creditor in the manner required by contract or by custom. [*corresponds to the penultimate sentence of the current paragraph 8*]

8.4 As a guide, certain explanations are given below in order to define the scope of Article 12 in relation to that of other Articles of the Convention, as regards, in particular, the provision of information. [*corresponds to the last sentence of current paragraph 8*].

~~8.58.1~~ Where information referred to in paragraph 2 is supplied or where the use or the right to use a type of property referred to in that paragraph is granted, the person who owns that information or property may agree not to supply or grant to anyone else that information or right. Payments made as consideration for such an agreement constitute payments made to secure the exclusivity of that information or an exclusive right to use that property, as the case may be. These payments being payments “of any kind received as a consideration for [...] the right to use” the property “or for information”, fall under the definition of royalties.

12. Add the following paragraphs 10.1 and 10.2 immediately after paragraph 10 of the Commentary on Article 12:

*10.1 Payments that are solely made in consideration for obtaining the exclusive distribution rights of a product or service in a given territory do not constitute royalties as they are not made in consideration for the use of, or the right to use, an element of property included in the definition. These payments, which are best viewed as being made to increase sales receipts, would rather fall under Article 7. An example of such a payment would be that of a distributor of clothes resident in one Contracting State who pays a certain sum of money to a manufacturer of branded shirts, who is a resident of the other Contracting State, as consideration for the exclusive right to sell in the first State the branded shirts manufactured abroad by that manufacturer. In that example, the resident distributor does not pay for the right to use the trade name or trade mark under which the shirts are sold; he merely obtains the exclusive right to sell in his State of residence shirts that he will buy from the manufacturer.*

*10.2 A payment cannot be said to be “for the use of, or the right to use” a design, model or plan if the payment is for the development of a design, model or plan that does not already exist. In such a case, the payment is made in consideration for the services that will result in the development of that design, model or plan and would thus fall under Article 7. This will be the*

*case even if the designer of the design, model or plan (e.g. an architect) retains all rights, including the copyright, in that design, model or plan. Where, however, the owner of the copyright in previously-developed plans merely grants someone the right to modify or reproduce these plans without actually performing any additional work, the payment received by that owner in consideration for granting the right to such use of the plans would constitute royalties.*

13. Replace paragraph 11 of the Commentary on Article 12 by the following:

11. In classifying as royalties payments received as consideration for information concerning industrial, commercial or scientific experience, paragraph 2 ~~alludes~~ **is referring** to the concept of “know-how”. Various specialist bodies and authors have formulated definitions of know-how which do not differ intrinsically. ~~One such definition, given by the “Association des Bureaux pour la Protection de la Propriété Industrielle” (ANBPPI), states that “know how is all the undivulged technical information, whether capable of being patented or not, that is necessary for the industrial reproduction of a product or process, directly and under the same conditions; inasmuch as it is derived from experience, know how represents what a manufacturer cannot know from mere examination of the product and mere knowledge of the progress of technique”~~ **The words “payments [...] for information concerning industrial, commercial or scientific experience” are used in the context of the transfer of certain information that has not been patented and does not generally fall within other categories of intellectual property rights. It generally corresponds to undivulged information of an industrial, commercial or scientific nature arising from previous experience, which has practical application in the operation of an enterprise and from the disclosure of which an economic benefit can be derived. Since the definition relates to information concerning previous experience, the Article does not apply to payments for new information obtained as a result of performing services at the request of the payer.**

3.1 Replace paragraph 11.4 of the Commentary on Article 12 by the following:

11.4 Examples of payments which should therefore not be considered to be received as consideration for the provision of know-how but, rather, for the provision of services, include:

- payments obtained as consideration for after-sales service,
- payments for services rendered by a seller to the purchaser under a **guarantee warranty**,
- payments for pure technical assistance,
- **payments for a list of potential customers, when such a list is developed specifically for the payer out of generally available information (a payment for the confidential list of customers to which the payee has provided a particular product or service would, however, constitute a payment for know-how as it would relate to the commercial experience of the payee in dealing with these customers),**
- payments for an opinion given by an engineer, an advocate or an accountant, and
- payments for advice provided electronically, for electronic communications with technicians or for accessing, through computer networks, a trouble-shooting database such as a database that provides users of software with non-confidential information in response to frequently asked questions or common problems that arise frequently.

14. Replace paragraphs 15 and 16 of the Commentary on Article 12 by the following:

15. Where consideration is paid for the transfer of the full ownership of the rights in the copyright, the payment cannot represent a royalty and the provisions of the Article are not applicable. Difficulties can arise where there ~~are extensive but partial alienation~~ **is a transfer** of rights involving:

- exclusive right of use *of the copyright* during a specific period or in a limited geographical area;
- additional consideration related to usage;
- consideration in the form of a substantial lump sum payment.

16. Each case will depend on its particular facts but in general *if the payment is in consideration for the transfer of rights that constitute a distinct and specific property (which is more likely in the case of geographically-limited than time-limited rights)*, such payments are likely to be commercial income within Article 7 or a capital gains matter within Article 13 rather than royalties within Article 12. That follows from the fact that where the ownership of rights has been alienated ~~in full or in part~~, the consideration cannot be for the use of the rights. The essential character of the transaction as an alienation cannot be altered by the form of the consideration, the payment of the consideration in instalments or, in the view of most countries, by the fact that the payments are related to a contingency.

## D. SOFTWARE DISTRIBUTION

### *Background*

15. Since the copyright law of some countries covers to some extent the right to distribute copies, arrangements between a software copyright holder and a distribution intermediary sometimes grant to the distribution intermediary the right to distribute copies of the program without the right to produce the copies. Representatives from the software industry have asked the OECD to clarify that where the rights acquired in relation to the copyright are limited to those necessary for the commercial intermediary to distribute copies of the software program, the payment made by the distributor does not correspond to a royalty. The following is the clarification to the Commentary that the Working Party has adopted to deal with that issue.

### *Change to the Commentary on Article 12*

16. Add the following new paragraph 14.4 to the Commentary on Article 12:

*14.4 Arrangements between a software copyright holder and a distribution intermediary frequently will grant to the distribution intermediary the right to distribute copies of the program without the right to reproduce that program. In these transactions, the rights acquired in relation to the copyright are limited to those necessary for the commercial intermediary to distribute copies of the software program. In such transactions, distributors are paying only for the acquisition of the software copies and not to exploit any right in the software copyrights. Thus, in a transaction where a distributor makes payments to acquire and distribute software copies (without the right to reproduce the software), the rights in relation to these acts of distribution should be disregarded in analysing the character of the transaction for tax purposes. Payments in these types of transactions would be dealt with as commercial income in accordance with Article 7. This would be the case regardless of whether the copies being distributed are delivered on tangible media or are distributed electronically (without the distributor having the right to reproduce the software), or whether the software is subject to minor customisation for the purposes of its installation.*

## E. DAYS OF RESIDENCE AND THE 183 DAY RULE

### *Background*

17. A practical problem that has arisen in the computation of the 183 day period referred to in subparagraph 2 a) of Article 15 is whether days of residence in the State of source should be taken into account. One example where the problem can arise is the following:

- Until the end of 2007, X lives in, and is a resident of, State S;
- At the end of 2007, X is hired by an employer of State R and moves to State R where he becomes a resident;
- X is sent to State S by his employer from 15 to 31 March 2008.

Between 1 April 2007 and 31 March 2008, X is present in State S for 292 days. Paragraph 2 of Article 15, however, refers to a resident of a Contracting State who is “present in the other State” and, when subparagraph a) is read in the context of the whole paragraph, X may be said not to satisfy that condition during the period of April to December 2008 as he is then a resident of the State where he is present (i.e. State S). The Working Party considered that that interpretation should prevail over a more literal interpretation of subparagraph 2 a) and decided to amend the Commentary accordingly.

### *Change to the Commentary on Article 15*

18. Add the following new paragraph 5.1 to the Commentary on Article 15:

***5.1 Days during which the taxpayer is a resident of the source State should not, however, be taken into account in the calculation. Subparagraph a) has to be read in the context of the first part of paragraph 2, which refers to “remuneration derived by a resident of a Contracting State in respect of an employment exercised in the other Contracting State”, which does not apply to a person who resides and works in the same State. The words “the recipient is present”, found in subparagraph a), refer to the recipient of such remuneration and, during a period of residence in the source State, a person cannot be said to be the recipient of remuneration derived by a resident of a Contracting State in respect of an employment exercised in the other Contracting State. The following examples illustrate this conclusion:***

- ***Example 1: From January 01 to December 01, X lives in, and is a resident of, State S. On 1 January 02, X is hired by an employer who is a resident of State R and moves to State R where he becomes a resident. X is subsequently sent to State S by his employer from 15 to 31 March 02. In that case, X is present in State S for 292 days between 1 April 01 and 31 March 02 but since he is a resident of State S between 1 April 01 and 31 December 01, this first period is not taken into account for purposes of the calculation of the periods referred to in subparagraph a).***
- ***Example 2: From 15 to 31 October 01, Y, a resident of State R, is present in State S to prepare the expansion in that country of the business of ACO, also a resident of State R. On 1 May 02, Y moves to State S where she becomes a resident and works as the manager of a newly created subsidiary of ACO resident of State S. In that case, Y is present in State S for 184 days between 15 October 01 and 14 October 02 but since she is a resident of State S between 1 May and 14 October 02, this last period is not taken into account for purposes of the calculation of the periods referred to in subparagraph a).***

## **F. DRAFTING CHANGE TO PARAGRAPH 32.6 OF THE COMMENTARY ON ARTICLES 23 A AND 23 B**

### ***Background***

19. Paragraph 32.6 of the Commentary on Articles 23 A and B discusses the residence country's obligation to grant relief for double taxation. It concludes that no such obligation exists if the source State considers that the Convention prevents it from taxing an item of income that "it would otherwise have taxed". That last phrase is unduly restrictive since there are cases where the source State considers that the Convention prevents it from taxing an item of income but that item would not have been "otherwise taxed" in that State because the item of income is not taxable under the State's domestic law.

### ***Change to the Commentary on Articles 23 A and 23 B***

20. Replace paragraph 32.6 of the Commentary on Articles 23 A and B by the following:

32.6 The phrase "in accordance with the provisions of this Convention, may be taxed" must also be interpreted in relation to possible cases of double non-taxation that can arise under Article 23 A. Where the State of source considers that the provisions of the Convention preclude it from taxing an item of income or capital which it would otherwise have ***had the right to tax***~~taxed~~, the State of residence should, for purposes of applying paragraph 1 of Article 23 A, consider that the item of income may not be taxed by the State of source in accordance with the provisions of the Convention, even though the State of residence would have applied the Convention differently so as to ***have the right*** to tax that income if it had been in the position of the State of source. Thus the State of residence is not required by paragraph 1 to exempt the item of income, a result which is consistent with the basic function of Article 23 which is to eliminate double taxation.

## **G. UPDATE TO PARAGRAPH 12 OF THE COMMENTARY ON ARTICLE 21**

### ***Background***

21. The first two sentences of paragraph 12 of the Commentary on Article 21 indicate that "[t]he Committee on Fiscal Affairs is actively studying the taxation of non-traditional financial instruments. Further changes to the Model or Commentaries may be necessary." These sentences refer to work that was carried on in the 1990s and they should be updated to reflect the fact that that work is no longer ongoing.

### ***Changes to the Commentary on Article 21***

22. Delete paragraph 12 and replace paragraph 7 of the Commentary on Article 21 as follows:

7. Some countries have encountered difficulties in dealing with income arising from certain non-traditional financial instruments when the parties to the instrument have a special relationship. These countries may wish to add the following paragraph to Article 21:

3. Where, by reason of a special relationship between the person referred to in paragraph 1 and some other person, or between both of them and some third person, the amount of the income referred to in paragraph 1 exceeds the amount (if any) which would have been agreed upon between them in the absence of such a relationship, the provisions of this Article shall apply only to the last mentioned amount. In such a case, the excess part of the income shall remain taxable according to the laws of each Contracting State, due regard being had to the other applicable provisions of this Convention.



*The inclusion of this additional paragraph should carry no implication about the treatment of innovative financial transactions between independent persons or under other provisions of the Convention.*

~~12.—The Committee on Fiscal Affairs is actively studying the taxation of non-traditional financial instruments. Further changes to the Model or Commentaries may be necessary. The inclusion of proposed paragraph 3 carries no implication about the treatment of innovative financial transactions between independent persons or under other provisions of the Convention.~~

## PART II

### CHANGES TO BE INCLUDED IN THE 2008 UPDATE TO THE MODEL TAX CONVENTION

[The changes to the existing text of the Model Tax Convention appear in ~~strike through~~ for deletions and ***bold italics*** for additions]

#### A. ARTICLES

##### Change to Article 25

23. Add the following paragraph 5 and related footnote to Article 25:

5. *Where,*

- a) *under paragraph 1, a person has presented a case to the competent authority of a Contracting State on the basis that the actions of one or both of the Contracting States have resulted for that person in taxation not in accordance with the provisions of this Convention, and*
- b) *the competent authorities are unable to reach an agreement to resolve that case pursuant to paragraph 2 within two years from the presentation of the case to the competent authority of the other Contracting State,*

*any unresolved issues arising from the case shall be submitted to arbitration if the person so requests. These unresolved issues shall not, however, be submitted to arbitration if a decision on these issues has already been rendered by a court or administrative tribunal of either State. Unless a person directly affected by the case does not accept the mutual agreement that implements the arbitration decision, that decision shall be binding on both Contracting States and shall be implemented notwithstanding any time limits in the domestic laws of these States. The competent authorities of the Contracting States shall by mutual agreement settle the mode of application of this paragraph.<sup>1</sup>*

- 1. *In some States, national law, policy or administrative considerations may not allow or justify the type of dispute resolution envisaged under this paragraph. In addition, some States may only wish to include this paragraph in treaties with certain States. For these reasons, the paragraph should only be included in the Convention where each State concludes that it would be appropriate to do so based on the factors described in paragraph 47 of the Commentary on the paragraph. As mentioned in paragraph 54 of that Commentary, however, other States may be able to agree to remove from the paragraph the condition that issues may not be submitted to arbitration if a decision on these issues has already been rendered by one of their courts or administrative tribunals.*

#### B. COMMENTARY

##### Changes to the Commentary on Article 1

24. In paragraph 5 of the Commentary on Article 1, replace the cross-reference to “paragraph 8.4 of the Commentary on Article 4” by “paragraph 8.7 of the Commentary on Article 4”.

25. In paragraph 23 of the Commentary on Article 1, replace the cross-reference to “paragraphs 10.1 of the Commentary on Article 7 and” by “paragraphs **13** of the Commentary on Article 4 and”.

#### Changes to the Commentary on Article 4

26. Replace paragraphs 8 to 8.4 of the Commentary on Article 4 by the following:

8. Paragraph 1 provides a definition of the expression “resident of a Contracting State” for the purposes of the Convention. The definition refers to the concept of residence adopted in the domestic laws (cf. Preliminary remarks). As criteria for the taxation as a resident the definition mentions: domicile, residence, place of management or any other criterion of a similar nature. As far as individuals are concerned, the definition aims at covering the various forms of personal attachment to a State which, in the domestic taxation laws, form the basis of a comprehensive taxation (full liability to tax). It also covers cases where a person is deemed, according to the taxation laws of a State, to be a resident of that State and on account thereof is fully liable to tax therein (e.g. diplomats or other persons in government service). [*the remaining part of paragraph 8 becomes new paragraphs 8.1, 8.2 and 8.3*]

**8.1** In accordance with the provisions of the second sentence of paragraph 1, however, a person is not to be considered a “resident of a Contracting State” in the sense of the Convention if, although not domiciled in that State, he is considered to be a resident according to the domestic laws but is subject only to a taxation limited to the income from sources in that State or to capital situated in that State. That situation exists in some States in relation to individuals, e.g. in the case of foreign diplomatic and consular staff serving in their territory.

**8.2** According to its wording and spirit the ~~provision would~~ **second sentence** also excludes from the definition of a resident of a Contracting State foreign-held companies exempted from tax on their foreign income by privileges tailored to attract conduit companies. ***It also excludes companies and other persons who are not subject to comprehensive liability to tax in a Contracting State because these persons, whilst being residents of that State under that State's tax law, are considered to be residents of another State pursuant to a treaty between these two States.*** [*next two sentences of existing paragraph 8 moved to the next paragraph*] The exclusion of certain companies ***or other persons*** from the definition would not of course prevent Contracting States from exchanging information about their activities (cf. paragraph 2 of the Commentary on Article 26). Indeed States may feel it appropriate to develop spontaneous exchanges of information about ~~companies which persons who~~ seek to obtain ***unintended treaty benefits*** ~~treaty benefits unintended by the Model Convention.~~

**8.3** ***The application of the second sentence*** This, however, has inherent difficulties and limitations. ~~Thus it has to be interpreted restrictively~~ ***It has to be interpreted in light of its object and purpose, which is to exclude persons who are not subjected to the most comprehensive liability to tax generally imposed by a State,*** because it might otherwise exclude from the scope of the Convention all residents of countries adopting a territorial principle in their taxation, a result which is clearly not intended.

**8.4** It has been the general understanding of most Member countries that the government of each State, as well as any political subdivision or local authority thereof, is a resident of that State for purposes of the Convention. Before 1995, the Model did not explicitly state this; in 1995, Article 4 was amended to conform the text of the Model to this understanding.

**8.52** Paragraph 1 refers to persons who are "liable to tax" in a Contracting State under its laws by reason of various criteria. In many States, a person is considered liable to comprehensive taxation

even if the Contracting State does not in fact impose tax. For example, pension funds, charities and other organisations may be exempted from tax, but they are exempt only if they meet all of the requirements for exemption specified in the tax laws. They are, thus, subject to the tax laws of a Contracting State. Furthermore, if they do not meet the standards specified, they are also required to pay tax. Most States would view such entities as residents for purposes of the Convention (see, for example, paragraph 1 of Article 10 and paragraph 5 of Article 11).

8.63 In some States, however, these entities are not considered liable to tax if they are exempt from tax under domestic tax laws. These States may not regard such entities as residents for purposes of a convention unless these entities are expressly covered by the convention. Contracting States taking this view are free to address the issue in their bilateral negotiations.

8.74 Where a State disregards a partnership for tax purposes and treats it as fiscally transparent, taxing the partners on their share of the partnership income, the partnership itself is not liable to tax and may not, therefore, be considered to be a resident of that State. In such a case, since the income of the partnership "flows through" to the partners under the domestic law of that State, the partners are the persons who are liable to tax on that income and are thus the appropriate persons to claim the benefits of the conventions concluded by the States of which they are residents. This latter result will be achieved even if, under the domestic law of the State of source, the income is attributed to a partnership which is treated as a separate taxable entity. For States which could not agree with this interpretation of the Article, it would be possible to provide for this result in a special provision which would avoid the resulting potential double taxation where the income of the partnership is differently allocated by the two States.

27. Replace paragraph 24 of the Commentary on Article 4 by the following:

24. As a result of these considerations, the "place of effective management" has been adopted as the preference criterion for persons other than individuals. The place of effective management is the place where key management and commercial decisions that are necessary for the conduct of the entity's business *as a whole* are in substance made. ~~The place of effective management will ordinarily be the place where the most senior person or group of persons (for example a board of directors) makes its decisions, the place where the actions to be taken by the entity as a whole are determined; however, no definitive rule can be given and a~~ All relevant facts and circumstances must be examined to determine the place of effective management. An entity may have more than one place of management, but it can have only one place of effective management at any one time.

*24.1 Some countries, however, consider that cases of dual residence of persons who are not individuals are relatively rare and should be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Some countries also consider that such a case-by-case approach is the best way to deal with the difficulties in determining the place of effective management of a legal person that may arise from the use of new communication technologies. These countries are free to leave the question of the residence of these persons to be settled by the competent authorities, which can be done by replacing the paragraph by the following provision:*

*3. Where by reason of the provisions of paragraph 1 a person other than an individual is a resident of both Contracting States, the competent authorities of the Contracting States shall endeavour to determine by mutual agreement the Contracting State of which such person shall be deemed to be a resident for the purposes of the Convention, having regard to its place of effective management, the place where it is incorporated or otherwise constituted and any other relevant factors. In the absence of such agreement, such person shall not be entitled to any relief or exemption from tax provided by this Convention except*

*to the extent and in such manner as may be agreed upon by the competent authorities of the Contracting States.*

*Competent authorities having to apply such a provision to determine the residence of a legal person for purposes of the Convention would be expected to take account of various factors, such as where the meetings of its board of directors or equivalent body are usually held, where the chief executive officer and other senior executives usually carry on their activities, where the senior day-to-day management of the person is carried on, where the person's headquarters are located, which country's laws govern the legal status of the person, where its accounting records are kept, whether determining that the legal person is a resident of one of the Contracting States but not of the other for the purpose of the Convention would carry the risk of an improper use of the provisions of the Convention etc. Countries that consider that the competent authorities should not be given the discretion to solve such cases of dual residence without an indication of the factors to be used for that purpose may want to supplement the provision to refer to these or other factors that they consider relevant. Also, since the application of the provision would normally be requested by the person concerned through the mechanism provided for under paragraph 1 of Article 25, the request should be made within three years from the first notification to that person that its taxation is not in accordance with the Convention since it is considered to be a resident of both Contracting States. Since the facts on which a decision will be based may change over time, the competent authorities that reach a decision under that provision should clarify which period of time is covered by that decision.*

#### **Changes to the Commentary on Article 5**

28. Add the following heading and new paragraphs 42.11 to 42.48 to the Commentary on Article 5 [changes to the draft version of these new paragraphs that was released in December 2006 are shown in Annex I]:

##### *The taxation of services*

*42.11 The combined effect of this Article and Article 7 is that the profits from services performed in the territory of a Contracting State by an enterprise of the other Contracting State are not taxable in the first-mentioned State if they are not attributable to a permanent establishment situated therein (as long as they are not covered by other Articles of the Convention that would allow such taxation). This result, under which these profits are only taxable in the other State, is supported by various policy and administrative considerations. It is consistent with the principle of Article 7 that until an enterprise of one State sets up a permanent establishment in another State, it should not be regarded as participating in the economic life of that State to such an extent that it comes within the taxing jurisdiction of that other State. Also, the provision of services should, as a general rule subject to a few exceptions for some types of service (e.g. those covered by Article 8 and 17), be treated the same way as other business activities and, therefore, the same permanent establishment threshold of taxation should apply to all business activities, including the provision of independent services.*

*42.12 One of the administrative considerations referred to above is that the extension of the cases where source taxation of profits from services performed in the territory of a Contracting State by an enterprise of the other Contracting State would be allowed would increase the compliance and administrative burden of enterprises and tax administrations. This would be especially problematic with respect to services provided to non-business consumers, which would not need to be disclosed to the source country's tax administration for purposes of claiming a business expense deduction. Since the rules that have typically been designed for that purpose are*

*based on the amount of time spent in a State, both tax administrations and enterprises would need to take account of the time spent in a country by personnel of service enterprises and these enterprises would face the risk of having a permanent establishment in unexpected circumstances in cases where they would be unable to determine in advance how long personnel would be present in a particular country (e.g. in situations where that presence would be extended because of unforeseen difficulties or at the request of a client). These cases create particular compliance difficulties as they require an enterprise to retroactively comply with a number of administrative requirements associated with a permanent establishment. These concerns relate to the need to maintain books and records, the taxation of the employees (e.g. the need to make source deductions in another country) as well as other non-income tax requirements.*

*42.13 Also, the source taxation of profits from services performed in the territory of a Contracting State by an enterprise of the other Contracting State that does not have a fixed place of business in the first-mentioned State would create difficulties concerning the determination of the profits to be taxed and the collection of the relevant tax. In most cases, the enterprise would not have the accounting records and assets typically associated with a permanent establishment and there would be no dependent agent which could comply with information and collection requirements. Moreover, whilst it is a common feature of States' domestic law to tax profits from services performed in their territory, it does not necessarily represent optimal tax treaty policy.*

*42.14 Some States, however, are reluctant to adopt the principle of exclusive residence taxation of services that are not attributable to a permanent establishment situated in their territory but that are performed in that territory. These States propose changes to the Article in order to preserve source taxation rights, in certain circumstances, with respect to the profits from such services. States that believe that additional source taxation rights should be allocated under a treaty with respect to services performed in their territory rely on various arguments to support their position.*

*42.15 These States may consider that profits from services performed in a given state should be taxable in that state on the basis of the generally-accepted policy principles for determining when business profits should be considered to have their source within a jurisdiction. They consider that, from the exclusive angle of the pure policy question of where business profits originate, the State where services are performed should have a right to tax even when these services are not attributable to a permanent establishment as defined in Article 5. They would note that the domestic law of many countries provides for the taxation of services performed in these countries even in the absence of a permanent establishment (even though services performed over very short periods of time may not always be taxed in practice).*

*42.16 These States are concerned that some service businesses do not require a fixed place of business in their territory in order to carry on a substantial level of business activities therein and consider that these additional rights are therefore appropriate.*

*42.17 Also, these States consider that even if the taxation of profits of enterprises carried on by non-residents that are not attributable to a permanent establishment raises certain compliance and administrative difficulties, these difficulties do not justify exempting from tax the profits from all services performed on their territory by such enterprises. Those who support that view may refer to mechanisms that are already in place in some States to ensure taxation of services performed in these States but not attributable to permanent establishments (such mechanisms are based on requirements for resident payers to report, and possibly withhold tax on, payments to non-residents for services performed in these States).*

*42.18 It should be noted, however, that all Member States agree that a State should not have source taxation rights on income derived from the provision of services performed by a non-resident outside that State. Under tax conventions, the profits from the sale of goods that are merely imported by a resident of a country and that are neither produced nor distributed through a permanent establishment in that country are not taxable therein and the same principle should apply in the case of services. The mere fact that the payer of the consideration for services is a resident of a State, or that such consideration is borne by a permanent establishment situated in that State or that the result of the services is used within the State does not constitute a sufficient nexus to warrant allocation of income taxing rights to that State.*

*42.19 Another fundamental issue on which there is general agreement relates to the determination of the amount on which tax should be levied. In the case of non-employment services (and subject to possible exceptions such as Article 17) only the profits derived from the services should be taxed. Thus, provisions that are sometimes included in bilateral conventions and that allow a State to tax the gross amount of the fees paid for certain services if the payer of the fees is a resident of that State do not seem to provide an appropriate way of taxing services. First, because these provisions are not restricted to services performed in the State of source, they have the effect of allowing a State to tax business activities that do not take place in that State. Second, these rules allow taxation of the gross payments for services as opposed to the profits therefrom.*

*42.20 Also, Member States agree that it is appropriate, for compliance and other reasons, not to allow a State to tax the profits from services performed in their territory in certain circumstances (e.g. when such services are provided during a very short period of time).*

*42.21 The Committee therefore considered that it was important to circumscribe the circumstances in which States that did not agree with the conclusion in paragraph 42.11 above could, if they wished to, provide that profits from services performed in the territory of a Contracting State by an enterprise of the other Contracting State would be taxable by that State even if there was no permanent establishment, as defined in Article 5, to which the profits were attributable.*

*42.22 Clearly, such taxation should not extend to services performed outside the territory of a State and should apply only to the profits from these services rather than to the payments for them. Also, there should be a minimum level of presence in a State before such taxation is allowed.*

*42.23 The following is an example of a provision that would conform to these requirements; States are free to agree bilaterally to include such a provision in their tax treaties:*

*Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraphs 1, 2 and 3, where an enterprise of a Contracting State performs services in the other Contracting State*

- a) through an individual who is present in that other State for a period or periods exceeding in the aggregate 183 days in any twelve month period, and more than 50 per cent of the gross revenues attributable to active business activities of the enterprise during this period or periods are derived from the services performed in that other State through that individual, or*
- b) for a period or periods exceeding in the aggregate 183 days in any twelve month period, and these services are performed for the same project or for connected projects through one or more individuals who are present and performing such services in that other State*

*the activities carried on in that other State in performing these services shall be deemed to be carried on through a permanent establishment of the enterprise situated in that other State, unless these services are limited to those mentioned in paragraph 4 which, if performed through a fixed place of business, would not make this fixed place of business a permanent establishment under the provisions of that paragraph. For the purposes of this paragraph, services performed by an individual on behalf of one enterprise shall not be considered to be performed by another enterprise through that individual unless that other enterprise supervises, directs or controls the manner in which these services are performed by the individual.*

*42.24 That alternative provision constitutes an extension of the permanent establishment definition that allows taxation of income from services provided by enterprises carried on by non-residents but does so in conformity with the principles described in paragraph 42.22.*

*42.25 The provision has the effect of deeming a permanent establishment to exist where one would not otherwise exist under the definition provided in paragraph 1 and the examples of paragraph 2. It therefore applies notwithstanding these paragraphs. As is the case of paragraph 5 of the Article, the provision provides a supplementary basis under which an enterprise may be found to have a permanent establishment in a State; it could apply, for example, where a consultant provides services over a long period in a country but at different locations that do not meet the conditions of paragraph 1 to constitute one or more permanent establishments. If it can be shown that the enterprise has a permanent establishment within the meaning of paragraphs 1 and 2 (subject to the provisions of paragraph 4), it is not necessary to apply the provision in order to find a permanent establishment. Since the provision simply creates a permanent establishment when none would otherwise exist, it does not provide an alternative definition of the concept of permanent establishment and obviously cannot limit the scope of the definition in paragraph 1 and of the examples in paragraph 2.*

*42.26 The provision also applies notwithstanding paragraph 3. Thus, an enterprise may be deemed to have a permanent establishment because it performs services in a country for the periods of time provided for in the suggested paragraph even if the various locations where these services are performed do not constitute permanent establishments pursuant to paragraph 3. The following example illustrates that result. A self-employed individual resident of one Contracting State provides services and is present in the other Contracting State for more than 183 days during a 12-month period but his services are performed for equal periods of time at a location that is not a construction site (and are not in relation to a construction or installation project) as well as on two unrelated building sites which each lasts less than the period of time provided for in paragraph 3. Whilst paragraph 3 would deem the two sites not to constitute permanent establishments, the proposed paragraph, which applies notwithstanding paragraph 3, would deem the enterprise carried on by that person to have a permanent establishment (since the individual is self-employed, it must be assumed that the 50% of gross revenues test will be met with respect to his enterprise).*

*42.27 Another example is that of a large construction enterprise that carries on a single construction project in a country. If the project is carried on at a single site, the provision should not have a significant impact as long as the period required for the site to constitute a permanent establishment is not substantially different from the period required for the provision to apply. States that wish to use the alternative provision may therefore wish to consider referring to the same periods of time in that provision and in paragraph 3 of Article 5.*



42.28 *The situation, however, may be different if the project, or connected projects, are carried out in different parts of a country. If the individual sites where a single project is carried on do not last sufficiently long for each of them to constitute a permanent establishment (see, however, paragraph 20 of the Commentary on Article 5), a permanent establishment will still be deemed to exist if the conditions of the alternative provision are met. That result is consistent with the purpose of the provision, which is to subject to source taxation foreign enterprises that are present in a country for a sufficiently long period of time notwithstanding the fact that their presence at any particular location in that country is not sufficiently long to make that location a fixed place of business of the enterprise. Some States, however, may consider that paragraph 3 should prevail over the alternative provision and may wish to amend the provision accordingly.*

42.29 *The suggested paragraph only applies to services. Other types of activities that do not constitute services are therefore excluded from its scope. Thus, for instance, the paragraph would not apply to a foreign enterprise that carries on fishing activities in the territorial waters of a State and derives revenues from selling its catches (in some treaties, however, activities such as fishing and oil extraction may be covered by specific provisions).*

42.30 *The provision applies to services performed by an enterprise. Thus, services must be provided by the enterprise to third parties. Clearly, the provision could not have the effect of deeming an enterprise to have a permanent establishment merely because services are provided to that enterprise. For example, services might be provided by an individual to his employer without that employer performing any services (e.g. an employee who provides manufacturing services to an enterprise that sells manufactured products). Another example would be where the employees of one enterprise provide services in one country to an associated enterprise under detailed instructions and close supervision of the latter enterprise; in that case, assuming the services in question are not for the benefit of any third party, the latter enterprise does not itself perform any services to which the provision could apply.*

42.31 *Also, the provision only applies to services that are performed in a State by a foreign enterprise. Whether or not the relevant services are furnished to a resident of the State does not matter; what matters is that the services are performed in the State through an individual present in that State.*

42.32 *The alternative provision does not specify that the services must be provided “through employees or other personnel engaged by the enterprise”, a phrase that is sometimes found in bilateral treaties. It simply provides that the services must be performed by an enterprise. As explained in paragraph 10, the business of an enterprise (which, in the context of the paragraph, would include the services performed in a Contracting State) “is carried on mainly by the entrepreneur or persons who are in paid-employment relationship with the enterprise (personnel). This personnel includes employees and other persons receiving instructions from the enterprise (e.g. dependent agents).” For the purposes of the alternative provision, the individuals through which an enterprise provides services will therefore be the individuals referred to in paragraph 10, subject to the exception included in the last sentence of that provision (see paragraph 42.43 below).*

42.33 *The alternative provision will apply in two different sets of circumstances. Subparagraph a) looks at the duration of the presence of the individual through whom an enterprise derives most of its revenues in a way that is similar to that of subparagraph 2 a) of Article 15; subparagraph b) looks at the duration of the activities of the individuals through whom the services are performed.*

42.34 *Subparagraph a) deals primarily with the situation of an enterprise carried on by a single individual. It also covers, however, the case of an enterprise which, during the relevant period or periods, derives most of its revenues from services provided by one individual. Such extension is necessary to avoid a different treatment between, for example, a case where services are provided by an individual and a case where similar services are provided by a company all the shares of which are owned by the only employee of that company.*

42.35 *The subparagraph may apply in different situations where an enterprise performs services through an individual, such as when the services are performed by a sole proprietorship, by the partner of a partnership, by the employee of a company etc. The main conditions are that*

- *the individual through which the services are performed be present in a State for a period or periods exceeding in the aggregate 183 days in any twelve month period, and*
- *more than 50 per cent of the gross revenues attributable to active business activities of the enterprise during the period or periods of presence be derived from the services performed in that State through that individual.*

42.36 *The first condition refers to the days of presence of an individual. Since the formulation is identical to that of subparagraph 2 a) of Article 15, the principles applicable to the computation of the days of presence for purposes of that last subparagraph are also applicable to the computation of the days of presence for the purpose of the suggested paragraph.*

42.37 *For the purposes of the second condition, according to which more than 50 per cent of the gross revenues attributable to active business activities of the enterprise during the relevant period or periods must be derived from the services performed in that State through that individual, the gross revenues attributable to active business activities of the enterprise would represent what the enterprise has charged or should charge for its active business activities, regardless of when the actual billing will occur or of domestic law rules concerning when such revenues should be taken into account for tax purposes. Such active business activities are not restricted to activities related to the provision of services. Gross revenues attributable to “active business activities” would clearly exclude income from passive investment activities, including, for example, receiving interest and dividends from investing surplus funds. States may, however, prefer to use a different test, such as “50% of the business profits of the enterprise during this period or periods is derived from the services” or “the services represent the most important part of the business activities of the enterprise”, in order to identify an enterprise that derives most of its revenues from services performed by an individual on their territory.*

42.38 *The following examples illustrate the application of subparagraph a) (assuming that the alternative provision has been included in a treaty between States R and S):*

- *Example 1: W, a resident of State R, is a consultant who carries on her business activities in her own name (i.e. that enterprise is a sole proprietorship). Between 2 February 00 and 1 February 01, she is present in State S for a period or periods of 190 days and during that period all the revenues from her business activities are derived from services that she performs in State S. Since subparagraph a) applies in that situation, these services shall be deemed to be performed through a permanent establishment in State S.*
- *Example 2: X, a resident of State R, is one of the two shareholders and employees of XCO, a company resident of State R that provides engineering services. Between 20 December 00 and 19 December 01, X is present in State S for a period or periods of 190 days and during that period, 70% of all the gross revenues of XCO attributable to active business activities are derived from the services that X performs in State S. Since subparagraph a) applies in*

*that situation, these services shall be deemed to be performed through a permanent establishment of XCO in State S.*

- Example 3: X and Y, who are residents of State R, are the two partners of X&Y, a partnership established in State R which provides legal services. For tax purposes, State R treats partnerships as transparent entities. Between 15 July 00 and 14 July 01, Y is present in State S for a period or periods of 240 days and during that period, 55% of all the fees of X&Y attributable to X&Y’s active business activities are derived from the services that Y performs in State S. Subparagraph a) applies in that situation and, for the purposes of the taxation of X and Y, the services performed by Y are deemed to be performed through a permanent establishment in State S.*
- Example 4: Z, a resident of State R, is one of 10 employees of ACO, a company resident of State R that provides accounting services. Between 10 April 00 and 9 April 01, Z is present in State S for a period or periods of 190 days and during that period, 12% of all the gross revenues of ACO attributable to its active business activities are derived from the services that Z performs in State S. Subparagraph a) does not apply in that situation and, unless subparagraph b) applies to ACO, the alternative provision will not deem ACO to have a permanent establishment in State S.*

*42.39 Subparagraph b) addresses the situation of an enterprise that performs services in a Contracting State in relation to a particular project (or for connected projects) and which performs these through one or more individuals over a substantial period. The period or periods referred to in the subparagraph apply in relation to the enterprise and not to the individuals. It is therefore not necessary that it be the same individual or individuals who perform the services and are present throughout these periods. As long as, on a given day, the enterprise is performing its services through at least one individual who is doing so and is present in the State, that day would be included in the period or periods referred to in the subparagraph. Clearly, however, that day will count as a single day regardless of how many individuals are performing such services for the enterprise during that day.*

*42.40 The reference to an “enterprise [...] performing these services for the same project” should be interpreted from the perspective of the enterprise that provides the services. Thus, an enterprise may have two different projects to provide services to a single customer (e.g. to provide tax advice and to provide training in an area unrelated to tax) and whilst these may be related to a single project of the customer, one should not consider that the services are performed for the same project.*

*42.41 The reference to “connected projects” is intended to cover cases where the services are provided in the context of separate projects carried on by an enterprise but these projects have a commercial coherence (see paragraphs 5.3 and 5.4 above). The determination of whether projects are connected will depend on the facts and circumstances of each case but factors that would generally be relevant for that purpose include*

- whether the projects are covered by a single master contract;*
- where the projects are covered by different contracts, whether these different contracts were concluded with the same person or with related persons and whether the conclusion of the additional contracts would reasonably have been expected when concluding the first contract;*
- whether the nature of the work involved under the different projects is the same;*
- whether the same individuals are performing the services under the different projects.*

*42.42 Subparagraph b) requires that during the relevant periods, the enterprise is performing services through individuals who are performing such services in that other State. For that purpose, a period during which individuals are performing services means a period during which the services are actually provided, which would normally correspond to the working days of these individuals. An enterprise that agrees to keep personnel available in case a client needs the services of such personnel and charges the client standby charges for making such personnel available is performing services through the relevant individuals even though they are idle during the working days when they remain available.*

*42.43 As indicated in paragraph 42.32, for the purposes of the alternative provision, the individuals through whom an enterprise provides services will be the individuals referred to in paragraph 10 above. If, however, an individual is providing the services on behalf of one enterprise, the exception included in the last sentence of the provision clarifies that the services performed by that individual will only be taken into account for another enterprise if the work of that individual is exercised under the supervision, direction or control of the last-mentioned enterprise. Thus, for example, where a company that has agreed by contract to provide services to third parties provides these services through the employees of a separate enterprise (e.g. an enterprise providing outsourced services), the services performed through these employees will not be taken into account for purposes of the application of subparagraph b) to the company that entered into the contract to provide services to third parties.*

*42.44 The following examples illustrate the application of subparagraph b) (assuming that the alternative provision has been included in a treaty between States R and S):*

- Example 1: X, a company resident of State R, has agreed with company Y to carry on geological surveys in various locations in State S where company Y owns exploration rights. Between 15 May 00 and 14 May 01, these surveys are carried on over 185 working days by employees of X as well as by self-employed individuals to whom X has sub-contracted part of the work but who work under the direction, supervision or control of X. Since subparagraph b) applies in that situation, these services shall be deemed to be performed through a permanent establishment of X in State S.*
- Example 2: Y, a resident of State T, is one of the two shareholders and employees of WYCO, a company resident of State R that provides training services. Between 10 June 00 and 9 June 01, Y performs services in State S under a contract that WYCO has concluded with a company which is a resident of State S to train the employees of that company. These services are performed in State S over 185 working days. During the period of Y's presence in State S, the revenues from these services account for 40% of the gross revenues of WYCO from its active business activities. Whilst subparagraph a) does not apply in that situation, subparagraph b) applies and these services shall be deemed to be performed through a permanent establishment of WYCO in State S.*
- Example 3: ZCO, a resident of State R, has outsourced to company OCO, which is a resident of State S, the technical support that it provides by telephone to its clients. OCO operates a call centre for a number of companies similar to ZCO. During the period of 1 January 00 to 31 December 00, the employees of OCO provide technical support to various clients of ZCO. Since the employees of OCO are not under the supervision, direction or control of ZCO, it cannot be considered, for the purposes of subparagraph b), that ZCO is performing services in State S through these employees. Additionally, whilst the services provided by OCO's employees to the various clients of ZCO are similar, these are provided under different contracts concluded by ZCO with unrelated clients: these services cannot, therefore, be considered to be rendered for the same or connected projects.*

42.45 *The 183-day thresholds provided for in the alternative provision may give rise to the same type of abuse as is described in paragraph 18 above. As indicated in that paragraph, legislative or judicial anti-avoidance rules may apply to prevent such abuses. Some States, however, may prefer to deal with them by including a specific provision in the Article. Such a provision could be drafted along the following lines:*

*For the purposes of paragraph [x], where an enterprise of a Contracting State that is performing services in the other Contracting State is, during a period of time, associated with another enterprise that performs substantially similar services in that other State for the same project or for connected projects through one or more individuals who, during that period, are present and performing such services in that State, the first-mentioned enterprise shall be deemed, during that period of time, to be performing services in the other State for that same project or for connected projects through these individuals. For the purpose of the preceding sentence, an enterprise shall be associated with another enterprise if one is controlled directly or indirectly by the other, or both are controlled directly or indirectly by the same persons, regardless of whether or not these persons are residents of one of the Contracting States.*

42.46 *According to the provision, the activities carried on in the other State by the individuals referred to in subparagraph a) or b) through which the services are performed by the enterprise during the period or periods referred to in these subparagraphs are deemed to be carried on through a permanent establishment that the enterprise has in that other State. The enterprise is therefore deemed to have a permanent establishment in that other State for the purposes of all the provisions of the Convention (including, for example, paragraph 5 of Article 11 and paragraph 2 of Article 15) and the profits derived from the activities carried on in the other State in providing these services are attributable to that permanent establishment and are therefore taxable in that State pursuant to Article 7.*

42.47 *By deeming the activities carried on in performing the relevant services to be carried on through a permanent establishment that the enterprise has in a Contracting State, the provision allows the application of Article 7 and therefore, the taxation, by that State, of the profits attributable to these activities. As a general rule, it is important to ensure that only the profits derived from the activities carried on in performing the services are taxed; whilst there may be certain exceptions, it would be detrimental to the cross-border trade in services if payments received for these services were taxed regardless of the direct or indirect expenses incurred for the purpose of performing these services.*

42.48 *This alternative provision will not apply if the services performed are limited to those mentioned in paragraph 4 of the Article 5 which, if performed through a fixed place of business, would not make this fixed place of business a permanent establishment under the provisions of that paragraph. Since the provision refers to the performance of services by the enterprise and this would not cover services provided to the enterprise itself, most of the provisions of paragraph 4 would not appear to be relevant. It may be, however, that the services that are performed are exclusively of a preparatory or auxiliary character (e.g. the supply of information to prospective customers when this is merely preparatory to the conduct of the ordinary business activities of the enterprise; see paragraph 23 above) and in that case, it is logical not to consider that the performance of these services will constitute a permanent establishment.*

## Changes to the Commentary on Article 7

29. Replace the Commentary on Article 7 by the following [*changes to the draft version of the revised Commentary released in April 2007 are shown in Annex 2*]:

### I. Preliminary remarks

1. This Article is in many respects a continuation of, and a corollary to, Article 5 on the definition of the concept of permanent establishment. The permanent establishment criterion is commonly used in international double taxation conventions to determine whether a particular kind of income shall or shall not be taxed in the country from which it originates but the criterion does not of itself provide a complete solution to the problem of the double taxation of business profits; in order to prevent such double taxation it is necessary to supplement the definition of permanent establishment by adding to it an agreed set of rules ~~by~~ of reference to which the profits *attributable to* ~~made by~~ the permanent establishment, ~~or by an enterprise trading with a foreign member of the same group of enterprises,~~ are to be calculated. To put the matter in a slightly different way, when an enterprise of a Contracting State carries on business in the other Contracting State the authorities of that second State have to ask themselves two questions before they levy tax on the profits of the enterprise: the first question is whether the enterprise has a permanent establishment in their country; if the answer is in the affirmative the second question is what, if any, are the profits on which that permanent establishment should pay tax. It is with the rules to be used in determining the answer to this second question that Article 7 is concerned. Rules for ascertaining the profits of an enterprise of a Contracting State which is trading with an enterprise of the other Contracting State when both enterprises are *associated members of the same group of enterprises* or are under the same effective control are dealt with in Article 9.

2. ~~It should perhaps be said at this point that neither Article is strikingly novel or~~ *Articles 7 and 9 are not particularly detailed and were not strikingly novel when they were adopted by the OECD.* The question of what criteria should be used in attributing profits to a permanent establishment, and of how to allocate profits from transactions between *associated enterprises, under common control,* has had to be dealt with in a large number of double taxation conventions and *in various models developed by the League of Nations before the OECD first dealt with it and* ~~it is fair to say that the solutions adopted have generally conformed to a standard pattern.~~

3. It is generally recognised that the essential principles on which this standard pattern is based are well founded, and, *when the OECD first examined that question, it was* ~~it has been~~ thought sufficient to restate them with some slight amendments and modifications primarily aimed at producing greater clarity. The two Articles incorporate a number of directives. They do not, nor in the nature of things could they be expected to, lay down a series of precise rules for dealing with every kind of problem that may arise when an enterprise of one State makes profits in another. Modern commerce organises itself in an infinite variety of ways, and it would be quite impossible within the fairly narrow limits of an Article in a double taxation convention to specify an exhaustive set of rules for dealing with every kind of problem that may arise.

4. ~~There have been, since the 1950s, rapid developments of activities in space: the launching of rockets and spaceships, the permanent presence of many satellites in space with human crews spending longer and longer periods on board, industrial activities being carried out in space, etc. Since all this could give rise to new situations as regards the implementation of double taxation conventions, would it be desirable to insert in the Model Convention special provisions covering these new situations? Firstly, no country envisages extending its tax sovereignty to activities exercised in space or treating these as activities exercised on its territory. Consequently, space could not be considered as the source of income or profits and hence activities carried out or to be carried out there would not run any new~~

risks of double taxation. Secondly, if there are double taxation problems, the Model Convention, by giving a ruling on the taxing rights of the State of residence and the State of source of the income, should be sufficient to settle them. The same applies with respect to individuals working on board space stations: it is not necessary to derogate from double taxation conventions, since Articles 15 and 19, as appropriate, are sufficient to determine which Contracting State has the right to tax remuneration and Article 4 should make it possible to determine the residence of the persons concerned, it being understood that any difficulties or doubts can be settled in accordance with the mutual agreement procedure.

4. *It must be acknowledged, however, that there has been considerable variation in the interpretation of the general directives of Article 7 and of the provisions of earlier conventions and models on which the wording of the Article is based. This lack of a common interpretation of Article 7 can lead to problems of double taxation and non-taxation. For that reason, it is* ~~However, since such problems may result in unrelieved double taxation or non-taxation of certain profits, it is more~~ important for tax authorities to agree on mutually consistent methods of dealing with these problems, using, where appropriate, the mutual agreement procedure provided for in Article 25.25, ~~than to adopt unilateral interpretations of basic principles to be adhered to despite differences of opinion with other States. In this respect, the methods for solving some of the problems most often encountered are discussed below.~~

5. *Over the years, the Committee on Fiscal Affairs has therefore spent considerable time and effort trying to ensure a more consistent interpretation and application of the rules of the Article. Minor changes to the wording of the Article and a number of changes to the Commentary were made when the 1977 Model Tax Convention was adopted. A report that addressed that question in the specific case of banks was published in 1984.<sup>1</sup> In 1987, noting that the determination of profits attributable to a permanent establishment could give rise to some uncertainty, the Committee undertook a review of the question which led to the adoption, in 1993, of the report entitled "Attribution of Income to Permanent Establishments"<sup>2</sup> and to subsequent changes to the Commentary.*

6. *Despite that work, the practices of OECD and non-OECD countries regarding the attribution of profits to permanent establishments and these countries' interpretation of Article 7 continued to vary considerably. The Committee acknowledged the need to provide more certainty to taxpayers: in its report "Transfer Pricing Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and Tax Administrations", adopted in 1995, it indicated that further work would address the application of the arm's length principle to permanent establishments. That work resulted, in 2008, in a report entitled "Attribution of Profits to Permanent Establishments". The approach developed in that report was not constrained by either the original intent or by the historical practice and interpretation of Article 7. Instead, the focus has been on formulating the most preferable approach to attributing profits to a permanent establishment under Article 7 given modern-day multinational operations and trade.*

7. *The approach put forward in that Report deals with the attribution of profits both to permanent establishments in general (Part I of the Report) and, in particular, to permanent*

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1. *"The Taxation of Multinational Banking Enterprises", in Transfer Pricing and Multinational Enterprises - Three Taxation Issues, OECD, Paris, 1984.*
  2. *Attribution of Income to Permanent Establishments, Issues in International Taxation No. 5, OECD, Paris, 1994; reproduced in Volume II of the loose-leaf version of the OECD Model Tax Convention at page R(13)-1.*

*establishments of businesses operating in the financial sector, where trading through a permanent establishment is widespread (Part II of the Report, which deals with permanent establishments of banks, Part III, which deals with permanent establishments of enterprises carrying on global trading and Part IV, which deals with permanent establishments of enterprises carrying on insurance activities). The Committee considers that the guidance included in the Report represents a better approach to attributing profits to permanent establishments than has previously been available. It does recognise, however, that there are differences between some of the conclusions of the Report and the interpretation of the Article previously given in this Commentary. For that reason, this Commentary has been amended to incorporate a number of conclusions of the Report that did not conflict with the previous version of this Commentary, which prescribed specific approaches in some areas and left considerable leeway in others. The Report therefore represents internationally agreed principles and, to the extent that it does not conflict with this Commentary, provides guidelines for the application of the arm's length principle incorporated in the Article.*

8.2.1 Before 2000, income from professional services and other activities of an independent character was dealt *with* under a separate Article, i.e. Article 14. The provisions of that Article were similar to those applicable to business profits but it used the concept of fixed base rather than that of permanent establishment since it had originally been thought that the latter concept should be reserved to commercial and industrial activities. However, it was not always clear which activities fell within Article 14 as opposed to Article 7. The elimination of Article 14 in 2000 reflected the fact that there were no intended differences between the concepts of permanent establishment, as used in Article 7, and fixed base, as used in Article 14, or between how profits were computed and tax was calculated according to which of Article 7 or 14 applied. The effect of the deletion of Article 14 is that income derived from professional services or other activities of an independent character is now dealt with under Article 7 as business profits. This was confirmed by the addition of a definition of the term “business” which expressly provides that this term includes professional services or other activities of an independent character.

## II. Commentary on the provisions of the Article

### *Paragraph 1*

9.3. This paragraph is concerned with two questions. First, it restates the generally accepted principle of double taxation conventions that an enterprise of one State shall not be taxed in the other State unless it carries on business in that other State through a permanent establishment situated therein. It is hardly necessary to argue here the merits of this principle. It is perhaps sufficient to say that it has come to be accepted in international fiscal matters that until an enterprise of one State sets up a permanent establishment in another State it should not properly be regarded as participating in the economic life of that other State to such an extent that it comes within the jurisdiction of that other State's taxing rights.

10.5. The second *principle, which is reflected* and more important point is that it is laid down — in the second sentence *of the paragraph, is* — that *the right to tax of the State where the* when an enterprise carries on business through a permanent establishment *is situated* in another State that State may tax the profits of the enterprise but only so much of them as is attributable to the permanent establishment, in other words that the right to tax does not extend to profits that the enterprise may derive from that State *but that are not attributable to* otherwise than through the permanent establishment. This is a question on which there *have historically been* may be differences of *view, a few countries having some time ago pursued a principle of general “force of attraction” according to which income such as other business profits, dividends, interest and royalties arising from*



~~sources in their territory was fully taxable by them if the beneficiary had~~ taken the view that when a foreign enterprise has set up a permanent establishment *therein even though such income was clearly not attributable to that permanent establishment. Whilst some bilateral tax conventions include a limited anti-avoidance rule based on a restricted force of attraction approach that only applies to* within their territory it has brought itself within their fiscal jurisdiction to such a degree that they can properly tax all profits that the enterprise derives from their territory, whether the profits come from the permanent establishment or from other activities in that territory. But it is thought that it is preferable to adopt the principle contained in the second sentence of paragraph 1, namely that the test that business profits *derived from activities similar to those carried on by* should not be taxed unless there is a permanent *establishment, the general force of attraction approach described above has now been rejected by international tax treaty practice. The principle that is now generally accepted in double taxation conventions* establishment is one that should properly be applied not to the enterprise itself but to its profits. To put the matter another way, the principle laid down in the second sentence of paragraph 1 is based on the view that in taxing the profits that a foreign enterprise derives from a particular country, the *tax* fiscal authorities of that country should look at the separate sources of profit that the enterprise derives from their country and should apply to each the permanent establishment *test, subject* test. This is of course without prejudice to *the possible application of* other Articles of view, and since it is an important question it may be useful to set out the arguments for each point of view. 7. Apart from the *Convention. This* background question of fiscal jurisdiction, the main argument commonly put forward against the solution *allows simpler and more* advocated above is that there is a risk that it might facilitate avoidance of tax. This solution, the argument runs, might leave it open to an enterprise to set up in a particular country a permanent establishment which made no profits, was never intended to make profits, but existed solely to supervise a trade, perhaps of an extensive nature, that the enterprise carried on in that country through independent agents and the like. Moreover, the argument goes, although the whole of this trade might be directed and arranged by the permanent establishment, it might be difficult in practice to prove that that was the case. If the rates of tax are higher in that country than they are in the country in which the head office is situated, then the enterprise has a strong incentive to see that it pays as little tax as possible in the other territory; the main criticism of the solution advocated above is that it might conceivably provide the enterprise with a means of ensuring that result. 8. Apart again from the question of the proper extent of fiscal jurisdiction, the main argument in favour of the proposed solution is that it is conducive to simple and efficient *tax* administration; and *compliance, and* that it is more closely adapted to the way in which business is commonly *carried on*. transacted. The organisation of modern business is highly complex. ~~There are~~ OECD Member countries, there are a considerable number of companies each of which is engaged in a wide diversity of activities and is carrying on business extensively in many countries. ~~It may be that such a company may have set up a permanent establishment in another second country and may be transacting a considerable amount of business through~~ *which it carries on manufacturing activities whilst* that permanent establishment in one particular kind of manufacture; that a different part of the same company *sells* may be selling quite different goods or manufactures in that *other* second country through independent *agents. That* agents; and that the company may have perfectly *valid commercial* genuine reasons for *doing so: these may be* taking this course, reasons based, for example, either on the historical pattern of its business or on commercial convenience. *If the country in which* Is it desirable that the *permanent establishment is situated wished to* fiscal authorities should go so far as to *try* insist on trying to *determine, and tax,* search out the profit element of each of the transactions carried on through independent agents, with a view to aggregating that profit with the profits of the permanent *establishment, that approach would* establishment? Such an Article might interfere seriously with ordinary commercial *activities* processes; and *would* so be *contrary to* out of keeping with the aims of the Convention.

~~9. — It is no doubt true that evasion of tax could be practised by undisclosed channelling of profits away from a permanent establishment and that this may sometimes need to be watched, but it is necessary in considering this point to preserve a sense of proportion and to bear in mind what is said above. It is not, of course, sought in any way to sanction any such malpractice, or to shelter any concern thus evading tax from the consequences that would follow from detection by the fiscal authorities concerned. It is fully recognised that Contracting States should be free to use all methods at their disposal to fight fiscal evasion.~~

~~10. — For the reasons given above, it is thought that the argument that the solution advocated might lead to increased avoidance of tax by foreign enterprises should not be given undue weight. Much more importance is attached to the desirability of interfering as little as possible with existing business organisation and of refraining from inflicting demands for information on foreign enterprises which are unnecessarily onerous.~~

***11. When referring to the part of the profits of an enterprise that is attributable to a permanent establishment, the second sentence of paragraph 1 refers directly to paragraph 2, which provides the directive for determining what profits should be attributed to a permanent establishment. As paragraph 2 is part of the context in which the sentence must be read, that sentence should not be interpreted in a way that could contradict paragraph 2, e.g. by interpreting it as restricting the amount of profits that can be attributed to a permanent establishment to the amount of profits of the enterprise as a whole. Thus, whilst paragraph 1 provides that a Contracting State may only tax the profits of an enterprise of the other Contracting to the extent that they are attributable to a permanent establishment situated in the first State, it is paragraph 2 that determines the meaning of the phrase “profits attributable to a permanent establishment”. In other words, the directive of paragraph 2 may result in profits being attributed to a permanent establishment even though the enterprise as a whole has never made profits; conversely, that directive may result in no profits being attributed to a permanent establishment even though the enterprise as a whole has made profits.***

***12. Clearly, however, the Contracting State of the enterprise has an interest in the directive of paragraph 2 being correctly applied by the State where the permanent establishment is located. Since that directive applies to both Contracting States, the State of the enterprise must, in accordance with Article 23, eliminate double taxation on the profits properly attributable to the permanent establishment. In other words, if the State where the permanent establishment is located attempts to tax profits that are not attributable to the permanent establishment under Article 7, this may result in double taxation of profits that should properly be taxed only in the State of the enterprise.***

~~13.10.1~~ The purpose of paragraph 1 is to provide limits to the right of one Contracting State to tax the business profits of enterprises that are residents of the other Contracting State. The paragraph does not limit the right of a Contracting State to tax its own residents under controlled foreign companies provisions found in its domestic law even though such tax imposed on these residents may be computed by reference to the part of the profits of an enterprise that is resident of the other Contracting State that is attributable to these residents' participation in that enterprise. Tax so levied by a State on its own residents does not reduce the profits of the enterprise of the other State and may not, therefore, be said to have been levied on such profits (see also paragraph 23 of the Commentary on Article 1 and paragraphs 37 to 39 of the Commentary on Article 10).

*Paragraph 2*

~~14.11.~~ This paragraph contains the central directive on which the **attribution** allocation of profits to a permanent establishment is intended to be based. The paragraph incorporates the view, ~~which is generally contained in bilateral conventions,~~ that the profits to be attributed to a permanent establishment are those which that permanent establishment would have made if, instead of dealing with **the rest of the enterprise,** ~~its head office,~~ it had been dealing with an entirely separate enterprise under conditions and at prices prevailing in the ordinary market. This corresponds to the “arm’s length principle” discussed in the Commentary on Article 9. Normally, the profits so determined would be the same profits that one would expect to be determined by the ordinary processes of good business accountancy. ~~The arm's length principle also extends to the allocation of profits which the permanent establishment may derive from transactions with other permanent establishments of the enterprise; but Contracting States which consider that the existing paragraph does not in fact cover these more general transactions may, in their bilateral negotiations, agree upon more detailed provisions or amend paragraph 2 to read as follows:~~

~~“Subject to the provisions of paragraph 3, where an enterprise of a Contracting State carries on business in the other Contracting State through a permanent establishment situated therein, there shall in each Contracting State be attributed to that permanent establishment the profits which it might be expected to make if it were a distinct and independent enterprise engaged in the same or similar activities under the same or similar conditions.”~~

**15. The paragraph requires that this principle be applied in each Contracting State. Clearly, this does not mean that the amount on which the enterprise will be taxed in the source State will, for a given period of time, be exactly the same as the amount of income with respect to which the other State will have to provide relief pursuant to Articles 23 A or 23 B. Variations between the domestic laws of the two States concerning matters such as depreciation rates, the timing of the recognition of income and restrictions on the deductibility of certain expenses that are in accordance with paragraph 3 of this Article will normally result in a different amount of taxable income in each State.**

~~16.12.~~In the great majority of cases, trading accounts of the permanent establishment — which are commonly available if only because a well-run business organisation is normally concerned to know what is the profitability of its various branches — will be used ~~by the taxation authorities concerned to~~ ascertain the profit properly attributable to that establishment. Exceptionally there may be no separate accounts (cf. paragraphs ~~5124 to 5528~~ below). But where there are such accounts they will naturally form the starting point for any processes of adjustment in case adjustment is required to produce the amount of **profits that are properly attributable — profits to the permanent establishment under the directive contained in paragraph 2.** It should perhaps be emphasized that ~~this the directive contained in paragraph 2~~ is no justification for tax administrations to construct hypothetical profit figures *in vacuo*; it is always necessary to start with the real facts of the situation as they appear from the business records of the permanent establishment and to adjust as may be shown to be necessary the profit figures which those facts produce. *As noted in paragraph 19 below and as explained in paragraph 39 of Part I of the Report “Attribution of Profits to Permanent Establishments”, however, records and documentation must satisfy certain requirements in order to be considered to reflect the real facts of the situation.*

**17. In order to determine whether such an adjustment is required by paragraph 2, it will be necessary to determine the profits that would have been realized if the permanent establishment had been a separate and distinct enterprise engaged in the same or similar activities under the same or similar conditions and dealing wholly independently with the rest of the enterprise. Sections D-2 and D-3 of Part I of the Report “Attribution of Profits to Permanent Establishments” describe the two-step approach through which this should be done. This approach will allow the calculation of the profits attributable to all the activities carried on through the permanent establishment, including**

*transactions with other unrelated enterprises, transactions with related enterprises and dealings (e.g. the internal transfer of capital or property or the internal provision of services – see for instance paragraphs 31 and 32) with other parts of the enterprise (under the second step described above), in accordance with the directive of paragraph 2.*

*18. The first step of that approach requires the identification of the activities carried on through the permanent establishment. This should be done through a functional and factual analysis (the guidance found in the Transfer Pricing Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and Tax Administrations<sup>3</sup> will be relevant for that purpose). Under that first step, the economically significant activities and responsibilities undertaken through the permanent establishment will be identified. This analysis should, to the extent relevant, consider the activities and responsibilities undertaken through the permanent establishment in the context of the activities and responsibilities undertaken by the enterprise as a whole, particularly those parts of the enterprise that engage in dealings with the permanent establishment. Under the second step of that approach, the remuneration of any such dealings will be determined by applying by analogy the principles developed for the application of the arm's length principle between associated enterprises (these principles are articulated in the Transfer Pricing Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and Tax Administrations) by reference to the functions performed, assets used and risk assumed by the enterprise through the permanent establishment and through the rest of the enterprise.*

~~19.12.1~~ ~~This raises the question as to what extent such accounts~~ *A question that may arise is to what extent accounting records should be relied upon when they are based on agreements between the head office and its permanent establishments (or between the permanent establishments themselves). Clearly, such internal agreements cannot qualify as legally binding contracts. However, to the extent that the trading accounts of the head office and the permanent establishments are both prepared symmetrically on the basis of such agreements and that those agreements reflect the functions performed by the different parts of the enterprise, these trading accounts could be accepted by tax authorities. ~~Accounts should~~ ~~In that respect, accounts could~~ ~~not be regarded as prepared symmetrically,~~ **however,** unless the values of transactions or the methods of attributing profits or expenses in the books of the permanent establishment corresponded exactly to the values or methods of attribution in the books of the head office in terms of the national currency or functional currency in which the enterprise recorded its transactions. **Also, as explained in paragraph 16, records and documentation must satisfy certain requirements in order to be considered to reflect the real facts of the situation. For example,** ~~However,~~ where trading accounts are based on internal agreements that reflect purely artificial arrangements instead of the real economic functions of the different parts of the enterprise, these agreements should simply be ignored and the accounts corrected accordingly. **One such case** ~~This would be~~ ~~where the case if, for example,~~ a permanent establishment involved in sales were, under such an internal agreement, given the role of principal (accepting all the risks and entitled to all the profits from the sales) when in fact the permanent establishment concerned was nothing more than an intermediary or agent (incurring limited risks and entitled to receive only a limited share of the resulting income) or, conversely, were given the role of intermediary or agent when in reality it was a principal.*

*20. It may therefore be concluded that accounting records and contemporaneous documentation that meet the above-mentioned requirements constitute a useful starting point for the purposes of attributing profits to a permanent establishment. Taxpayers are encouraged to*

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3. *The original version of that report was approved by the Council of the OECD on 27 June 1995. Published in a loose-leaf format as Transfer Pricing Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and Tax Administrations, OECD, Paris, 1995.*

*prepare such documentation, as it may reduce substantially the potential for controversies. Section D-2 (vi) b) of Part I of the Report "Attribution of Profits" discusses the conditions under which tax administrations would give effect to such documentation.*

~~12.2—In this respect, it should also be noted that the principle set out in paragraph 2 is subject to the provisions contained in paragraph 3, especially as regards the treatment of payments which, under the name of interest, royalties, etc. are made by a permanent establishment to its head office in return for money loaned, or patent rights conceded by the latter to the permanent establishment (cf. paragraphs 17.1 ff below).~~

~~13.—Even where a permanent establishment is able to produce detailed accounts which purport to show the profits arising from its activities, it may still be necessary for the taxation authorities of the country concerned to rectify those accounts in accordance with the arm's length principle (cf. paragraph 2 above). Adjustment of this kind may be necessary, for example, because goods have been invoiced from the head office to the permanent establishment at prices which are not consistent with this principle, and profits have thus been diverted from the permanent establishment to the head office, or vice versa.~~

~~14.—In such cases, it will usually be appropriate to substitute for the prices used ordinary market prices for the same or similar goods supplied on the same or similar conditions. Clearly the price at which goods can be bought on open market terms varies with the quantity required and the period over which they will be supplied; such factors would have to be taken into account in deciding the open market price to be used. It is perhaps only necessary to mention at this point that there may sometimes be perfectly good commercial reasons for an enterprise invoicing its goods at prices less than those prevailing in the ordinary market; this may, for example, be a perfectly normal commercial method of establishing a competitive position in a new market and should not then be taken as evidence of an attempt to divert profits from one country to another. Difficulties may also occur in the case of proprietary goods produced by an enterprise, all of which are sold through its permanent establishments; if in such circumstances there is no open market price, and it is thought that the figures in the accounts are unsatisfactory, it may be necessary to calculate the permanent establishment's profits by other methods, for example, by applying an average ratio of gross profit to the turnover of the permanent establishment and then deducting from the figure so obtained the proper amount of expenses incurred. Clearly many special problems of this kind may arise in individual cases but the general rule should always be that the profits attributed to a permanent establishment should be based on that establishment's accounts insofar as accounts are available which represent the real facts of the situation. If available accounts do not represent the real facts then new accounts will have to be constructed, or the original ones rewritten, and for this purpose the figures to be used will be those prevailing in the open market.~~

~~21.15. Many States consider that there is ***There may be*** a realisation of a taxable profit when an asset, whether or not trading stock, forming part of the business property of a permanent establishment situated within ***a State***'s~~their~~ territory is transferred to a permanent establishment or the head office of the same enterprise situated in another State. Article 7 allows ***the former States***~~such States~~ to tax profits deemed to arise in connection with such a transfer. Such profits may be determined as indicated below. In cases where such transfer takes place, whether or not it is a permanent one, the question arises as to when taxable profits are realised. In practice, where such property has a substantial market value and is likely to appear on the balance sheet of the importing permanent establishment or other part of the enterprise after the taxation year during that in which the transfer occurred, the realisation of the taxable profits will not, so far as the enterprise as a whole is concerned, necessarily take place in the taxation year of the transfer under consideration. However, the mere fact that the property leaves the~~

purview of a tax jurisdiction may trigger the taxation of the accrued gains attributable to that property as the concept of realisation depends on each country's domestic law.

~~22.45.1~~ Where the countries in which the permanent establishments operate levy tax on the profits accruing from an internal transfer as soon as it is made, even when these profits are not actually realised until a subsequent commercial year, there will be inevitably a time lag between the moment when tax is paid abroad and the moment it can be taken into account in the country where the enterprise's head office is located. A serious problem is inherent in the time lag, especially when a permanent establishment transfers fixed assets or — in the event that it is wound up — its entire operating equipment stock, to some other part of the enterprise of which it forms part. In such cases, it is up to the head office country to seek, on a case by case basis, a bilateral solution with the outward country where there is serious risk of overtaxation.

**23. Paragraph 3 of Article 5 sets forth a special rule for a fixed place of business that is a building site or a construction or installation project. Such a fixed place of business is a permanent establishment only if it lasts more than twelve months. Experience has shown that these types of permanent establishments can give rise to special problems in attributing income to them under Article 7.**

**24. These problems arise chiefly where goods are provided, or services performed, by the other parts of the enterprise or a related party in connection with the building site or construction or installation project. Whilst these problems can arise with any permanent establishment, they are particularly acute for building sites and construction or installation projects. In these circumstances, it is necessary to pay close attention to the general principle that income is attributable to a permanent establishment only when it results from activities carried on by the enterprise through that permanent establishment.**

**25. For example, where such goods are supplied by the other parts of the enterprise, the profits arising from that supply do not result from the activities carried on through the permanent establishment and are not attributable to it. Similarly, profits resulting from the provision of services (such as planning, designing, drawing blueprints, or rendering technical advice) by the parts of the enterprise operating outside the State where the permanent establishment is located do not result from the activities carried on through the permanent establishment and are not attributable to it.**

**26. Where, under paragraph 5 of Article 5, a permanent establishment of an enterprise of a Contracting State is deemed to exist in the other Contracting State by reason of the activities of a so-called dependent agent (see paragraph 32 of the Commentary on Article 5), the same principles used to attribute profits to other types of permanent establishment will apply to attribute profits to that deemed permanent establishment. As a first step, the activities that the dependent agent undertakes for the enterprise will be identified through a functional and factual analysis that will determine the functions undertaken by the dependent agent both on its own account and on behalf of the enterprise. The dependent agent and the enterprise on behalf of which it is acting constitute two separate potential taxpayers. On the one hand, the dependent agent will derive its own income or profits from the activities that it performs on its own account for the enterprise; if the agent is itself a resident of either Contracting State, the provisions of the Convention (including Article 9 if that agent is an enterprise associated to the enterprise on behalf of which it is acting) will be relevant to the taxation of such income or profits. On the other hand, the deemed permanent establishment of the enterprise will be attributed the assets and risks of the enterprise relating to the functions performed by the dependent agent on behalf of that enterprise (i.e. the activities that the dependent agent undertakes for that enterprise), together with sufficient capital to support those assets and**

*risks. Profits will then be attributed to the deemed permanent establishment on the basis of those assets, risks and capital; these profits will be separate from, and will not include, the income or profits that are properly attributable to the dependent agent itself (see section D-5 of Part I of the Report "Attribution of Profits to Permanent Establishments").*

~~15.2—Another significant problem concerning the transfer of assets, such as bad loans, arises in relation to international banking. Debts may be transferred, for supervisory and financing purposes, from branch to head office or from branch to branch within a single bank. Such transfers should not be recognised where it cannot be reasonably considered that they take place for valid commercial reasons or that they would have taken place between independent enterprises, for instance where they are undertaken solely for tax purposes with the aim of maximising the tax relief available to the bank. In such cases, the transfers would not have been expected to take place between wholly independent enterprises and therefore would not have affected the amount of profits which such an independent enterprise might have been expected to make in independent dealing with the enterprise of which it is a permanent establishment.~~

~~15.3—However, there may exist a commercial market for the transfer of such loans from one bank to another and the circumstances of an internal transfer may be similar to those which might have been expected to have taken place between independent banks. An instance of such a transfer might be a case where a bank closed down a particular foreign branch and had therefore to transfer the debts concerned either back to its head office or to another branch. Another example might be the opening of a new branch in a given country and the subsequent transfer to it, solely for commercial reasons, of all loans previously granted to residents of that country by the head office or other branches. Any such transfer should be treated (to the extent that it is recognised for tax purposes at all) as taking place at the open market value of the debt at the date of the transfer. Some relief has to be taken into account in computing the profits of the permanent establishment since, between separate entities, the value of the debt at the date of transfer would have been taken into account in deciding on the price to be charged and principles of sound accounting require that the book value of the asset should be varied to take into account market values (this question is further discussed in the report of the Committee on Fiscal Affairs entitled "Attribution of Income to Permanent Establishments"<sup>4</sup>).~~

~~15.4—Where loans which have gone bad are transferred, in order that full, but not excessive, relief for such a loss be granted, it is important that the two jurisdictions concerned reach an agreement for a mutually consistent basis for granting relief. In such cases, account should be taken of whether the transfer value, at the date of the internal transfer, was the result of mistaken judgment as to the debtor's solvency or whether the value at that date reflected an appropriate judgment of the debtor's position at that time. In the former case, it might be appropriate for the country of the transferring branch to limit relief to the actual loss suffered by the bank as a whole and for the receiving country not to tax the subsequent apparent gain. Where, however, the loan was transferred for commercial reasons from one part of the bank to another and did, after a certain time, improve in value, then the transferring branch should normally be given relief on the basis of the actual value at the time of the transfer. The position is somewhat different where the receiving entity is the head office of a bank in a credit country because normally the credit country will tax the bank on its worldwide profits and will therefore give relief by reference to the total loss suffered in respect of the loan between the time the loan was made and the time it was finally disposed of. In such a case, the transferring branch should receive relief for the period during which the loan was in the hands of that branch by reference to the principles above. The country of the head office will then give relief from double taxation by granting a credit for the tax borne by the branch in the host country.~~

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4. *Attribution of Income to Permanent Establishments*, reproduced in Volume II of the loose leaf version of the OECD Model Tax Convention at page R(13)-1.

### *Paragraph 3*

27.46. This paragraph clarifies, in relation to the expenses of a permanent establishment, the general directive laid down in paragraph 2. The paragraph specifically recognises that in calculating the profits of a permanent establishment allowance is to be made for expenses, wherever incurred, that were incurred for the purposes of the permanent establishment. Clearly in some cases it will be necessary to estimate or to calculate by conventional means the amount of expenses to be taken into account. In the case, for example, of general administrative expenses incurred at the head office of the enterprise, it may be appropriate to take into account a proportionate part based on the ratio that the permanent establishment's turnover (or perhaps gross profits) bears to that of the enterprise as a whole. Subject to this, it is considered that the amount of expenses to be taken into account as incurred for the purposes of the permanent establishment should be the actual amount so incurred. The deduction allowable to the permanent establishment for any of the expenses of the enterprise attributed to it does not depend upon the actual reimbursement of such expenses by the permanent establishment.

28.47 It has sometimes been suggested that the need to reconcile paragraphs 2 and 3 created practical difficulties as paragraph 2 required that prices between the permanent establishment and the head office be normally charged on an arm's length basis, giving to the transferring entity the type of profit which it might have been expected to make were it dealing with an independent enterprise, whilst the wording of paragraph 3 suggested that the deduction for expenses incurred for the purposes of permanent establishments should be the actual cost of those expenses, normally without adding any profit element.

29. In fact, whilst the application of paragraph 3 may raise some practical difficulties, especially in relation to the separate enterprise and arm's length principles underlying paragraph 2, there is no difference of principle between the two paragraphs. Paragraph 3 indicates that in determining the profits of a permanent establishment, certain expenses must be allowed as deductions whilst paragraph 2 provides that the profits determined in accordance with the rule contained in paragraph 3 relating to the deduction of expenses must be those that a separate and distinct enterprise engaged in the same or similar activities under the same or similar conditions would have made. Thus, whilst paragraph 3 provides a rule applicable for the determination of the profits of the permanent establishment, paragraph 2 requires that the profits so determined correspond to the profits that a separate and independent enterprise would have made.

**30. *Also, paragraph 3 only determines which expenses should be attributed to the permanent establishment for purposes of determining the profits attributable to that permanent establishment. It does not deal with the issue of whether those expenses, once attributed, are deductible when computing the taxable income of the permanent establishment since the conditions for the deductibility of expenses are a matter to be determined by domestic law, subject to the rules of Article 24 on Non-discrimination (in particular, paragraphs 3 and 4 of that Article).***

31.47.4 In applying these principles to the practical determination of the profits of a permanent establishment, the question may arise as to whether a particular cost incurred by an enterprise can truly be considered as an expense incurred for the purposes of the permanent establishment, keeping in mind the separate and independent enterprise principles of paragraph 2. Whilst in general independent enterprises in their dealings with each other will seek to realise a profit and, when transferring property or providing services to each other, will charge such prices as the open market would bear, nevertheless, there are also circumstances where it cannot be considered that a particular property or service would have been obtainable from an independent enterprise or when independent enterprises may agree to share between them the costs of some activity which is pursued in common for their mutual benefit. In these particular circumstances, it may be appropriate to treat any relevant costs



incurred by the enterprise as an expense incurred for the permanent establishment. The difficulty arises in making a distinction between these circumstances and the cases where a cost incurred by an enterprise should not be considered as an expense of the permanent establishment and the relevant property or service should be considered, on the basis of the separate and independent enterprises principle, to have been transferred between the head office and the permanent establishment at a price including an element of profit. The question must be whether the internal transfer of property and services, be it temporary or final, is of the same kind as those which the enterprise, in the normal course of its business, would have charged to a third party at an arm's length price, i.e. by normally including in the sale price an appropriate profit.

**32.47.2** On the one hand, the answer to that question will be in the affirmative if the expense is initially incurred in performing a function the direct purpose of which is to make sales of a specific good or service and to realise a profit through a permanent establishment. On the other hand, the answer will be in the negative if, on the basis of the facts and circumstances of the specific case, it appears that the expense is initially incurred in performing a function the essential purpose of which is to rationalise the overall costs of the enterprise or to increase in a general way its sales.<sup>5</sup>

**33.47.3** Where goods are supplied for resale whether in a finished state or as raw materials or semi-finished goods, it will normally be appropriate for the provisions of paragraph 2 to apply and for the supplying part of the enterprise to be allocated a profit, measured by reference to arm's length principles. But there may be exceptions even here. One example might be where goods are not supplied for resale but for temporary use in the trade so that it may be appropriate for the parts of the enterprise which share the use of the material to bear only their share of the cost of such material e.g. in the case of machinery, the depreciation costs that relate to its use by each of these parts. It should of course be remembered that the mere purchase of goods does not constitute a permanent establishment (subparagraph 4 d) of Article 5) so that no question of attribution of profit arises in such circumstances.

**34.47.4** In the case of intangible rights, the rules concerning the relations between enterprises of the same group (e.g. payment of royalties or cost sharing arrangements) cannot be applied in respect of the relations between parts of the same enterprise. Indeed, it may be extremely difficult to allocate "ownership" of the intangible right solely to one part of the enterprise and to argue that this part of the enterprise should receive royalties from the other parts as if it were an independent enterprise. Since there is only one legal entity it is not possible to allocate legal ownership to any particular part of the enterprise and in practical terms it will often be difficult to allocate the costs of creation exclusively to one part of the enterprise. It may therefore be preferable for the costs of creation of intangible rights to be regarded as attributable to all parts of the enterprise which will make use of them and as incurred on behalf of the various parts of the enterprise to which they are relevant accordingly. In such circumstances it would be appropriate to allocate ***between the various parts of the enterprise*** the actual costs of the creation ***or acquisition*** of such intangible rights, ***as well as the costs subsequently incurred with respect to these intangible rights,*** ~~between the various parts of the enterprise~~ without any mark-up for profit or royalty. In so doing, tax authorities must be aware of the fact that the possible adverse consequences deriving from any research and development activity (e.g. the responsibility related to the products and damages to the environment) shall also be allocated to the various parts of the enterprise, therefore giving rise, where appropriate, to a compensatory charge.

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5. Internal transfers of financial assets, which are primarily relevant for banks and other financial institutions, raise specific issues which have ***been dealt with in Parts II and III of the Report "Attribution of Profits to Permanent Establishments"***, ~~already been dealt with in a separate study entitled "The Taxation of Multinational Banking Enterprises" (published under the title *Transfer Pricing and Multinational Enterprises - Three Taxation Issues*, OECD, Paris, 1984) and which are the subject of paragraphs 19 and 20 below.~~

35.17.5 The area of services is the one in which difficulties may arise in determining whether in a particular case a service should be charged between the various parts of a single enterprise at its actual cost or at that cost plus a mark-up to represent a profit to the part of the enterprise providing the service. The trade of the enterprise, or part of it, may consist of the provision of such services and there may be a standard charge for their provision. In such a case it will usually be appropriate to charge a service at the same rate as is charged to the outside customer.

36.17.6 Where the main activity of a permanent establishment is to provide specific services to the enterprise to which it belongs and where these services provide a real advantage to the enterprise and their costs represent a significant part of the expenses of the enterprise, the host country may require that a profit margin be included in the amount of the costs. As far as possible, the host country should then try to avoid schematic solutions and rely on the value of these services in the given circumstances of each case.

37.17.7 However, more commonly the provision of services is merely part of the general management activity of the company taken as a whole as where, for example, the enterprise conducts a common system of training and employees of each part of the enterprise benefit from it. In such a case it would usually be appropriate to treat the cost of providing the service as being part of the general administrative expenses of the enterprise as a whole which should be allocated on an actual cost basis to the various parts of the enterprise to the extent that the costs are incurred for the purposes of that part of the enterprise, without any mark-up to represent profit to another part of the enterprise.

~~18.— Special considerations apply to payments which, under the name of interest, are made to a head office by its permanent establishment with respect to loans made by the former to the latter. In that case, the main issue is not so much whether a debtor/creditor relationship should be recognized within the same legal entity as whether an arm's length interest rate should be charged. This is because:~~

~~— from the legal standpoint, the transfer of capital against payment of interest and an undertaking to repay in full at the due date is really a formal act incompatible with the true legal nature of a permanent establishment;~~

~~— from the economic standpoint, internal debts and receivables may prove to be non-existent, since if an enterprise is solely or predominantly equity funded it ought not to be allowed to deduct interest charges that it has manifestly not had to pay. While, admittedly, symmetrical charges and returns will not distort the enterprise's overall profits, partial results may well be arbitrarily changed.~~

~~18.1 If debts incurred by the head office of an enterprise were used solely to finance its activity or clearly and exclusively the activity of a particular permanent establishment, the problem would be reduced to one of thin capitalisation of the actual user of such loans. In fact, loans contracted by an enterprise's head office usually serve its own needs only to a certain extent, the rest of the money borrowed providing basic capital for its permanent establishments.~~

~~18.2 The approach previously suggested in this Commentary, namely the direct and indirect apportionment of actual debt charges, did not prove to be a practical solution, notably since it was unlikely to be applied in a uniform manner. Also, it is well known that the indirect apportionment of total interest payment charges, or of the part of interest that remains after certain direct allocations, comes up against practical difficulties. It is also well known that direct apportionment of total interest expense may not accurately reflect the cost of financing the permanent establishment because the taxpayer may be able to control where loans are booked and adjustments may need to be made to reflect economic reality.~~

~~18.3~~ Consequently, the majority of Member countries considered that it would be preferable to look for a practicable solution that would take into account a capital structure appropriate to both the organization and the functions performed. For that reason, the ban on deductions for internal debts and receivables should continue to apply generally, subject to the special problems of banks mentioned below (this question is further discussed in the reports of the Committee entitled “Attribution of Income to Permanent Establishments” and “Thin Capitalisation”).<sup>6</sup>

19. It is, however, recognised that special considerations apply to payments of interest made by different parts of a financial enterprise (e.g. a bank) to each other on advances etc. (as distinct from capital allotted to them), in view of the fact that making and receiving advances is closely related to the ordinary business of such enterprises. This problem, as well as other problems relating to the transfer of financial assets, are considered in the report on multinational banking enterprises included in the OECD 1984 publication entitled *Transfer Pricing and Multinational Enterprises—Three Taxation Studies*. This Commentary does not depart from the positions expressed in the report on this topic. One issue not discussed in the report relates to the transfer of debts by bankers from one part of the bank to another; this is discussed in paragraphs 15.2 to 15.4 above.

20. The above mentioned report also addresses the issue of the attribution of capital to the permanent establishment of a bank in situations where actual assets were transferred to such a branch and in situations where they were not. Difficulties in practice continue to arise from the differing views of Member countries on these questions and the present Commentary can only emphasise the desirability of agreement on mutually consistent methods of dealing with these problems.

~~38.21.~~ Another case is related to *The treatment of services performed in the course of the general management of an enterprise raises* the question whether any part of the total profits of an enterprise should be deemed to arise from the exercise of good management. Consider the case of a company that has its head office in one country but carries on all its business through a permanent establishment situated in another country. In the extreme case it might well be that only the directors’ meetings were held at the head office and that all other activities of the company apart from purely formal legal activities, were carried on in the permanent establishment. In such a case there is something to be said for the view that at least part of the profits of the whole enterprise arose from the skilful management and business acumen of the directors and that part of the profits of the enterprise ought, therefore, to be attributed to the country in which the head office was situated. If the company had been managed by a managing agency, then that agency would doubtless have charged a fee for its services and the fee might well have been a simple percentage participation in the profits of the enterprise. But, ~~once again~~, whatever the theoretical merits of such a course, practical considerations weigh heavily against it. In the kind of case quoted the expenses of management would, of course, be set against the profits of the permanent establishment in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 3, but when the matter is looked at as a whole, it is thought that it would not be right to go further by deducting and taking into account some notional figure for “profits of management”. In cases identical to the extreme case mentioned above, no account should therefore be taken in determining taxable profits of the permanent establishment of any notional figure such as profits of management.

~~39.22.~~ It may be, of course, that countries where it has been customary to allocate some proportion of the total profits of an enterprise to the head office of the enterprise to represent the profits of good management will wish to continue to make such an allocation. Nothing in the Article is designed to prevent this. Nevertheless it follows from what is said in paragraph ~~38.21~~ above that a country in which a permanent establishment is situated is in no way required to deduct when calculating the profits

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6. ~~These two reports are reproduced in Volume II of the loose leaf version of the OECD Model Tax Convention, at pages R(13)-1 and R(4)-1 respectively.~~

attributable to that permanent establishment an amount intended to represent a proportionate part of the profits of management attributable to the head office.

~~40.23-~~ It might well be that if the country in which the head office of an enterprise is situated allocates to the head office some percentage of the profits of the enterprise only in respect of good management, whilst the country in which the permanent establishment is situated does not, the resulting total of the amounts charged to tax in the two countries would be greater than it should be. In any such case the country in which the head office of the enterprise is situated should take the initiative in arranging for such adjustments to be made in computing the taxation liability in that country as may be necessary to ensure that any double taxation is eliminated.

*41. The treatment of interest charges raises particular issues. First, there might be amounts which, under the name of interest, are charged by a head office to its permanent establishment with respect to internal “loans” by the former to the latter. Except for financial enterprises such as banks, it is generally agreed that such internal “interest” need not be recognised. This is because:*

- From the legal standpoint, the transfer of capital against payment of interest and an undertaking to repay in full at the due date is really a formal act incompatible with the true legal nature of a permanent establishment.*
- From the economic standpoint, internal debts and receivables may prove to be non-existent, since if an enterprise is solely or predominantly equity-funded it ought not to be allowed to deduct interest charges that it has manifestly not had to pay. Whilst, admittedly, symmetrical charges and returns will not distort the enterprise’s overall profits, partial results may well be arbitrarily changed.*

*42. For these reasons, the ban on deductions for internal debts and receivables should continue to apply generally, subject to the special situation of banks, as mentioned below.*

*43. A different issue, however, is that of the deduction of interest on debts actually incurred by the enterprise. Such debts may relate in whole or in part to the activities of the permanent establishment; indeed, loans contracted by an enterprise will serve either the head office, the permanent establishment or both. The question that arises in relation to these debts is how to determine the part of the interest that should be deducted in computing the profits attributable to the permanent establishment.*

*44. The approach suggested in this Commentary before 1994, namely the direct and indirect apportionment of actual debt charges, did not prove to be a practical solution, notably since it was unlikely to be applied in a uniform manner. Also, it is well known that the indirect apportionment of total interest payment charges, or of the part of interest that remains after certain direct allocations, comes up against practical difficulties. It is also well known that direct apportionment of total interest expense may not accurately reflect the cost of financing the permanent establishment because the taxpayer may be able to control where loans are booked and adjustments may need to be made to reflect economic reality, in particular the fact that an independent enterprise would normally be expected to have a certain level of “free” capital.*

*45. Consequently, the majority of Member countries consider that it would be preferable to look for a practicable solution that would take into account a capital structure appropriate to both the organization and the functions performed. This appropriate capital structure will take account of the fact that in order to carry out its activities, the permanent establishment requires a certain amount of funding made up of “free” capital and interest-bearing debt. The objective is therefore to attribute an arm’s length amount of interest to the permanent establishment after attributing an appropriate amount of “free” capital in order to support the functions, assets and risks of the*

*permanent establishment. Under the arm's length principle a permanent establishment should have sufficient capital to support the functions it undertakes, the assets it economically owns and the risks it assumes. In the financial sector regulations stipulate minimum levels of regulatory capital to provide a cushion in the event that some of the risks inherent in the business crystallise into financial loss. Capital provides a similar cushion against crystallisation of risk in non-financial sectors.*

*46. As explained in section D-2 (v) b) of Part I of the Report "Attribution of Profits to Permanent Establishments", there are different acceptable approaches for attributing "free" capital that are capable of giving an arm's length result. Each approach has its own strengths and weaknesses, which become more or less material depending on the facts and circumstances of particular cases. Different methods adopt different starting points for determining the amount of "free" capital attributable to a permanent establishment, which either put more emphasis on the actual structure of the enterprise of which the permanent establishment is a part or alternatively, on the capital structures of comparable independent enterprises. The key to attributing "free" capital is to recognise:*

- the existence of strengths and weaknesses in any approach and when these are likely to be present;*
- that there is no single arm's length amount of "free capital", but a range of potential capital attributions within which it is possible to find an amount of "free" capital that can meet the basic principle set out above.*

*47. It is recognised, however, that the existence of different acceptable approaches for attributing "free" capital to a permanent establishment which are capable of giving an arm's length result can give rise to problems of double taxation. The main concern, which is especially acute for financial institutions, is that if the domestic law rules of the State where the permanent establishment is located and of the State of the enterprise require different acceptable approaches for attributing an arm's length amount of free capital to the permanent establishment, the amount of profits calculated by the State of the permanent establishment may be higher than the amount of profits calculated by the State of the enterprise for purposes of relief of double taxation.*

*48. Given the importance of that issue, the Committee has looked for a practical solution. OECD Member countries have therefore agreed to accept, for the purposes of determining the amount of interest deduction that will be used in computing double taxation relief, the attribution of capital derived from the application of the approach used by the State in which the permanent establishment is located if the following two conditions are met: first, if the difference in capital attribution between that State and the State of the enterprise results from conflicting domestic law choices of capital attribution methods, and second, if there is agreement that the State in which the permanent establishment is located has used an authorised approach to the attribution of capital and there is also agreement that that approach produces a result consistent with the arm's length principle in the particular case. OECD Member countries consider that they are able to achieve that result either under their domestic law, through the interpretation of Articles 7 and 23 or under the mutual agreement procedure of Article 25 and, in particular, the possibility offered by that Article to resolve any issues concerning the application or interpretation of their tax treaties.*

*49. As already mentioned, special considerations apply to internal interest charges on advances between different parts of a financial enterprise (e.g. a bank), in view of the fact that making and receiving advances is closely related to the ordinary business of such enterprises. This problem, as well as other problems relating to the application of Article 7 to the permanent*

*establishments of banks and enterprises carrying on global trading, is discussed in Parts II and III of the Report “Attribution of Profits to Permanent Establishments”.*

**50.** *The determination of the investment assets attributable to a permanent establishment through which insurance activities are carried on also raises particular issues, which are discussed in Part IV of the Report.*

**51.24.** It is usually found that there are, or there can be constructed, adequate accounts for each part or section of an enterprise so that profits and expenses, adjusted as may be necessary, can be allocated to a particular part of the enterprise with a considerable degree of precision. This method of allocation is, it is thought, to be preferred in general wherever it is reasonably practicable to adopt it. There are, however, circumstances in which this may not be the case and paragraphs 2 and 3 are in no way intended to imply that other methods cannot properly be adopted where appropriate in order to arrive at the profits of a permanent establishment on a “separate enterprise” footing. It may well be, for example, that profits of insurance enterprises can most conveniently be ascertained by special methods of computation, e.g. by applying appropriate co-efficients to gross premiums received from policy holders in the country concerned. Again, in the case of a relatively small enterprise operating on both sides of the border between two countries, there may be no proper accounts for the permanent establishment nor means of constructing them. There may, too, be other cases where the affairs of the permanent establishment are so closely bound up with those of the head office that it would be impossible to disentangle them on any strict basis of branch accounts. Where it has been customary in such cases to estimate the arm’s length profit of a permanent establishment by reference to suitable criteria, it may well be reasonable that that method should continue to be followed, notwithstanding that the estimate thus made may not achieve as high a degree of accurate measurement of the profit as adequate accounts. Even where such a course has not been customary, it may, exceptionally, be necessary for practical reasons to estimate the arm's length profits ***based on other methods.***

#### *Paragraph 4*

**52.25.** It has in some cases been the practice to determine the profits to be attributed to a permanent establishment not on the basis of separate accounts or by making an estimate of arm’s length profit, but simply by apportioning the total profits of the enterprise by reference to various formulae. Such a method differs from those envisaged in paragraph 2, since it contemplates not an attribution of profits on a separate enterprise footing, but an apportionment of total profits; and indeed it might produce a result in figures which would differ from that which would be arrived at by a computation based on separate accounts. Paragraph 4 makes it clear that such a method may continue to be employed by a Contracting State if it has been customary in that State to adopt it, even though the figure arrived at may at times differ to some extent from that which would be obtained from separate accounts, provided that the result can fairly be said to be in accordance with the principles contained in the Article. It is emphasized, however, that in general the profits to be attributed to a permanent establishment should be determined by reference to the establishment’s accounts if these reflect the real facts. It is considered that a method of allocation which is based on apportioning total profits is generally not as appropriate as a method which has regard only to the activities of the permanent establishment and should be used only where, exceptionally, it has as a matter of history been customary in the past and is accepted in the country concerned both by the taxation authorities and taxpayers generally there as being satisfactory. It is understood that paragraph 4 may be deleted where neither State uses such a method. Where, however, Contracting States wish to be able to use a method which has not been customary in the past the paragraph should be amended during the bilateral negotiations to make this clear.

**53.26.** It would not, it is thought, be appropriate within the framework of this Commentary to attempt to discuss at length the many various methods involving apportionment of total profits that have been adopted in particular fields for allocating profits. These methods have been well documented in treatises on international taxation. It may, however, not be out of place to summarise briefly some of the main types and to lay down some very general directives for their use.

**54.27.** The essential character of a method involving apportionment of total profits is that a proportionate part of the profits of the whole enterprise is allocated to a part thereof, all parts of the enterprise being assumed to have contributed on the basis of the criterion or criteria adopted to the profitability of the whole. The difference between one such method and another arises for the most part from the varying criteria used to determine what is the correct proportion of the total profits. It is fair to say that the criteria commonly used can be grouped into three main categories, namely those which are based on the receipts of the enterprise, its expenses or its capital structure. The first category covers allocation methods based on turnover or on commission, the second on wages and the third on the proportion of the total working capital of the enterprise allocated to each branch or part. It is not, of course, possible to say *in vacuo* that any of these methods is intrinsically more accurate than the others; the appropriateness of any particular method will depend on the circumstances to which it is applied. In some enterprises, such as those providing services or producing proprietary articles with a high profit margin, net profits will depend very much on turnover. For insurance enterprises it may be appropriate to make an apportionment of total profits by reference to premiums received from policy holders in each of the countries concerned. In the case of an enterprise manufacturing goods with a high cost raw material or labour content, profits may be found to be related more closely to expenses. In the case of banking and financial concerns the proportion of total working capital may be the most relevant criterion. It is considered that the general aim of any method involving apportionment of total profits ought to be to produce figures of taxable profit that approximate as closely as possible to the figures that would have been produced on a separate accounts basis, and that it would not be desirable to attempt in this connection to lay down any specific directive other than that it should be the responsibility of the taxation authority, in consultation with the authorities of other countries concerned, to use the method which in the light of all the known facts seems most likely to produce that result.

**55.28.** The use of any method which allocates to a part of an enterprise a proportion of the total profits of the whole does, of course, raise the question of the method to be used in computing the total profits of the enterprise. This may well be a matter which will be treated differently under the laws of different countries. This is not a problem which it would seem practicable to attempt to resolve by laying down any rigid rule. It is scarcely to be expected that it would be accepted that the profits to be apportioned should be the profits as they are computed under the laws of one particular country; each country concerned would have to be given the right to compute the profits according to the provisions of its own laws.

#### *Paragraph 5*

**56.29.** In paragraph 4 of Article 5 there are listed a number of examples of activities which, even though carried on at a fixed place of business, are deemed not to be included in the term “permanent establishment”. In considering rules for the allocation of profits to a permanent establishment the most important of these examples is the activity mentioned in paragraph 5 of this Article, i.e. the purchasing office.

**57.30.** Paragraph 5 is not, of course, concerned with the organisation established solely for purchasing; such an organisation is not a permanent establishment and the profits allocation provisions of this Article would not therefore come into play. The paragraph is concerned with a permanent establishment which, although carrying on other business, also carries on purchasing for its head office.

In such a case the paragraph provides that the profits of the permanent establishment shall not be increased by adding to them a notional figure for profits from purchasing. It follows, of course, that any expenses that arise from the purchasing activities will also be excluded in calculating the taxable profits of the permanent establishment.

#### *Paragraph 6*

**58.34.** This paragraph is intended to lay down clearly that a method of allocation once used should not be changed merely because in a particular year some other method produces more favourable results. One of the purposes of a double taxation convention is to give an enterprise of a Contracting State some degree of certainty about the tax treatment that will be accorded to its permanent establishment in the other Contracting State as well as to the part of it in its home State which is dealing with the permanent establishment; for this reason, paragraph 6 gives an assurance of continuous and consistent tax treatment.

#### *Paragraph 7*

**59.32.** Although it has not been found necessary in the Convention to define the term “profits”, it should nevertheless be understood that the term when used in this Article and elsewhere in the Convention has a broad meaning including all income derived in carrying on an enterprise. Such a broad meaning corresponds to the use of the term made in the tax laws of most OECD Member countries.

**60.33.** This interpretation of the term “profits”, however, may give rise to some uncertainty as to the application of the Convention. If the profits of an enterprise include categories of income which are treated separately in other Articles of the Convention, e.g. dividends, it may be asked whether the taxation of those profits is governed by the special Article on dividends, etc., or by the provisions of this Article.

**61.34.** To the extent that an application of this Article and the special Article concerned would result in the same tax treatment, there is little practical significance to this question. Further, it should be noted that some of the special Articles contain specific provisions giving priority to a specific Article (cf. paragraph 4 of Article 6, paragraph 4 of Articles 10 and 11, paragraph 3 of Article 12, and paragraph 2 of Article 21).

**62.35.** It has seemed desirable, however, to lay down a rule of interpretation in order to clarify the field of application of this Article in relation to the other Articles dealing with a specific category of income. In conformity with the practice generally adhered to in existing bilateral conventions, paragraph 7 gives first preference to the special Articles on dividends, interest, etc. It follows from the rule that this Article will be applicable to business profits which do not belong to categories of income covered by the special Articles, and, in addition, to dividends, interest, etc. which under paragraph 4 of Articles 10 and 11, paragraph 3 of Article 12 and paragraph 2 of Article 21, fall within this Article (cf. paragraphs 12 to 18 of the Commentary on Article 12 which discusses the principles governing whether, in the particular case of computer software, payments should be classified as income within Articles 7 or as a capital gains matter within Article 13 on the one hand or as royalties within Article 12 on the other). It is understood that the items of income covered by the special Articles may, subject to the provisions of the Convention, be taxed either separately, or as business profits, in conformity with the tax laws of the Contracting States.



~~63.36~~. It is open to Contracting States to agree bilaterally upon special explanations or definitions concerning the term “profits” with a view to clarifying the distinction between this term and e.g. the concept of dividends. It may in particular be found appropriate to do so where in a convention under negotiation a deviation has been made from the definitions in the special Articles on dividends, interest and royalties. It may also be deemed desirable if the Contracting States wish to place on notice, that, in agreement with the domestic tax laws of one or both of the States, the term “profits” includes special classes of receipts such as income from the alienation or the letting of a business or of movable property used in a business. In this connection it may have to be considered whether it would be useful to include also additional rules for the allocation of such special profits.

~~64.37~~. It should also be noted that, whilst the definition of “royalties” in paragraph 2 of Article 12 of the 1963 Draft Convention and 1977 Model Convention included payments “for the use of, or the right to use, industrial, commercial, or scientific equipment”, the reference to these payments was subsequently deleted from that definition in order to ensure that income from the leasing of industrial, commercial or scientific equipment, including the income from the leasing of containers, falls under the provisions of Article 7 rather than those of Article 12, a result that the Committee on Fiscal Affairs considers to be appropriate given the nature of such income.

#### **Changes to the Commentary on Article 9**

30. In paragraph 10 of the Commentary on Article 9, replace the cross-reference to “paragraphs 28, 29 and 30 of the Commentary on Article 25” by “paragraphs **39, 40 and 41** of the Commentary on Article 25”.

31. Replace paragraph 11 of the Commentary on Article 9 by the following:

11. If there is a dispute between the parties concerned over the amount and character of the appropriate adjustment, the mutual agreement procedure provided for under Article 25 should be implemented; the Commentary on that Article contains a number of considerations applicable to adjustments of the profits of associated enterprises carried out on the basis of the present Article (following, in particular, adjustment of transfer prices) and to the corresponding adjustments which must then be made in pursuance of paragraph 2 thereof (see in particular paragraphs ~~9, 10, 22, 23, 29 and 30~~ **10, 11, 12, 33, 34, 40 and 41** of the Commentary on Article 25).

#### **Changes to the Commentary on Article 10**

32. In paragraph 19 of the Commentary on Article 10, replace the cross-reference to “paragraph 53 of the Commentary on Article 24” by “paragraph **71** of the Commentary on Article 24”.

33. Add the following heading and new paragraphs 67.1 to 67.7 to the Commentary on Article 10 (the addition made to the previous version of these proposals released as a public discussion draft on 30 October 2007 is underlined):

#### ***IV. Distributions by Real Estate Investment Trusts***

***67.1 In many States, a large part of portfolio investment in immovable property is done through Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs). A REIT may be loosely described as a widely held company, trust or contractual or fiduciary arrangement that derives its income primarily from long-term investment in immovable property, distributes most of that income annually and does not pay income tax on the income related to immovable property that is so distributed. The fact***

*that the REIT vehicle does not pay tax on that income is the result of tax rules that provide for a single-level of taxation in the hands of the investors in the REIT.*

*67.2 The importance and the globalisation of investments in and through REITs have led the Committee on Fiscal Affairs to examine the tax treaty issues that arise from such investments. The results of that work appear in a report entitled “Tax Treaty Issues Related to REITS”.<sup>7</sup>*

*67.3 One issue discussed in the report is the tax treaty treatment of cross-border distributions by a REIT. In the case of a small investor in a REIT, the investor has no control over the immovable property acquired by the REIT and no connection to that property. Notwithstanding the fact that the REIT itself will not pay tax on its distributed income, it may therefore be appropriate to consider that such an investor has not invested in immovable property but, rather, has simply invested in a company and should be treated as receiving a portfolio dividend. Such a treatment would also reflect the blended attributes of a REIT investment, which combines the attributes of both shares and bonds. In contrast, a larger investor in a REIT would have a more particular interest in the immovable property acquired by the REIT; for that investor, the investment in the REIT may be seen as a substitute for an investment in the underlying property of the REIT. In this situation, it would not seem appropriate to restrict the source taxation of the distribution from the REIT since the REIT itself will not pay tax on its income.*

*67.4 States that wish to achieve that result may agree bilaterally to replace paragraph 2 of the Article by the following:*

*2. However, such dividends may also be taxed in the Contracting State of which the company paying the dividends is a resident and according to the laws of that State, but if the beneficial owner of the dividends is a resident of the other Contracting State (other than a beneficial owner of dividends paid by a company which is a REIT in which such person holds, directly or indirectly, capital that represents at least 10 per cent of the value of all the capital in that company), the tax so charged shall not exceed:*

- a) 5 per cent of the gross amount of the dividends if the beneficial owner is a company (other than a partnership) which holds directly at least 25 per cent of the capital of the company paying the dividends (other than a paying company that is a REIT);*
- b) 15 per cent of the gross amount of the dividends in all other cases.*

*According to this provision, a large investor in a REIT is an investor holding, directly or indirectly, capital that represents at least 10% of the value of all the REIT's capital. Countries may, however, agree bilaterally to use a different threshold. Also, the provision applies to all distributions by a REIT; in the case of distributions of capital gains, however, the domestic law of some countries provides for a different threshold to differentiate between a large investor and a small investor entitled to taxation at the rate applicable to portfolio dividends and these countries may wish to amend the provision to preserve that distinction in their treaties. Finally, because it would be inappropriate to restrict the source taxation of a REIT distribution to a large investor, the drafting of subparagraph a) excludes dividends paid by a REIT from its application; thus, the subparagraph can never apply to such dividends, even if a company that did not hold capital representing 10% or more of the value of the capital of a REIT held at least 25% of its capital as computed in accordance with paragraph 15 above. The State of source will therefore be able to tax such distributions to large investors regardless of the restrictions in subparagraphs a) or b).*

**67.5** *Where, however, the REITs established in one of the Contracting States do not qualify as companies that are residents of that Contracting State, the provision will need to be amended to ensure that it applies to distributions by such REITs.*

**67.6** *For example, if the REIT is a company that does not qualify as a resident of the State, paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Article will need to be amended as follows to achieve that result:*

*1. Dividends paid by a company which is a resident, or a REIT organized under the laws, of a Contracting State to a resident of the other Contracting State may be taxed in that other State.*

*2. However, such dividends may also be taxed in, and according to the laws of, the Contracting State of which the company paying the dividends is a resident or, in the case of a REIT, under the laws of which it has been organized, but if the beneficial owner of the dividends is a resident of the other Contracting State (other than a beneficial owner of dividends paid by a company which is a REIT in which such person holds, directly or indirectly, capital that represents at least 10 per cent of the value of all the capital in that company), the tax so charged shall not exceed:*

- a) 5 per cent of the gross amount of the dividends if the beneficial owner is a company (other than a partnership) which holds directly at least 25 per cent of the capital of the company paying the dividends (other than a paying company that is a REIT);*
- b) 15 per cent of the gross amount of the dividends in all other cases.*

**67.7** *Similarly, in order to achieve that result where the REIT is structured as a trust or as a contractual or fiduciary arrangement and does not qualify as a company, States may agree bilaterally to add to the alternative version of paragraph 2 set forth in paragraph 67.4 above an additional provision drafted along the following lines:*

*For the purposes of this Convention, where a REIT organized under the laws of a Contracting State makes a distribution of income to a resident of the other Contracting State who is the beneficial owner of that distribution, the distribution of that income shall be treated as a dividend paid by a company resident of the first-mentioned State.*

*Under this additional provision, the relevant distribution would be treated as a dividend and not, therefore, as another type of income (e.g. income from immovable property or capital gain) for the purposes of applying Article 10 and the other Articles of the Convention. Clearly, however, that would not change the characterisation of that distribution for purposes of domestic law so that domestic law treatment would not be affected except for the purposes of applying the limitations imposed by the relevant provisions of the Convention.*

## **Changes to the Commentary on Article 12**

34. In paragraph 5 of the Commentary on Article 12, replace the cross-reference to “paragraph 53 of the Commentary on Article 24” by “paragraph 71 of the Commentary on Article 24”.

35. Replace paragraphs 8 and 8.1 of the Commentary on Article 12 by the following:

8. Paragraph 2 contains a definition of the term “royalties”. These relate, in general, to rights or property constituting the different forms of literary and artistic property, the elements of intellectual property specified in the text and information concerning industrial, commercial or scientific experience. The definition applies to payments for the use of, or the entitlement to use, rights of the kind mentioned, whether or not they have been, or are required to be, registered in a public register.

The definition covers both payments made under a license and compensation which a person would be obliged to pay for fraudulently copying or infringing the right. *[the rest of the existing paragraph would be included in paragraphs 8.1, 8.2 and 8.3]*

**8.1** The definition does not, however, apply to payments that, whilst based on the number of times a right belonging to someone is used, are made to someone else who does not himself own the right or the right to use it (see, for instance, paragraph 18 below). *[corresponds to the fifth sentence of the current paragraph 8].*

**8.2** *Where a payment is in consideration for the transfer of the full ownership of an element of property referred to in the definition, the payment is not in consideration “for the use of, or the right to use” that property and cannot therefore represent a royalty. As noted in paragraphs 15 and 16 below as regards software, difficulties can arise in the case of a transfer of rights that could be considered to form part of an element of property referred to in the definition where these rights are transferred in a way that is presented as an alienation. For example, this could involve the exclusive granting of all rights to an intellectual property for a limited period or all rights to the property in a limited geographical area in a transaction structured as a sale. Each case will depend on its particular facts and will need to be examined in light of the national intellectual property law applicable to the relevant type of property and the national law rules as regards what constitutes an alienation but in general, if the payment is in consideration for the alienation of rights that constitute distinct and specific property (which is more likely in the case of geographically-limited than time-limited rights), such payments are likely to be commercial income within Article 7 or a capital gains matter within Article 13 rather than royalties within Article 12. That follows from the fact that where the ownership of rights has been alienated, the consideration cannot be for the use of the rights. The essential character of the transaction as an alienation cannot be altered by the form of the consideration, the payment of the consideration in instalments or, in the view of most countries, by the fact that the payments are related to a contingency.*

**8.3** ~~It should also be noted that~~ The word “payment”, used in the definition, has a very wide meaning since the concept of payment means the fulfilment of the obligation to put funds at the disposal of the creditor in the manner required by contract or by custom. *[corresponds to the penultimate sentence of the current paragraph 8]*

**8.4** As a guide, certain explanations are given below in order to define the scope of Article 12 in relation to that of other Articles of the Convention, as regards, in particular, the provision of information. *[corresponds to the last sentence of current paragraph 8].*

~~8.58.1~~ Where information referred to in paragraph 2 is supplied or where the use or the right to use a type of property referred to in that paragraph is granted, the person who owns that information or property may agree not to supply or grant to anyone else that information or right. Payments made as consideration for such an agreement constitute payments made to secure the exclusivity of that information or an exclusive right to use that property, as the case may be. These payments being payments “of any kind received as a consideration for [...] the right to use” the property “or for information”, fall under the definition of royalties.

36. Add the following paragraphs 10.1 and 10.2 immediately after paragraph 10 of the Commentary on Article 12:

**10.1** *Payments that are solely made in consideration for obtaining the exclusive distribution rights of a product or service in a given territory do not constitute royalties as they are not made in consideration for the use of, or the right to use, an element of property included in the*

*definition. These payments, which are best viewed as being made to increase sales receipts, would rather fall under Article 7. An example of such a payment would be that of a distributor of clothes resident in one Contracting State who pays a certain sum of money to a manufacturer of branded shirts, who is a resident of the other Contracting State, as consideration for the exclusive right to sell in the first State the branded shirts manufactured abroad by that manufacturer. In that example, the resident distributor does not pay for the right to use the trade name or trade mark under which the shirts are sold; he merely obtains the exclusive right to sell in his State of residence shirts that he will buy from the manufacturer.*

*10.2 A payment cannot be said to be “for the use of, or the right to use” a design, model or plan if the payment is for the development of a design, model or plan that does not already exist. In such a case, the payment is made in consideration for the services that will result in the development of that design, model or plan and would thus fall under Article 7. This will be the case even if the designer of the design, model or plan (e.g. an architect) retains all rights, including the copyright, in that design, model or plan. Where, however, the owner of the copyright in previously-developed plans merely grants someone the right to modify or reproduce these plans without actually performing any additional work, the payment received by that owner in consideration for granting the right to such use of the plans would constitute royalties.*

37. Replace paragraph 11 of the Commentary on Article 12 by the following:

11. In classifying as royalties payments received as consideration for information concerning industrial, commercial or scientific experience, paragraph 2 ~~alludes~~ **is referring** to the concept of “know-how”. Various specialist bodies and authors have formulated definitions of know-how which do not differ intrinsically. ~~One such definition, given by the “Association des Bureaux pour la Protection de la Propriété Industrielle” (ANBPPI), states that “know-how is all the undivulged technical information, whether capable of being patented or not, that is necessary for the industrial reproduction of a product or process, directly and under the same conditions; inasmuch as it is derived from experience, know-how represents what a manufacturer cannot know from mere examination of the product and mere knowledge of the progress of technique”~~ **The words “payments [...] for information concerning industrial, commercial or scientific experience” are used in the context of the transfer of certain information that has not been patented and does not generally fall within other categories of intellectual property rights. It generally corresponds to undivulged information of an industrial, commercial or scientific nature arising from previous experience, which has practical application in the operation of an enterprise and from the disclosure of which an economic benefit can be derived. Since the definition relates to information concerning previous experience, the Article does not apply to payments for new information obtained as a result of performing services at the request of the payer.**

38. Replace paragraph 11.4 of the Commentary on Article 12 by the following:

11.4 Examples of payments which should therefore not be considered to be received as consideration for the provision of know-how but, rather, for the provision of services, include:

- payments obtained as consideration for after-sales service,
- payments for services rendered by a seller to the purchaser under a **guarantee warranty**,
- payments for pure technical assistance,
- **payments for a list of potential customers, when such a list is developed specifically for the payer out of generally available information (a payment for the confidential list of customers to which the payee has provided a particular product or service would, however, constitute a payment for know-how as it would relate to the commercial experience of the payee in dealing with these customers),**

- payments for an opinion given by an engineer, an advocate or an accountant, and
- payments for advice provided electronically, for electronic communications with technicians or for accessing, through computer networks, a trouble-shooting database such as a database that provides users of software with non-confidential information in response to frequently asked questions or common problems that arise frequently.

39. Add the following new paragraph 14.4 to the Commentary on Article 12:

*14.4 Arrangements between a software copyright holder and a distribution intermediary frequently will grant to the distribution intermediary the right to distribute copies of the program without the right to reproduce that program. In these transactions, the rights acquired in relation to the copyright are limited to those necessary for the commercial intermediary to distribute copies of the software program. In such transactions, distributors are paying only for the acquisition of the software copies and not to exploit any right in the software copyrights. Thus, in a transaction where a distributor makes payments to acquire and distribute software copies (without the right to reproduce the software), the rights in relation to these acts of distribution should be disregarded in analysing the character of the transaction for tax purposes. Payments in these types of transactions would be dealt with as commercial income in accordance with Article 7. This would be the case regardless of whether the copies being distributed are delivered on tangible media or are distributed electronically (without the distributor having the right to reproduce the software), or whether the software is subject to minor customisation for the purposes of its installation.*

40. Replace paragraphs 15 and 16 of the Commentary on Article 12 by the following:

15. Where consideration is paid for the transfer of the full ownership of the rights in the copyright, the payment cannot represent a royalty and the provisions of the Article are not applicable. Difficulties can arise where there ~~are extensive but partial alienation~~ **is a transfer** of rights involving:

- exclusive right of use **of the copyright** during a specific period or in a limited geographical area;
- additional consideration related to usage;
- consideration in the form of a substantial lump sum payment.

16. Each case will depend on its particular facts but in general **if the payment is in consideration for the transfer of rights that constitute a distinct and specific property (which is more likely in the case of geographically-limited than time-limited rights)**, such payments are likely to be commercial income within Article 7 or a capital gains matter within Article 13 rather than royalties within Article 12. That follows from the fact that where the ownership of rights has been alienated ~~in full or in part~~, the consideration cannot be for the use of the rights. The essential character of the transaction as an alienation cannot be altered by the form of the consideration, the payment of the consideration in instalments or, in the view of most countries, by the fact that the payments are related to a contingency.

### Changes to the Commentary on Article 13

41. Renumber paragraph 28.9 of the Commentary on Article 13 as paragraph 28.12 and add the following new paragraphs 28.9 to 28.11:

**28.9 Finally, a further possible exception relates to shares and similar interests in a Real Estate Investment Trust (see paragraphs 67.1 to 67.7 of the Commentary on Article 10 for background information on REITs). Whilst it would not seem appropriate to make an exception to paragraph 4 in the case of the alienation of a large investor's interests in a REIT, which could be considered to be the alienation of a substitute for a direct investment in immovable property, an exception to**

*paragraph 4 for the alienation of a small investor's interest in a REIT may be considered to be appropriate.*

*28.10 As discussed in paragraph 67.3 of the Commentary on Article 10, it may be appropriate to consider a small investor's interest in a REIT as a security rather than as an indirect holding in immovable property. In this regard, in practice it would be very difficult to administer the application of source taxation of gains on small interests in a widely held REIT. Moreover, since REITs, unlike other entities deriving their value primarily from immovable property, are required to distribute most of their profits, it is unlikely that there would be significant residual profits to which the capital gain tax would apply (as compared to other companies). States that share this view may agree bilaterally to add, before the phrase "may be taxed in that other State", words such as "except shares held by a person who holds, directly or indirectly, interests representing less than 10 per cent of all the interests in a company if that company is a REIT". (If paragraph 4 is amended along the lines of paragraph 28.5 above to cover interests similar to shares, these words should be amended accordingly.)*

*28.11 Some States, however, consider that paragraph 4 was intended to apply to any gain on the alienation of shares in a company that derives its value primarily from immovable property and that there would be no reason to distinguish between a REIT and a publicly held company with respect to the application of that paragraph, especially since a REIT is not taxed on its income. These States consider that as long as there is no exception for the alienation of shares in companies quoted on a stock exchange (see paragraph 28.7 above), there should not be a special exception for interests in a REIT.*

#### **Change to the Commentary on Article 15**

42. Add the following new paragraph 5.1 to the Commentary on Article 15:

*5.1 Days during which the taxpayer is a resident of the source State should not, however, be taken into account in the calculation. Subparagraph a) has to be read in the context of the first part of paragraph 2, which refers to "remuneration derived by a resident of a Contracting State in respect of an employment exercised in the other Contracting State", which does not apply to a person who resides and works in the same State. The words "the recipient is present", found in subparagraph a), refer to the recipient of such remuneration and, during a period of residence in the source State, a person cannot be said to be the recipient of remuneration derived by a resident of a Contracting State in respect of an employment exercised in the other Contracting State. The following examples illustrate this conclusion:*

- Example 1: From January 01 to December 01, X lives in, and is a resident of, State S. On 1 January 02, X is hired by an employer who is a resident of State R and moves to State R where he becomes a resident. X is subsequently sent to State S by his employer from 15 to 31 March 02. In that case, X is present in State S for 292 days between 1 April 01 and 31 March 02 but since he is a resident of State S between 1 April 01 and 31 December 01, this first period is not taken into account for purposes of the calculation of the periods referred to in subparagraph a).*
- Example 2: From 15 to 31 October 01, Y, a resident of State R, is present in State S to prepare the expansion in that country of the business of ACO, also a resident of State R. On 1 May 02, Y moves to State S where she becomes a resident and works as the manager of a newly created subsidiary of ACO resident of State S. In that case, Y is present in State S for 184 days between 15 October 01 and 14 October 02 but since she is a resident of State S*

*between 1 May and 14 October 02, this last period is not taken into account for purposes of the calculation of the periods referred to in subparagraph a).*

#### **Changes to the Commentary on Article 17**

43. Replace paragraph 10 of the Commentary on Article 17 by the following:

10. The Article says nothing about how the income in question is to be computed. It is for a Contracting State's domestic law to determine the extent of any deductions for expenses. Domestic laws differ in this area, and some provide for taxation at source, at a low rate based on the gross amount paid to artistes and sportsmen. Such rules may also apply to income paid to groups or incorporated teams, troupes, etc. *Some States, however, may consider that the taxation of the gross amount may be inappropriate in some circumstances even if the applicable rate is low. These States may want to give the option to the taxpayer to be taxed on a net basis. This could be done through the inclusion of a paragraph drafted along the following lines:*

*Where a resident of a Contracting State derives income referred to in paragraph 1 or 2 and such income is taxable in the other Contracting State on a gross basis, that person may, within [period to be determined by the Contracting States] request the other State in writing that the income be taxable on a net basis in that other State. Such request shall be allowed by that other State. In determining the taxable income of such resident in the other State, there shall be allowed as deductions those expenses deductible under the domestic laws of the other State which are incurred for the purposes of the activities exercised in the other State and which are available to a resident of the other State exercising the same or similar activities under the same or similar conditions.*

#### **Changes to the Commentary on Article 21**

44. Replace paragraph 1 of the Commentary on Article 21 by the following:

1. This Article provides a general rule relating to income not dealt with in the foregoing Articles of the Convention. The income concerned is not only income of a class not expressly dealt with but also income from sources not expressly mentioned. The scope of the Article is not confined to income arising in a Contracting State; it extends also to income from third States. *Where, for instance, a person who would be a resident of two Contracting States under the provisions of paragraph 1 of Article 4 is deemed to be a resident of only one of these States pursuant to the provisions of paragraph 2 or 3 of that Article, this Article will prevent the other State from taxing the person on income arising in third states even if the person is resident of this other State for domestic law purposes (see also paragraph 8.2 of the Commentary on Article 4 as regards the effect of paragraphs 2 and 3 of Article 4 for purposes of the conventions concluded between this other State and third states).*

45. Replace paragraph 7 of the Commentary on Article 21 by the following:

7. Some countries have encountered difficulties in dealing with income arising from certain non-traditional financial instruments when the parties to the instrument have a special relationship. These countries may wish to add the following paragraph to Article 21:

3. Where, by reason of a special relationship between the person referred to in paragraph 1 and some other person, or between both of them and some third person, the amount of the income referred to in paragraph 1 exceeds the amount (if any) which would have been agreed



upon between them in the absence of such a relationship, the provisions of this Article shall apply only to the last mentioned amount. In such a case, the excess part of the income shall remain taxable according to the laws of each Contracting State, due regard being had to the other applicable provisions of this Convention.

***The inclusion of this additional paragraph should carry no implication about the treatment of innovative financial transactions between independent persons or under other provisions of the Convention.***

46. Delete paragraph 12 of the Commentary on Article 21 as follows:

~~12.—The Committee on Fiscal Affairs is actively studying the taxation of non-traditional financial instruments. Further changes to the Model or Commentaries may be necessary. The inclusion of proposed paragraph 3 carries no implication about the treatment of innovative financial transactions between independent persons or under other provisions of the Convention.~~

#### **Change to the Commentary on Articles 23 A and 23 B**

47. In paragraph 10 of the Commentary on Articles 23 A and B, replace the cross-reference to “paragraphs 49 to 54 of the Commentary on Article 24” by “paragraphs **67 to 72** of the Commentary on Article 24”.

48. Replace paragraph 32.6 of the Commentary on Articles 23 A and B by the following:

32.6 The phrase “in accordance with the provisions of this Convention, may be taxed” must also be interpreted in relation to possible cases of double non-taxation that can arise under Article 23 A. Where the State of source considers that the provisions of the Convention preclude it from taxing an item of income or capital which it would otherwise have ***had the right to tax***~~taxed~~, the State of residence should, for purposes of applying paragraph 1 of Article 23 A, consider that the item of income may not be taxed by the State of source in accordance with the provisions of the Convention, even though the State of residence would have applied the Convention differently so as to ***have the right*** to tax that income if it had been in the position of the State of source. Thus the State of residence is not required by paragraph 1 to exempt the item of income, a result which is consistent with the basic function of Article 23 which is to eliminate double taxation.

#### **Changes to the Commentary on Article 24**

49. Replace the Commentary on Article 24 by the following:

### **COMMENTARY ON ARTICLE 24 CONCERNING NON-DISCRIMINATION**

#### ***General remarks***

***1. This Article deals with the elimination of tax discrimination in certain precise circumstances. All tax systems incorporate legitimate distinctions based, for example, on differences in liability to tax or ability to pay. The non-discrimination provisions of the Article seek to balance the need to prevent unjustified discrimination with the need to take account of these legitimate distinctions. For that reason, the Article should not be unduly extended to cover so-called “indirect” discrimination. For example, whilst paragraph 1, which deals with discrimination on the basis of nationality, would prevent a different treatment that is really a***

*disguised form of discrimination based on nationality such as a different treatment of individuals based on whether or not they hold, or are entitled to, a passport issued by the State, it could not be argued that non-residents of a given State include primarily persons who are not nationals of that State to conclude that a different treatment based on residence is indirectly a discrimination based on nationality for purposes of that paragraph.*

*2. Likewise, the provisions of the Article cannot be interpreted as to require most-favoured-nation treatment. Where a State has concluded a bilateral or multilateral agreement which affords tax benefits to nationals or residents of the other Contracting State(s) party to that agreement, nationals or residents of a third State that is not a Contracting State of the treaty may not claim these benefits by reason of a similar non-discrimination provision in the double taxation convention between the third State and the first-mentioned State. As tax conventions are based on the principle of reciprocity, a tax treatment that is granted by one Contracting State under a bilateral or multilateral agreement to a resident or national of another Contracting State party to that agreement by reason of the specific economic relationship between those Contracting States may not be extended to a resident or national of a third State under the non-discrimination provision of the tax convention between the first State and the third State.*

*3. The various provisions of Article 24 prevent differences in tax treatment that are solely based on certain specific grounds (e.g. nationality, in the case of paragraph 1). Thus, for these paragraphs to apply, other relevant aspects must be the same. The various provisions of Article 24 use different wording to achieve that result (e.g. “in the same circumstances” in paragraphs 1 and 2; “carrying on the same activities” in paragraph 3; “similar enterprises” in paragraph 5). Also, whilst the Article seeks to eliminate distinctions that are solely based on certain grounds, it is not intended to provide foreign nationals, non-residents, enterprises of other States or domestic enterprises owned or controlled by non-residents with a tax treatment that is better than that of nationals, residents or domestic enterprises owned or controlled by residents (see, for example, paragraph 34 below).*

*4. Finally, as illustrated by paragraph 79 below, the provisions of the Article must be read in the context of the other Articles of the Convention so that measures that are mandated or expressly authorized by the provisions of these Articles cannot be considered to violate the provisions of the Article even if they only apply, for example, as regards payments to non-residents. Conversely, however, the fact that a particular measure does not constitute a violation of the provisions of the Article does not mean that it is authorized by the Convention since that measure could violate other Articles of the Convention.*

#### ***Paragraph 1***

*15. This paragraph establishes the principle that for purposes of taxation discrimination on the grounds of nationality is forbidden, and that, subject to reciprocity, the nationals of a Contracting State may not be less favourably treated in the other Contracting State than nationals of the latter State in the same circumstances.*

*26. It is noteworthy that the principle of non-discrimination, under various descriptions and with a more or less wide scope, was applied in international fiscal relations well before the appearance, at the end of the 19th Century, of the classic type of double taxation conventions. Thus, in a great many agreements of different kinds (consular or establishment conventions, treaties of friendship or commerce, etc.) concluded by States, especially in the 19th Century, in order to extend and strengthen the diplomatic protection of their nationals wherever resident, there are clauses under which each of the two Contracting States undertakes to accord nationals of the other State equality of*

treatment with its own nationals. The fact that such clauses subsequently found their way into double taxation conventions has in no way affected their original justification and scope. The text of paragraph 1 provides that the application of this paragraph is not restricted by Article 1 to nationals solely who are residents of a Contracting State, but on the contrary, extends to all nationals of each Contracting State, whether or not they be residents of one of them. In other words, all nationals of a Contracting State are entitled to invoke the benefit of this provision as against the other Contracting State. This holds good, in particular, for nationals of the Contracting States who are not residents of either of them but of a third State.

37. The expression “in the same circumstances” refers to taxpayers (individuals, legal persons, partnerships and associations) placed, from the point of view of the application of the ordinary taxation laws and regulations, in substantially similar circumstances both in law and in fact. The expression “in particular with respect to residence” makes clear that the residence of the taxpayer is one of the factors that are relevant in determining whether taxpayers are placed in similar circumstances. The expression “in the same circumstances” would be sufficient by itself to establish that a taxpayer who is a resident of a Contracting State and one who is not a resident of that State are not in the same circumstances. In fact, whilst the expression “in particular with respect to residence” did not appear in the 1963 Draft Convention or in the 1977 Model Convention, the Member countries have consistently held, in applying and interpreting the expression “in the same circumstances”, that the residence of the taxpayer must be taken into account. However, in revising the Model Convention, the Committee on Fiscal Affairs felt that a specific reference to the residence of the taxpayers would be a useful clarification as it would avoid any possible doubt as to the interpretation to be given to the expression “in the same circumstances” in this respect.

48. In applying paragraph 1, therefore, the underlying question is whether two persons who are residents of the same State are being treated differently solely by reason of having a different nationality. Consequently if a Contracting State, in giving relief from taxation on account of family responsibilities, distinguishes between its own nationals according to whether they reside in its territory or not, that State cannot be obliged to give nationals of the other State who do not reside in its territory the same treatment as it gives its resident nationals but it undertakes to extend to them the same treatment as is available to its nationals who reside in the other State. Similarly, paragraph 1 does not apply where a national of a Contracting State (State R) who is also a resident of State R is taxed less favourably in the other Contracting State (State S) than a national of State S residing in a third State (for instance, as a result of the application of provisions aimed at discouraging the use of tax havens) as the two persons are not in the same circumstances with respect to their residence.

**9. *The expression “in the same circumstances” can in some cases refer to a person’s tax situation. This would be the case, for example, where a country would subject its nationals, or some of them, to a more comprehensive tax liability than non-nationals (this, for example, is a feature of the United States tax system). As long as such treatment is not itself a violation of paragraph 1, it could not be argued that persons who are not nationals of that State are in the same circumstances as its nationals for the purposes of the application of the other provisions of the domestic tax law of that State with respect to which the comprehensive or limited liability to tax of a taxpayer would be relevant (e.g. the granting of personal allowances).***

510. Likewise, the provisions of paragraph 1 are not to be construed as obliging a State which accords special taxation privileges to its own public bodies or services as such, to extend the same privileges to the public bodies and services of the other State.

611. Neither are they to be construed as obliging a State which accords special taxation privileges to private institutions not for profit whose activities are performed for purposes of public benefit, which

are specific to that State, to extend the same privileges to similar institutions whose activities are not for its benefit.

712. To take the first of these two cases, if a State accords immunity from taxation to its own public bodies and services, this is justified because such bodies and services are integral parts of the State and at no time can their circumstances be comparable to those of the public bodies and services of the other State. Nevertheless, this reservation is not intended to apply to State corporations carrying on gainful undertakings. To the extent that these can be regarded as being on the same footing as private business undertakings, the provisions of paragraph 1 will apply to them.

813. As for the second case, if a State accords taxation privileges to certain private institutions not for profit, this is clearly justified by the very nature of these institutions' activities and by the benefit which that State and its nationals will derive from those activities.

914. Furthermore, paragraph 1 has been deliberately framed in a negative form. By providing that the nationals of a Contracting State may not be subjected in the other Contracting State to any taxation or any requirement connected therewith which is other or more burdensome than the taxation and connected requirements to which nationals of the other Contracting State in the same circumstances are or may be subjected, this paragraph has the same mandatory force as if it enjoined the Contracting States to accord the same treatment to their respective nationals. But since the principal object of this clause is to forbid discrimination in one State against the nationals of the other, there is nothing to prevent the first State from granting to persons of foreign nationality, for special reasons of its own, or in order to comply with a special stipulation in a double taxation convention, such as, notably, the requirement that profits of permanent establishments are to be taxed on the basis of separate accounts, certain concessions or facilities which are not available to its own nationals. As it is worded, paragraph 1 would not prohibit this.

1015. Subject to the foregoing observation, the words "...shall not be subjected... to any taxation or any requirement connected therewith which is other or more burdensome..." mean that when a tax is imposed on nationals and foreigners in the same circumstances, it must be in the same form as regards both the basis of charge and the method of assessment, its rate must be the same and, finally, the formalities connected with the taxation (returns, payment, prescribed times, etc.) must not be more onerous for foreigners than for nationals.

1116. In view of the legal relationship created between the company and the State under whose law it is constituted, which from certain points of view is closely akin to the relationship of nationality in the case of individuals, it seems justifiable not to deal with legal persons, partnerships and associations in a special provision, but to assimilate them with individuals under paragraph 1. This result is achieved through the definition of the term "national" in subparagraph *f*) *g*) of paragraph 1 of Article 3.

**17. By virtue of that definition, in the case of a legal person such as a company, "national of a Contracting State" means a legal person "deriving its status as such from the laws in force in that Contracting State". A company will usually derive its status as such from the laws in force in the State in which it has been incorporated or registered. Under the domestic law of many countries, however, incorporation or registration constitutes the criterion, or one of the criteria, to determine the residence of companies for the purposes of Article 4. Since paragraph 1 of Article 24 prevents different treatment based on nationality but only with respect to persons or entities "in the same circumstances, in particular with respect to residence", it is therefore important to distinguish, for purposes of that paragraph, a different treatment that is solely based on nationality from a different treatment that relates to other circumstances and, in particular, residence. As explained**

*in paragraphs 7 and 8 above, paragraph 1 only prohibits discrimination based on a different nationality and requires that all other relevant factors, including the residence of the entity, be the same. The different treatment of residents and non-residents is a crucial feature of domestic tax systems and of tax treaties; when Article 24 is read in the context of the other Articles of the Convention, most of which provide for a different treatment of residents and non-residents, it is clear that two companies that are not residents of the same State for purposes of the Convention (under the rules of Article 4) are usually not in the same circumstances for purposes of paragraph 1.*

*18. Whilst residents and non-residents are usually not in the same circumstances for the purposes of paragraph 1, it is clear, however, that this is not the case where residence has no relevance whatsoever with respect to the different treatment under consideration.*

*19. The following examples illustrate these principles.*

*20. Example 1: Under the domestic income tax law of State A, companies incorporated in that State or having their place of effective management in that State are residents thereof. The State A-State B tax convention is identical to this Model Tax Convention. The domestic tax law of State A provides that dividends paid to a company incorporated in that country by another company incorporated in that country are exempt from tax. Since a company incorporated in State B that would have its place of effective management in State A would be a resident of State A for purposes of the State A - State B Convention, the fact that dividends paid to such a company by a company incorporated in State A would not be eligible for this exemption, even though the recipient company is in the same circumstances as a company incorporated in State A with respect to its residence, would constitute a breach of paragraph 1 absent other relevant different circumstances.*

*21. Example 2: Under the domestic income tax law of State A, companies incorporated in that State are residents thereof and companies incorporated abroad are non-residents. The State A-State B tax convention is identical to this Model Tax Convention except that paragraph 3 of Article 4 provides that if a legal person is a resident of both States under paragraph 1 of that Article, that legal person shall be deemed to be a resident of the State in which it has been incorporated. The domestic tax law of State A provides that dividends paid to a company incorporated in that country by another company incorporated in that country are exempt from tax. Paragraph 1 does not extend that treatment to dividends paid to a company incorporated in State B. Even if a company incorporated in State A and a company incorporated in State B that receive such dividends are treated differently, these companies are not in the same circumstances with regards to their residence and residence is a relevant factor in this case (as can be concluded, for example, from paragraph 5 of Article 10, which would prevent the subsequent taxation of dividends paid by a non-resident company but not those paid by a resident company).*

*22. Example 3: Under the domestic income tax law of State A, companies that are incorporated in that State are residents thereof. Under the domestic tax law of State B, companies that have their place of effective management in that State are residents thereof. The State A-State B tax convention is identical to this Model Tax Convention. The domestic tax law of State A provides that a non-resident company that is a resident of a State with which State A does not have a tax treaty that allows for the exchange of tax information is subject to an annual tax equal to 3% of the value of that property instead of a tax on the net income derived from that property. A company incorporated in State B but which is a resident of a State with which State A does not have a tax treaty that allows for the exchange of tax information cannot claim that paragraph 1 prevents the application of the 3% tax levied by State A because it is treated differently from a*

company incorporated in State A. In that case, such a company would not be in the same circumstances, with respect to its residence, as a company incorporated in State A and the residence of the company would be relevant (e.g. for purposes of accessing the information necessary to verify the net income from immovable property derived by a non-resident taxpayer).

23. *Example 4: Under the domestic income tax law of State A, companies incorporated in that State are residents of State A and companies incorporated abroad are non-residents. The State A-State B tax convention is identical to this Model Tax Convention except that paragraph 3 of Article 4 provides that if a legal person is a resident of both States under paragraph 1 of that Article, that legal person shall be deemed to be a resident of the State in which it has been incorporated. Under State A's payroll tax law, all companies that employ resident employees are subject to a payroll tax that does not make any distinction based on the residence of the employer but that provides that only companies incorporated in State A shall benefit from a lower rate of payroll tax. In that case, the fact that a company incorporated in State B will not have the same residence as a company incorporated in State A for the purposes of the A-B convention has no relevance at all with respect to the different tax treatment under the payroll tax and that different treatment would therefore be in violation of paragraph 1 absent other relevant different circumstances.*

24. *Example 5: Under the domestic income tax law of State A, companies incorporated in that State or which have their place of effective management in that State are residents of the State and companies that do not meet one of these two conditions are non-residents. Under the domestic income tax law of State B, companies incorporated in that State are residents of that State. The State A-State B tax convention is identical to this Model Tax Convention except that paragraph 3 of Article 4 provides that if a legal person is a resident of both States under paragraph 1 of that Article, that legal person shall be deemed to be a resident only of the State in which it has been incorporated. The domestic tax law of State A further provides that companies that have been incorporated and that have their place of effective management in that State are entitled to consolidate their income for tax purposes if they are part of a group of companies that have common shareholders. Company X, which was incorporated in State B, belongs to the same group as two companies incorporated in State A and all these companies are effectively managed in State A. Since it was not incorporated in State A, company X is not allowed to consolidate its income with that of the two other companies.*

25. *In that case, even if company X is a resident of State A under the domestic law of that State, it is not a resident of State A for purposes of the Convention by virtue of paragraph 3 of Article 4. It will therefore not be in the same circumstances as the other companies of the group as regards residence and paragraph 1 will not allow it to obtain the benefits of consolidation even if the different treatment results from the fact that company X has not been incorporated in State A. The residence of company X is clearly relevant with respect to the benefits of consolidation since certain provisions of the Convention, such as Articles 7 and 10, would prevent State A from taxing certain types of income derived by company X.*

#### Paragraph 2

1226. On 28 September 1954, a number of States concluded in New York a Convention relating to the status of stateless persons, under Article 29 of which stateless persons must be accorded national treatment. The signatories of the Convention include several OECD Member countries.

1327. It should, however, be recognised that the provisions of paragraph 2 will, in a bilateral convention, enable national treatment to be extended to stateless persons who, because they are in one

of the situations enumerated in paragraph 2 of Article 1 of the above-mentioned Convention of 28 September 1954, are not covered by that Convention. This is mainly the case, on the one hand, of persons receiving at the time of signature of that Convention, protection or assistance from organs or agencies of the United Nations other than the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and, on the other hand, of persons who are residents of a country and who there enjoy and are subject to the rights and obligations attaching to the possession of that country's nationality.

~~428.~~ The purpose of paragraph 2 is to limit the scope of the clause concerning equality of treatment with nationals of a Contracting State solely to stateless persons who are residents of that or of the other Contracting State.

~~429.~~ By thus excluding stateless persons who are residents of neither Contracting State, such a clause prevents their being privileged in one State as compared with nationals of the other State.

~~430.~~ However, if States were to consider it desirable in their bilateral relations to extend the application of paragraph 2 to all stateless persons, whether residents of a Contracting State or not, so that in all cases they enjoy the most favourable treatment accorded to nationals of the State concerned, in order to do this they would need only to adopt the following text which contains no condition as to residence in a Contracting State:

Notwithstanding the provisions of Article 1, stateless persons shall not be subjected in a Contracting State to any taxation or any requirement connected therewith which is other or more burdensome than the taxation and connected requirements to which nationals of that State in the same circumstances, in particular with respect to residence, are or may be subjected.

~~431.~~ It is possible that in the future certain States will take exception to the provisions of paragraph 2 as being too liberal insofar as they entitle stateless persons who are residents of one State to claim equality of treatment not only in the other State but also in their State of residence and thus benefit in particular in the latter from the provisions of double taxation conventions concluded by it with third States. If such States wished to avoid this latter consequence, they would have to modify paragraph 2 as follows:

Stateless persons who are residents of a Contracting State shall not be subjected in the other Contracting State to any taxation or any requirement connected therewith which is other or more burdensome than the taxation and connected requirements to which nationals of that other State in the same circumstances, in particular with respect to residence, are or may be subjected.

~~432.~~ Finally, it should be understood that the definition of the term "stateless person" to be used for the purposes of such a clause can only be that laid down in paragraph 1 of Article 1 of the Convention of 28 September 1954, which defines a stateless person as "a person who is not considered as a national by any State under the operation of its law."

### *Paragraph 3*

~~433.~~ Strictly speaking, the type of discrimination which this paragraph is designed to end is discrimination based not on nationality but on the actual situs of an enterprise. It therefore affects without distinction, and irrespective of their nationality, all residents of a Contracting State who have a permanent establishment in the other Contracting State.

~~434.~~ It appears necessary first to make it clear that the wording of the first sentence of paragraph 3 must be interpreted in the sense that it does not constitute discrimination to tax non-resident persons differently, for practical reasons, from resident persons, as long as this does not result in more burden-

some taxation for the former than for the latter. In the negative form in which the provision concerned has been framed, it is the result alone which counts, it being permissible to adapt the mode of taxation to the particular circumstances in which the taxation is levied.

2435. By the terms of the first sentence of paragraph 3, the taxation of a permanent establishment shall not be less favourably levied in the State concerned than the taxation levied on enterprises of that State carrying on the same activities. The purpose of this provision is to end all discrimination in the treatment of permanent establishments as compared with resident enterprises belonging to the same sector of activities, as regards taxes based on business activities, and especially taxes on business profits.

2236. However, the second sentence of paragraph 3 specifies the conditions under which the principle of equal treatment set forth in the first sentence should be applied to individuals who are residents of a Contracting State and have a permanent establishment in the other State. It is designed mainly to ensure that such persons do not obtain greater advantages than residents, through entitlement to personal allowances and reliefs for family responsibilities, both in the State of which they are residents, by the application of its domestic laws, and in the other State by virtue of the principle of equal treatment. Consequently, it leaves it open to the State in which the permanent establishment is situated whether or not to give personal allowances and reliefs to the persons concerned in the proportion which the amount of the permanent establishment's profits bears to the world income taxable in the other State.

**37. *It is also clear that, for purposes of paragraph 3, the tax treatment in one Contracting State of the permanent establishment of an enterprise of the other Contracting State should be compared to that of an enterprise of the first-mentioned State that has a legal structure that is similar to that of the enterprise to which the permanent establishment belongs. Thus, for example, paragraph 3 does not require a State to apply to the profits of the permanent establishment of an enterprise carried on by a non-resident individual the same rate of tax as is applicable to an enterprise of that State that is carried on by a resident company.***

**38. *Similarly, regulated and unregulated activities would generally not constitute the "same activities" for the purposes of paragraph 3. Thus, for instance, paragraph 3 would not require that the taxation on a permanent establishment whose activities include the borrowing and lending of money but which is not registered as a bank be not less favourably levied than that of domestic banks since the permanent establishment does not carry on the same activities. Another example would be that of activities carried on by a State or its public bodies, which, since they are controlled by the State, could not be considered, for the purposes of paragraph 3, to be similar to activities that an enterprise of the other State performs through a permanent establishment.***

2339. As regards the first sentence, experience has shown that it was difficult to define clearly and completely the substance of the principle of equal treatment and this has led to wide differences of opinion with regard to the many implications of this principle. The main reason for difficulty seems to reside in the actual nature of the permanent establishment, which is not a separate legal entity but only a part of an enterprise that has its head office in another State. The situation of the permanent establishment is different from that of a domestic enterprise, which constitutes a single entity all of whose activities, with their fiscal implications, can be fully brought within the purview of the State where it has its head office. The implications of the equal treatment clause will be examined below under several aspects of the levying of tax.



## A. Assessment of tax

2440. With regard to the basis of assessment of tax, the principle of equal treatment normally has the following implications:

- a) Permanent establishments must be accorded the same right as resident enterprises to deduct the trading expenses that are, in general, authorised by the taxation law to be deducted from taxable profits in addition to the right to attribute to the permanent establishment a proportion of the overheads of the head office of the enterprise. Such deductions should be allowed without any restrictions other than those also imposed on resident enterprises.
- b) Permanent establishments must be accorded the same facilities with regard to depreciation and reserves. They should be entitled to avail themselves without restriction not only of the depreciation facilities which are customarily available to enterprises (straight line depreciation, declining balance depreciation), but also of the special systems that exist in a number of countries (“wholesale” writing down, accelerated depreciation, etc.). As regards reserves, it should be noted that these are sometimes authorised for purposes other than the offsetting—in accordance with commercial accounting principles—of depreciation on assets, expenses or losses which have not yet occurred but which circumstances make likely to occur in the near future. Thus, in certain countries, enterprises are entitled to set aside, out of taxable profit, provisions or “reserves” for investment. When such a right is enjoyed by all enterprises, or by all enterprises in a given sector of activity, it should normally also be enjoyed, under the same conditions, by non-resident enterprises with respect to their permanent establishments situated in the State concerned, insofar, that is, as the activities to which such provisions or reserves would pertain are taxable in that State.
- c) Permanent establishments should also have the option that is available in most countries to resident enterprises of carrying forward or backward a loss brought out at the close of an accounting period within a certain period of time (e.g. 5 years). It is hardly necessary to specify that in the case of permanent establishments it is the loss on their own business activities, as shown in the separate accounts for these activities, which will qualify for such carry-forward.
- d) Permanent establishments should further have the same rules applied to resident enterprises, with regard to the taxation of capital gains realised on the alienation of assets, whether during or on the cessation of business.

**41. As clearly stated in subparagraph c) above, the equal treatment principle of paragraph 3 only applies to the taxation of the permanent establishment’s own activities. That principle, therefore, is restricted to a comparison between the rules governing the taxation of the permanent establishment’s own activities and those applicable to similar business activities carried on by an independent resident enterprise. It does not extend to rules that take account of the relationship between an enterprise and other enterprises (e.g. rules that allow consolidation, transfer of losses or tax-free transfers of property between companies under common ownership) since the latter rules do not focus on the taxation of an enterprise’s own business activities similar to those of the permanent establishment but, instead, on the taxation of a resident enterprise as part of a group of associated enterprises. Such rules will often operate to ensure or facilitate tax compliance and administration within a domestic group. It therefore follows that the equal treatment principle has no application. For the same reasons, rules related to the distribution of the profits of a resident enterprise cannot be extended to a permanent establishment under paragraph 3 as they do not relate to the business activities of the permanent establishment (see paragraph 59 below).**

**42. Also, it is clear that the application of transfer pricing rules based on the arm’s length standard in the case of transfers from a permanent establishment to its head office (or vice versa) cannot be considered to be a violation of paragraph 3 even if such rules do not apply to transfers within an enterprise of the Contracting State where the permanent establishment is located.**

*Indeed, the application of the arm's length standard to the determination of the profits attributable to a permanent establishment is mandated by paragraph 2 of Article 7 and that paragraph forms part of the context in which paragraph 3 of Article 24 must be read; also, since Article 9 would authorize the application of the arm's length standard to a transfer between a domestic enterprise and a foreign related enterprise, one cannot consider that its application in the case of a permanent establishment results in less favourable taxation than that levied on an enterprise of the Contracting State where the permanent establishment is located.*

~~2543.~~ Although the general rules mentioned above rarely give rise to any difficulties with regard to the principle of non-discrimination, *they do not constitute an exhaustive list of the possible consequences of that principle with respect to the determination of the tax base. The application of that principle may be less clear in the case of* ~~the same does not always hold good for the tax incentive measures which most countries, faced with such problems as decentralisation of industry, development of economically backward regions, or the promotion of new activities necessary for the expansion of the economy, have introduced in order to facilitate the solution of these problems by means of tax exemptions, reductions or other tax advantages given to enterprises for investment which is in line with official objectives.~~

~~2644.~~ As such measures are in furtherance of objectives directly related to the economic activity proper of the State concerned, it is right that the benefit of them should be extended to permanent establishments of enterprises of another State which has a double taxation convention with the first embodying the provisions of Article 24, once they have been accorded the right to engage in business activity in that State, either under its legislation or under an international agreement (treaties of commerce, establishment conventions, etc.) concluded between the two States.

~~2745.~~ It should, however, be noted that although non-resident enterprises are entitled to claim these tax advantages in the State concerned, they must fulfil the same conditions and requirements as resident enterprises. They may, therefore, be denied such advantages if their permanent establishments are unable or refuse to fulfil the special conditions and requirements attached to the granting of them.

~~2846.~~ ~~Finally~~ *Also*, it goes without saying that non-resident enterprises are not entitled to tax advantages attaching to activities the exercise of which is strictly reserved, on grounds of national interest, defence, protection of the national economy, etc., to domestic enterprises, since non-resident enterprises are not allowed to engage in such activities.

*47. Finally, the provisions of paragraph 3 should not be construed as obliging a State which accords special taxation privileges to non-profit institutions whose activities are performed for purposes of public benefit that are specific to that State, to extend the same privileges to permanent establishments of similar institutions of the other State whose activities are not exclusively for the first-mentioned State's public benefit.*

#### ***B. Special treatment of dividends received in respect of holdings owned by permanent establishments***

~~29-48.~~ In many countries special rules exist for the taxation of dividends distributed between companies (parent company-subsidary treatment, the *Schachtelprivileg*, the rule *non bis in idem*). The question arises whether such treatment should, by effect of the provisions of paragraph 3, also be enjoyed by permanent establishments in respect of dividends on holdings forming part of their assets.

~~30-49.~~ On this point opinions differ. Some States consider that such special treatment should be accorded to permanent establishments. They take the view that such treatment was enacted in order to

avoid double taxation on profits made by a subsidiary and distributed to a parent company. In principle, profits tax should be levied once, in the hands of the subsidiary performing the profit-generating activities. The parent company should be exempted from tax on such profits when received from the subsidiary or should, under the indirect credit method, be given relief for the taxation borne by the subsidiary. In cases where shares are held as direct investment by a permanent establishment the same principle implies that such a permanent establishment receiving dividends from the subsidiary should likewise be granted the special treatment in view of the fact that a profits tax has already been levied in the hands of the subsidiary. On the other hand, it is hardly conceivable on this line of thought to leave it to the State where the head office of the parent company is situated to give relief from double taxation brought about by a second levying of tax in the State of the permanent establishment. The State of the parent company, in which no activities giving rise to the doubly taxed profits have taken place, will normally exempt the profits in question or will levy a profits tax which is not sufficient to bear a double credit (i.e. for the profits tax on the subsidiary as well as for such tax on the permanent establishment). All this assumes that the shares held by the permanent establishment are effectively connected with its activity. Furthermore, an obvious additional condition is that the profits out of which the dividends are distributed should have borne a profits tax.

**3150.** Other States, on the contrary, consider that assimilating permanent establishments to their own enterprises does not entail any obligation to accord such special treatment to the former. They justify their position on various grounds. The purpose of such special treatment is to avoid economic double taxation of dividends and it should be for the recipient company's State of residence and not the permanent establishment's State to bear its cost, because it is more interested in the aim in view. Another reason put forward relates to the sharing of tax revenue between States. The loss of tax revenue incurred by a State in applying such special treatment is partly offset by the taxation of the dividends when they are redistributed by the parent company which has enjoyed such treatment (withholding tax on dividends, shareholder's tax). A State which accorded such treatment to permanent establishments would not have the benefit of such a compensation. Another argument made is that when such treatment is made conditional upon redistribution of the dividends, its extension to permanent establishments would not be justified, for in such a case the permanent establishment, which is only a part of a company of another State and does not distribute dividends, would be more favourably treated than a resident company. Finally, the States which feel that paragraph 3 does not entail any obligation to extend such treatment to permanent establishments argue that there is a risk that companies of one State might transfer their holdings in companies of another State to their permanent establishments in that other State for the sole purpose of availing themselves of such treatment.

**3251.** The fact remains that there can be very valid reasons for a holding being owned and managed by a permanent establishment rather than by the head office of the enterprise, *viz.*,

- reasons of necessity arising principally from a legal or regulatory obligation on banks and financial institutions and insurance companies to keep deposited in countries where they operate a certain amount of assets, particularly shares, as security for the performance of their obligations;
- or reasons of expediency, where the holdings are in companies which have business relations with the permanent establishment or whose head offices are situated in the same country as the permanent establishment;
- or simple reasons of practical convenience, in line with the present tendency towards decentralisation of management functions in large enterprises.

**3352.** In view of these divergent attitudes, as well as of the existence of the situations just described, it would be advisable for States, when concluding bilateral conventions, to make clear the interpretation they give to the first sentence of paragraph 3. They can, if they so desire, explain their position, or

change it as compared with their previous practice, in a protocol or any other document annexed to the convention.

3453. A solution could also be provided in such a document to meet the objection mentioned above that the extension of the treatment of holdings in a State (A) to permanent establishments of companies which are residents of another State (B) results in such companies unduly enjoying privileged treatment as compared with other companies which are residents of the same State and whose head offices own holdings in the capital of companies which are residents of State A, in that whereas the dividends on their holdings can be repatriated by the former companies without bearing withholding tax, such tax is levied on dividends distributed to the latter companies at the rate of 5 or 15 per cent as the case may be. Tax neutrality and the equality of tax burdens as between permanent establishments and subsidiary companies, as advocated by the States concerned, could be ensured by adapting, in the bilateral convention between States A and B, the provisions of paragraphs 2 and 4 of Article 10, so as to enable withholding tax to be levied in State A on dividends paid by companies which are residents of that State to permanent establishments of companies which are residents of State B in the same way as if they are received directly i.e. by the head offices of the latter companies, *viz.*, at the rate of:

- 5 per cent in the case of a holding of at least 25 per cent;
- 15 per cent in all other cases.

3554. Should it not be possible, because of the absence of appropriate provisions in the domestic laws of the State concerned, to levy a withholding tax there on dividends paid to permanent establishments, the treatment of inter-company dividends could be extended to permanent establishments, as long as its application is limited in such manner that the tax levied by the State of source of the dividends is the same whether the dividends are received by a permanent establishment of a company which is a resident of the other State or are received directly by such a company.

### *C. Structure and rate of tax*

3655. In countries where enterprises, mainly companies, are charged a tax on their profits which is specific to them, the provisions of paragraph 3 raise, with regard to the rate applicable in the case of permanent establishments, ~~especially difficult and delicate problems, which here too arise from the fact that~~ *some specific issues related to the fact that* the permanent establishment is only a part of a legal entity which is not under the jurisdiction of the State where the permanent establishment is situated.

3756. When the taxation of profits made by companies which are residents of a given State is calculated according to a progressive scale of rates, such a scale should, in principle, be applied to permanent establishments situated in that State. If in applying the progressive scale, the permanent establishment's State takes into account the profits of the whole company to which such a permanent establishment belongs, such a rule would not appear to conflict with the equal treatment rule, since resident companies are in fact treated in the same way (cf. paragraphs 55, 56 and 79 of the Commentary on Articles 23 A and 23 B). States that tax their own companies in this way could therefore define in their bilateral conventions the treatment applicable to permanent establishments.

3857. When a system of taxation based on a progressive scale of rates includes a rule that a minimum rate is applicable to permanent establishments, it cannot be claimed *a priori* that such a rule is incompatible with the equal treatment principle. The profits of the whole enterprise to which the permanent establishment belongs should be taken into account in determining the rate applicable according to the progressive scale. The provisions of the first sentence of paragraph 3 are not observed only if the minimum rate is higher.

3958. However, even if the profits of the whole enterprise to which the permanent establishment belongs are taken into account when applying either a progressive scale of rates or a minimum rate, this should not conflict with the principle of the distinct and separate enterprise, according to which the profits of the permanent establishment must be determined under paragraph 2 of Article 7. The minimum amount of the tax levied in the State where the permanent establishment is situated is, therefore, the amount which would be due if it were a distinct and separate enterprise, without reference to the profits of the whole enterprise to which it belongs. The State where the permanent establishment is situated is, therefore, justified in applying the progressive scale applicable to resident enterprises solely to the profits of the permanent establishment, leaving aside the profits of the whole enterprise when the latter are less than those of the permanent establishment. This State may likewise tax the profits of the permanent establishment at a minimum rate, provided that the same rate applies also to resident enterprises, even if taking into account the profits of the whole enterprise to which it belongs would result in a lower amount of tax, or no tax at all.

40. — As regards the split rate system of company tax, it should first be pointed out as being a fact central to the issue here that most OECD Member countries which have adopted this system do not consider themselves bound by the provisions of paragraph 3 to extend it to permanent establishments of non-resident companies. This attitude is based, in particular, on the view that the split rate is only one element amongst others (in particular a withholding tax on distributed income) in a system of taxing company profits and dividends which must be considered as a whole and is therefore, both for legal and technical reasons, of domestic application only. The State where the permanent establishment is situated could claim the right not to tax such profits at the reduced rate as, generally, it does not tax the dividends distributed by the company to which the permanent establishment belongs. Moreover, a State which has adopted a split rate system usually has other economic policy objectives, such as the promotion of the capital market, by encouraging resident companies to distribute dividends. The extension of the reduced rate to the profits of the permanent establishment would not serve such a purpose at all, as the company distributing the dividends is not a resident of the State concerned.

41. — This view is, however, disputed. The States in favour of extending the split rate system to permanent establishments urge that as the essential feature of this system is a special technique of taxing profits which enterprises in a corporate form derive from their activities, and is designed to afford immediate relief from the double taxation levied on the profits distributed, it should be applied to permanent establishments in bilateral conventions against double taxation. It is generally recognised that, by the effects of their provisions, such conventions necessarily result in some integration of the taxation systems of the Contracting States. On this account, it is perfectly conceivable that profits made in a State (A) by a permanent establishment of a company resident in another State (B) should be taxed in State A according to the split rate system. As a practical rule, the tax could in such case be calculated at the reduced rate (applicable to distributed profits) on that proportion of an establishment's profits which corresponds to the ratio between the profit distributed by the company to which it belongs and the latter's total profit; the remaining profit could be taxed at the higher rate. Of course, the two Contracting States would have to consult together and exchange all information necessary for giving practical effect to this solution. Similar considerations apply to systems where distributions of profits made can be deducted from the taxable income of a company.

42. — As regards the imputation system ("*avoir fiscal*" or "tax credit"), it seems doubtful, at least on a literal interpretation of the provisions of paragraph 3, whether it should be extended to non-resident companies in respect of dividends paid out of profits made by their permanent establishments. In fact, it has identical effects to those of the split rate system but these effects are not immediate as they occur only at the time of the shareholder's personal taxation. From a purely

economic and financial standpoint, however, it is conceivable that such profits should be treated as though they were profits of a distinct company in State A where the permanent establishment of a company which is a resident of State B is situated, and, to the extent that they are distributed, carry the *avoir fiscal* or tax credit. But to take the matter further, to avoid all discrimination it is necessary that this advantage should already have been accorded to shareholders who are residents of State B of companies which are residents of State A. From the practical standpoint, the two States concerned should, of course, agree upon the conditions and procedures for allowing the *avoir fiscal* or tax credit to shareholders who are themselves residents of either State, of the companies concerned that are residents of State B.

43. — Contracting States which are faced with the problems described above may settle them in bilateral negotiations in the light of their peculiar circumstances.

*59. Since a permanent establishment, by its very nature, does not distribute dividends, the tax treatment of distributions made by the enterprise to which the permanent establishment belongs is therefore outside the scope of paragraph 3. Paragraph 3 is restricted to the taxation of the profits from the activities of the permanent establishment itself and does not extend to the taxation of the enterprise as a whole. This is confirmed by the second sentence of the paragraph, which confirms that tax aspects related to the taxpayer that owns the permanent establishment, such as personal allowances and deductions, are outside the scope of the paragraph. Thus, issues related to various systems for the integration of the corporate and shareholder's taxes (e.g. advance corporate tax, précompte mobilier, computation of franked income and related dividend tax credits) are outside the scope of the paragraph.*

*60. In some States, the profits of a permanent establishment of an enterprise of another Contracting State are taxed at a higher rate than the profits of enterprises of that State. This additional tax, sometimes referred to as a "branch tax", may be explained by the fact that if a subsidiary of the foreign enterprise earned the same profits as the permanent establishment and subsequently distributed these profits as a dividend, an additional tax would be levied on these dividends in accordance with paragraph 2 of Article 10. Where such tax is simply expressed as an additional tax payable on the profits of the permanent establishment, it must be considered as a tax levied on the profits of the activities of the permanent establishment itself and not as a tax on the enterprise in its capacity as owner of the permanent establishment. Such a tax would therefore be contrary to paragraph 3.*

*61. That situation must, however, be distinguished from that of a tax that would be imposed on amounts deducted, for instance as interest, in computing the profits of a permanent establishments (e.g. "branch level interest tax"); in that case, the tax would not be levied on the permanent establishment itself but, rather, on the enterprise to which the interest is considered to be paid and would therefore be outside the scope of paragraph 3 (depending on the circumstances, however, other provisions, such as those of Articles 7 and 11, may be relevant in determining whether such a tax is allowed by the Convention; see the last sentence of paragraph 4).*

#### ***D. Withholding tax on dividends, interest and royalties received by a permanent establishment***

4462. When permanent establishments receive dividends, interest, or royalties such income, by virtue of paragraph 4 of Articles 10 and 11 and paragraph 3 of Article 12, respectively, comes under the provisions of Article 7 and consequently — subject to the observations made in paragraph 3453 above as regards dividends received on holdings of permanent establishment — falls to be included in the taxable profits of such permanent establishments (cf. paragraph 6235 of the Commentary on Article 7).

4563. According to the respective Commentaries on the above-mentioned provisions of Articles 10, 11 and 12 (cf. respectively paragraphs 31, 24 and 20), these provisions dispense the State of source of the dividends, interest or royalties received by the permanent establishment from applying any limitation provided for in those Articles, which means — and this is the generally accepted interpretation — that they leave completely unaffected the right of the State of source, where the permanent establishment is situated, to apply its withholding tax at the full rate.

4664. Whilst this approach does not create any problems with regard to the provisions of paragraph 3 of Article 24 in the case of countries where a withholding tax is levied on all such income, whether the latter be paid to residents (permanent establishments, like resident enterprises, being allowed to set such withholding tax off against the tax on profits due by virtue of Article 7) or to non residents (subject to the limitations provided for in Articles 10, 11 and 12), the position is different when withholding tax is applied exclusively to income paid to non-residents.

4765. In this latter case, in fact, it seems difficult to reconcile the levy of withholding tax with the principle set out in paragraph 3 that for the purpose of taxing the income which is derived from their activity, or which is normally connected with it — as is recognised to be the case with dividends, interest and royalties referred to in paragraph 4 of Articles 10 and 11 and in paragraph 3 of Article 12 — permanent establishments must be treated as resident enterprises and hence in respect of such income be subjected to tax on profits solely.

4866. In any case, it is for Contracting States which have this difficulty to settle it in bilateral negotiations in the light of their peculiar circumstances.

#### ***E. Credit for foreign tax***

4967. In a related context, when ***foreign income is included in the profits attributable to*** a permanent establishment ~~receives foreign income which is included in its taxable profits~~, it is right by virtue of the same principle to grant to the permanent establishment credit for foreign tax borne by such income when such credit is granted to resident enterprises under domestic laws.

5068. If in a Contracting State (A) in which is situated a permanent establishment of an enterprise of the other Contracting State (B), credit for tax levied in a third State (C) can be allowed only by virtue of a convention, then the more general question arises as to the extension to permanent establishments of the benefit of ***credit provisions included in*** tax conventions concluded with third States. ***Whilst the permanent establishment is not itself a person and is therefore not entitled to the benefits of these tax conventions, this issue is relevant to the taxation on the permanent establishment.*** This question is examined below ***in*** <sup>5</sup> the particular case of dividends ***or***, interest ~~and royalties being dealt with in paragraph 51.~~

#### ***F. Extension to permanent establishments of the benefit of the credit provisions of double taxation conventions concluded with third States***

5169. When the permanent establishment in a Contracting State of a resident enterprise of another Contracting State receives dividends ***or***, interest ~~or royalties~~ from a third State, then the question arises as to whether and to what extent the Contracting State in which the permanent establishment is situated should credit the tax that cannot be recovered from the third State.

5270. There is agreement that double taxation arises in these situations and that some method of relief should be found. The majority of Member countries are able to grant credit in these cases on the

basis of their domestic law or under paragraph 3. States that cannot give credit in such a way or that wish to clarify the situation may wish to supplement the provision in their convention with the Contracting State in which the enterprise is resident by wording that allows the State in which the permanent establishment is situated to credit the tax liability in the State in which the income originates to an amount that does not exceed the amount that resident enterprises in the Contracting State in which the permanent establishment is situated can claim on the basis of the Contracting State's convention with the third State. If the tax that cannot be recovered under the convention between the third State and the State of residence of the enterprise which has a permanent establishment in the other Contracting State is lower than that under the convention between the third State and the Contracting State in which the permanent establishment is situated, then only the lower tax collected in the third State shall be credited. This result would be achieved by adding the following words after the first sentence of paragraph 3:

When a permanent establishment in a Contracting State of an enterprise of the other Contracting State receives dividends ~~or, interest or royalties~~ from a third State and the **holding or debt-claim right or the asset** in respect of which the dividends ~~or, interest or royalties~~ are paid is effectively connected with that permanent establishment, the first-mentioned State shall grant a tax credit in respect of the tax paid in the third State on the dividends ~~or, interest or royalties~~, as the case may be, by applying the rate of tax provided in the convention with respect to taxes on income and capital between the State of which the enterprise is a resident and the third State. However, the amount of the credit shall not exceed the amount that an enterprise that is a resident of the first-mentioned State can claim under that State's convention on income and capital with the third State.

***If the convention also provides for other categories of income that may be taxed in the State in which they arise and for which credit should be given (e.g. royalties, in some conventions), the above provision should be amended to also cover these.***

5371. Where a permanent establishment situated in a Contracting State of an enterprise resident of another Contracting State (the State of residence) receives dividends, interest or royalties from a third State (the State of source) and, according to the procedure agreed to between the State of residence and the State of source, a certificate of domicile is requested by the State of source for the application of the withholding tax at the rate provided for in the convention between the State of source and the State of residence, this certificate must be issued by the latter State. Whilst this procedure may be useful where the State of residence employs the credit method, it seems to serve no purposes where that State uses the exemption method as the income from the third State is not liable to tax in the State of residence of the enterprise. On the other hand, the State in which the permanent establishment is located could benefit from being involved in the certification procedure as this procedure would provide useful information for audit purposes. Another question that arises with triangular cases is that of abuses. If the Contracting State of which the enterprise is a resident exempts from tax the profits of the permanent establishment located in the other Contracting State, there is a danger that the enterprise will transfer assets such as shares, bonds or patents to permanent establishments in States that offer very favourable tax treatment, and in certain circumstances the resulting income may not be taxed in any of the three States. To prevent such practices, which may be regarded as abusive, a provision can be included in the convention between the State of which the enterprise is a resident and the third State (the State of source) stating that an enterprise can claim the benefits of the convention only if the income obtained by the permanent establishment situated in the other State is taxed normally in the State of the permanent establishment.

5472. In addition to the typical triangular case considered here, other triangular cases arise, particularly that in which the State of the enterprise is also the State from which the income ascribable



to the permanent establishment in the other State originates (see also paragraph 5 of the Commentary on Article 21). States can settle these matters in bilateral negotiations.

#### *Paragraph 4*

~~55~~73. This paragraph is designed to end a particular form of discrimination resulting from the fact that in certain countries the deduction of interest, royalties and other disbursements allowed without restriction when the recipient is resident, is restricted or even prohibited when he is a non-resident. The same situation may also be found in the sphere of capital taxation, as regards debts contracted to a non-resident. It is however open to Contracting States to modify this provision in bilateral conventions to avoid its use for tax avoidance purposes.

~~56~~74. Paragraph 4 does not prohibit the country of the borrower ~~from treating interest as a dividend under~~ **from applying** its domestic rules on thin capitalisation insofar as these are compatible with paragraph 1 of Article 9 or paragraph 6 of Article 11. However, if such treatment results from rules which are not compatible with the said Articles and which only apply to non-resident creditors (to the exclusion of resident creditors), then such treatment is prohibited by paragraph 4.

*75. Also, paragraph 4 does not prohibit additional information requirements with respect to payments made to non-residents since these requirements are intended to ensure similar levels of compliance and verification in the case of payments to residents and non-residents.*

#### *Paragraph 5*

~~57~~76. This paragraph forbids a Contracting State to give less favourable treatment to an enterprise, the capital of which is owned or controlled, wholly or partly, directly or indirectly, by one or more residents of the other Contracting State. This provision, and the discrimination which it puts an end to, relates to the taxation only of enterprises and not of the persons owning or controlling their capital. Its object therefore is to ensure equal treatment for taxpayers residing in the same State, and not to subject foreign capital, in the hands of the partners or shareholders, to identical treatment to that applied to domestic capital.

*77. Since the paragraph relates only to the taxation of resident enterprises and not to that of the persons owning or controlling their capital, it follows that it cannot be interpreted to extend the benefits of rules that take account of the relationship between a resident enterprise and other resident enterprises (e.g. rules that allow consolidation, transfer of losses or tax-free transfer of property between companies under common ownership). For example, if the domestic tax law of one State allows a resident company to consolidate its income with that of a resident parent company, paragraph 5 cannot have the effect to force the State to allow such consolidation between a resident company and a non-resident parent company. This would require comparing the combined treatment of a resident enterprise and the non-resident that owns its capital with that of a resident enterprise and the resident that owns its capital, something that clearly goes beyond the taxation of the resident enterprise alone.*

*78. Also, because paragraph 5 is aimed at ensuring that all resident companies are treated equally regardless of who owns or control their capital and does not seek to ensure that distributions to residents and non-residents are treated in the same way (see paragraph 76 above), it follows that withholding tax obligations that are imposed on a resident company with respect to dividends paid to non-resident shareholders but not with respect to dividends paid to resident shareholders cannot be considered to violate paragraph 5. In that case, the different treatment is*

*not dependent on the fact that the capital of the company is owned or controlled by non-residents but, rather, on the fact that dividends paid to non-residents are taxed differently. A similar example would be that of a State that levies a tax on resident companies that make distributions to their shareholders regardless of whether or not they are residents or non-residents, but which, in order to avoid a multiple application of that tax, would not apply it to distributions made to related resident companies that are themselves subject to the tax upon their own distributions. The fact that the latter exemption would not apply to distributions to non-resident companies should not be considered to violate paragraph 5. In that case, it is not because the capital of the resident company is owned or controlled by non-residents that it is treated differently; it is because it makes distributions to companies that, under the provisions of the treaty, cannot be subjected to the same tax when they re-distribute the dividends received from that resident company. In this example, all resident companies are treated the same way regardless of who owns or controls their capital and the different treatment is restricted to cases where distributions are made in circumstances where the distribution tax could be avoided.*

~~5879. Paragraph 5, though relevant in principle to thin capitalisation, is worded in such general terms that it must take second place to more specific provisions in the Convention. Thus paragraph 4 (referring to paragraph 1 of Article 9 and paragraph 6 of Article 11) takes precedence over this paragraph in relation to the deduction of interest. Since the paragraph prevents the discrimination of a resident enterprise that is solely based on who owns or controls the capital of that enterprise, it would not prima facie be relevant with respect to rules that provide for a different treatment of an enterprise based on whether it pays interest to resident or non-resident creditors. The paragraph is not concerned with rules based on a debtor-creditor relationship as long as the different treatment resulting from the rules is not based on whether or not non-residents own or control, wholly or partly, directly or indirectly, the capital of the enterprise. For example, if under a State's domestic thin capitalisation rules, a resident enterprise is not allowed to deduct interest paid to a non-resident associated enterprise, that rule would not be in violation of paragraph 5 even where it would be applied to payments of interest made to a creditor that would own or control the capital of the enterprise, provided that the treatment would be the same if the interest had been paid to a non-resident associated enterprise that did not itself own or control any of the capital of the payer. Clearly, however, such a domestic law rule could be in violation of paragraph 4 to the extent that different conditions would apply for the deduction of interest paid to residents and non-residents and it will therefore be important to determine, for purposes of that paragraph, whether the application of the rule is compatible with the provisions of paragraph 1 of Article 9 or paragraph 6 of Article 11 (see paragraph 74 above).~~ Paragraph 5, though relevant in principle to thin capitalisation, is worded in such general terms that it must take second place to more specific provisions in the Convention. Thus paragraph 4 (referring to paragraph 1 of Article 9 and paragraph 6 of Article 11) takes precedence over this paragraph in relation to the deduction of interest. *This would also be important for purposes of paragraph 5 in the case of thin capitalisation rules that would apply only to enterprises of a Contracting State the capital of which is wholly or partly owned or controlled, directly or indirectly, by non-residents. Indeed, since the provisions of paragraph 1 of Article 9 or paragraph 6 of Article 11 form part of the context in which paragraph 5 must be read (as required by Article 31 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties), adjustments which are compatible with these provisions could not be considered to violate the provisions of paragraph 5.*

~~5980.~~ In the case of transfer pricing enquiries, almost all Member countries consider that additional information requirements which would be more stringent than the normal requirements, or even a reversal of the burden of proof, would not constitute discrimination within the meaning of the Article.

*Paragraph 6*

~~6081.~~ This paragraph states that the scope of the Article is not restricted by the provisions of Article 2. The Article therefore applies to taxes of every kind and description levied by, or on behalf of, the State, its political subdivisions or local authorities.

**Changes to the Commentary on Article 25**

50. Replace the Commentary on Article 25 by the following (including the new Annex to the Commentary on Article 25):

**COMMENTARY ON ARTICLE 25  
CONCERNING THE MUTUAL AGREEMENT PROCEDURE**

**I. Preliminary remarks**

1. This Article institutes a mutual agreement procedure for resolving difficulties arising out of the application of the Convention in the broadest sense of the term.

2. It provides first, in paragraphs 1 and 2, that the competent authorities shall endeavour by mutual agreement to resolve the situation of taxpayers subjected to taxation not in accordance with the provisions of the Convention.

3. It also, in paragraph 3, invites and authorises the competent authorities of the two States to resolve by mutual agreement problems relating to the interpretation or application of the Convention and, furthermore, to consult together for the elimination of double taxation in cases not provided for in the Convention.

4. ~~Finally, as~~ regards the practical operation of the mutual agreement procedure, the Article, in paragraph 4, merely authorises the competent authorities to communicate with each other directly, without going through diplomatic channels, and, if it seems advisable to them, to have an oral exchange of opinions through a joint commission appointed especially for the purpose. Article 26 applies to the exchange of information for the purposes of the provisions of this Article. The confidentiality of information exchanged for the purposes of a mutual agreement procedure is thus ensured.

*5. Finally, paragraph 5 provides a mechanism that allows a taxpayer to request the arbitration of unresolved issues that have prevented competent authorities from reaching a mutual agreement within two years. Whilst the mutual agreement procedure provides a generally effective and efficient method of resolving disputes arising under the Convention, there may be cases where the competent authorities are unable to agree that the taxation by both States is in accordance with the Convention. The arbitration process provided for under paragraph 5 allows such cases to be resolved by allowing an independent decision of the unresolved issues, thereby allowing a mutual agreement to be reached. This process is an integral part of the mutual agreement procedure and does not constitute an alternative route to solving disputes concerning the application of the Convention.*

~~5-6.~~ Since the Article merely lays down general rules concerning the mutual agreement procedure, the comments ~~now following~~ **below** are intended to clarify the purpose of such rules, and also to

amplify them, if necessary, by referring, in particular, to the rules *and practices* followed at international level in the conduct of mutual agreement procedures or at the internal level in the conduct of the procedures which exist in most OECD Member countries for dealing with disputed claims regarding taxes. *In particular, since paragraph 5 expressly requires the competent authorities to agree on the mode of application of the arbitration process that it provides, the comments below discuss in detail various procedural aspects of that process. An annex to this Commentary contains a sample form of agreement that the competent authorities may use as a basis for settling the mode of application of the arbitration process; that annex addresses various structural and procedural issues, discusses the various provisions of the sample agreement and, in some cases, put forward alternatives.*

## II. Commentary on the provisions of the Article

### *Paragraphs 1 and 2*

~~6~~-7. The rules laid down in paragraphs 1 and 2 provide for the elimination in a particular case of taxation which does not accord with the Convention. As is known, in such cases it is normally open to taxpayers to litigate in the tax court, either immediately or upon the dismissal of their objections by the taxation authorities. When taxation not in accordance with the Convention arises from an incorrect application of the Convention in both States, taxpayers are then obliged to litigate in each State, with all the disadvantages and uncertainties that such a situation entails. So paragraph 1 makes available to taxpayers affected, without depriving them of the ordinary legal remedies available, a procedure which is called the mutual agreement procedure because it is aimed, in its second stage, at resolving the dispute on an ~~amicable~~ *agreed* basis, i.e. by agreement between competent authorities, the first stage being conducted exclusively in the State of residence (except where the procedure for the application of paragraph 1 of Article 24 is set in motion by the taxpayer in the State of which he is a national) from the presentation of the objection up to the decision taken regarding it by the competent authority on the matter.

~~7~~-8. In any case, the mutual agreement procedure is clearly a special procedure outside the domestic law. It follows that it can be set in motion solely in cases coming within paragraph 1, i.e. cases where tax has been charged, or is going to be charged, in disregard of the provisions of the Convention. So where a charge of tax has been made contrary both to the Convention and the domestic law, this case is amenable to the mutual agreement procedure to the extent only that the Convention is affected, unless a connecting link exists between the rules of the Convention and the rules of the domestic law which have been misapplied.

~~8~~-9. In practice, the procedure applies to cases — by far the most numerous — where the measure in question leads to double taxation which it is the specific purpose of the Convention to avoid. Among the most common cases, mention must be made of the following:

- the questions relating to attribution to a permanent establishment of a proportion of the executive and general administrative expenses incurred by the enterprise, under paragraph 3 of Article 7;
- the taxation in the State of the payer — in case of a special relationship between the payer and the beneficial owner — of the excess part of interest and royalties, under the provisions of Article 9, paragraph 6 of Article 11 or paragraph 4 of Article 12;
- cases of application of legislation to deal with thin capitalisation when the State of the debtor company has treated interest as dividends, insofar as such treatment is based on clauses of a convention corresponding for example to Article 9 or paragraph 6 of Article 11;

- cases where lack of information as to the taxpayer's actual situation has led to misapplication of the Convention, especially in regard to the determination of residence (paragraph 2 of Article 4), the existence of a permanent establishment (Article 5), or the temporary nature of the services performed by an employee (paragraph 2 of Article 15).

~~9-10.~~ Article 25 also provides machinery to enable competent authorities to consult with each other with a view to resolving, in the context of transfer pricing problems, not only problems of juridical double taxation but also those of economic double taxation, and especially those resulting from the inclusion of profits of associated enterprises under paragraph 1 of Article 9; the corresponding adjustments to be made in pursuance of paragraph 2 of the same Article thus fall within the scope of the mutual agreement procedure, both as concerns assessing whether they are well-founded and for determining their amount.

~~10-11.~~ This in fact is implicit in the wording of paragraph 2 of Article 9 when the bilateral convention in question contains a clause of this type. When the bilateral convention does not contain rules similar to those of paragraph 2 of Article 9 (as is usually the case for conventions signed before 1977) the mere fact that Contracting States inserted in the convention the text of Article 9, as limited to the text of paragraph 1 — which usually only confirms broadly similar rules existing in domestic laws — indicates that the intention was to have economic double taxation covered by the Convention. As a result, most Member countries consider that economic double taxation resulting from adjustments made to profits by reason of transfer pricing is not in accordance with — at least — the spirit of the convention and falls within the scope of the mutual agreement procedure set up under Article 25. *[the rest of the existing paragraph becomes the last sentence of paragraph 12]*

**12.** *Whilst the mutual agreement procedure has a clear role in dealing with issues arising as to the sorts of adjustments referred to in paragraph 2 of Article 9, it follows that even in the absence of such a provision, States should be seeking to avoid double taxation, including by giving corresponding adjustments in cases of the type contemplated in paragraph 2. Whilst there may be some difference of view, States would therefore generally regard a taxpayer-initiated mutual agreement procedure based upon economic double taxation contrary to the terms of Article 9 as encompassing issues of whether a corresponding adjustment should have been provided, even in the absence of a provision similar to paragraph 2 of Article 9.* States which do not share this view do, however, in practice, find the means of remedying economic double taxation in most cases involving *bona fide* companies by making use of provisions in their domestic laws.

~~11-13.~~ The mutual agreement procedure is also applicable in the absence of any double taxation contrary to the Convention, once the taxation in dispute is in direct contravention of a rule in the Convention. Such is the case when one State taxes a particular class of income in respect of which the Convention gives an exclusive right to tax to the other State even though the latter is unable to exercise it owing to a gap in its domestic laws. Another category of cases concerns persons who, being nationals of one Contracting State but residents of the other State, are subjected in that other State to taxation treatment which is discriminatory under the provisions of paragraph 1 of Article 24.

~~12-14.~~ It should be noted that the mutual agreement procedure, unlike the disputed claims procedure under domestic law, can be set in motion by a taxpayer without waiting until the taxation considered by him to be “not in accordance with the Convention” has been charged against or notified to him. To be able to set the procedure in motion, he must, and it is sufficient if he does, establish that the “actions of one or both of the Contracting States” will result in such taxation, and that this taxation appears as a risk which is not merely possible but probable. Such actions mean all acts or decisions, whether of a legislative or a regulatory nature, and whether of general or individual application, having as their direct and necessary consequence the charging of tax against the complainant contrary to the provisions of the Convention. ***Thus, for example, if a change to a***

*Contracting State's tax law would result in a person deriving a particular type of income being subjected to taxation not in accordance with the Convention, that person could set the mutual agreement procedure in motion as soon as the law has been amended and that person has derived the relevant income or it becomes probable that the person will derive that income. Other examples include filing a return in a self assessment system or the active examination of a specific taxpayer reporting position in the course of an audit, to the extent that either event creates the probability of taxation not in accordance with the Convention (e.g. where the self assessment reporting position the taxpayer is required to take under a Contracting State's domestic law would, if proposed by that State as an assessment in a non-self assessment regime, give rise to the probability of taxation not in accordance with the Convention, or where circumstances such as a Contracting State's published positions or its audit practice create a significant likelihood that the active examination of a specific reporting position such as the taxpayer's will lead to proposed assessments that would give rise to the probability of taxation not in accordance with the Convention). Another example might be a case where a Contracting State's transfer pricing law requires a taxpayer to report taxable income in an amount greater than would result from the actual prices used by the taxpayer in its transactions with a related party, in order to comply with the arm's length principle, and where there is substantial doubt whether the taxpayer's related party will be able to obtain a corresponding adjustment in the other Contracting State in the absence of a mutual agreement procedure. As indicated by the opening words of paragraph 1, whether or not the actions of one or both of the Contracting States will result in taxation not in accordance with the Convention must be determined from the perspective of the taxpayer. Whilst the taxpayer's belief that there will be such taxation must be reasonable and must be based on facts that can be established, the tax authorities should not refuse to consider a request under paragraph 1 merely because they consider that it has not been proven (for example to domestic law standards of proof on the "balance of probabilities") that such taxation will occur.*

*15. Since the first steps in a mutual agreement procedure may be set in motion at a very early stage based upon the mere probability of taxation not in accordance with the Convention, the initiation of the procedure in this manner would not be considered the presentation of the case to the competent authority for the purposes of determining the start of the two-year period referred to in paragraph 5 of the Article. Paragraph 8 of the annex to the Commentary on Article 25 describes the circumstances in which that two-year period commences.*

~~13-~~16. To be admissible objections presented under paragraph 1 must first meet a twofold requirement expressly formulated in that paragraph: in principle, they must be presented to the competent authority of the taxpayer's State of residence (except where the procedure for the application of paragraph 1 of Article 24 is set in motion by the taxpayer in the State of which he is a national), and they must be so presented within three years of the first notification of the action which gives rise to taxation which is not in accordance with the Convention. The Convention does not lay down any special rule as to the form of the objections. The competent authorities may prescribe special procedures which they feel to be appropriate. If no special procedure has been specified, the objections may be presented in the same way as objections regarding taxes are presented to the tax authorities of the State concerned.

~~14-~~17. The requirement laid on the taxpayer to present his case to the competent authority of the State of which he is a resident (except where the procedure for the application of paragraph 1 of Article 24 is set in motion by the taxpayer in the State of which he is a national) is of general application, regardless of whether the taxation objected to has been charged in that or the other State and regardless of whether it has given rise to double taxation or not. If the taxpayer should have transferred his residence to the other Contracting State subsequently to the measure or taxation objected to, he must nevertheless still present his objection to the competent authority of the State of which he was a resident during the year in respect of which such taxation has been or is going to be charged.

~~15-18.~~ However, in the case already alluded to where a person who is a national of one State but a resident of the other complains of having been subjected in that other State to an action or taxation which is discriminatory under paragraph 1 of Article 24, it appears more appropriate for obvious reasons to allow him, by way of exception to the general rule set forth above, to present his objection to the competent authority of the Contracting State of which he is a national. Finally, it is to the same competent authority that an objection has to be presented by a person who, whilst not being a resident of a Contracting State, is a national of a Contracting State, and whose case comes under paragraph 1 of Article 24.

~~16-19.~~ On the other hand, Contracting States may, if they consider it preferable, give taxpayers the option of presenting their cases to the competent authority of either State. In such a case, paragraph 1 would have to be modified as follows:

1. Where a person considers that the actions of one or both of the Contracting States result or will result for him in taxation not in accordance with the provisions of this Convention, he may, irrespective of the remedies provided by the domestic law of those States, present his case to the competent authority of either Contracting State. The case must be presented within three years from the first notification of the action resulting in taxation not in accordance with the provisions of the Convention.

~~17-20.~~ The time limit of three years set by the second sentence of paragraph 1 for presenting objections is intended to protect administrations against late objections. This time limit must be regarded as a minimum, so that Contracting States are left free to agree in their bilateral conventions upon a longer period in the interests of taxpayers, e.g. on the analogy in particular of the time limits laid down by their respective domestic regulations in regard to tax conventions. Contracting States may omit the second sentence of paragraph 1 if they concur that their respective domestic regulations apply automatically to such objections and are more favourable in their effects to the taxpayers affected, either because they allow a longer time for presenting objections or because they do not set any time limits for such purpose.

~~18-21.~~ The provision fixing the starting point of the three-year time limit as the date of the “first notification of the action resulting in taxation not in accordance with the provisions of the Convention” should be interpreted in the way most favourable to the taxpayer. Thus, even if such taxation should be directly charged in pursuance of an administrative decision or action of general application, the time limit begins to run only from the date of the notification of the individual action giving rise to such taxation, that is to say, under the most favourable interpretation, from the act of taxation itself, as evidenced by a notice of assessment or an official demand or other instrument for the collection or levy of tax. *[the rest of the existing paragraph becomes part of the new paragraph 24] Since a taxpayer has the right to present a case as soon as the taxpayer considers that taxation will result in taxation not in accordance with the provisions of the Convention, whilst the three-year limit only begins when that result has materialised, there will be cases where the taxpayer will have the right to initiate the mutual agreement procedure before the three-year time limit begins (see the example of such a situation given in paragraph 12 above).*

*22. In most cases it will be clear what constitutes the relevant notice of assessment, official demand or other instrument for the collection or levy of tax, and there will usually be domestic law rules governing when that notice is regarded as “given”. Such domestic law will usually look to the time when the notice is sent (time of sending), a specific number of days after it is sent, the time when it would be expected to arrive at the address it is sent to (both of which are times of presumptive physical receipt), or the time when it is in fact physically received (time of actual physical receipt). Where there are no such rules, either the time of actual physical receipt or,*

*where this is not sufficiently evidenced, the time when the notice would normally be expected to have arrived at the relevant address should usually be treated as the time of notification, bearing in mind that this provision should be interpreted in the way most favourable to the taxpayer.*

23. *In self assessment cases, there will usually be some notification effecting that assessment (such as a notice of a liability or of denial or adjustment of a claim for refund), and generally the time of notification, rather than the time when the taxpayer lodges the self-assessed return, would be a starting point for the three year period to run. There may, however, be cases where there is no notice of a liability or the like. In such cases, the relevant time of “notification” would be the time when the taxpayer would, in the normal course of events, be regarded as having been made aware of the taxation that is in fact not in accordance with the Convention. This could, for example, be when information recording the transfer of funds is first made available to a taxpayer, such as in a bank balance or statement. The time begins to run whether or not the taxpayer actually regards the taxation, at that stage, as contrary to the Convention, provided that a reasonably prudent person in the taxpayer’s position would have been able to conclude at that stage that the taxation was not in accordance with the Convention. In such cases, notification of the fact of taxation to the taxpayer is enough. Where, however, it is only the combination of the self assessment with some other circumstance that would cause a reasonably prudent person in the taxpayer’s position to conclude that the taxation was contrary to the Convention (such as a judicial decision determining the imposition of tax in a case similar to the taxpayer’s to be contrary to the provisions of the Convention), the time begins to run only when the latter circumstance materialises.*

24. *If the tax is levied by deduction at the source, the time limit begins to run from the moment when the income is paid; however, if the taxpayer proves that only at a later date did he know that the deduction had been made, the time limit will begin from that date. Furthermore, where it is the combination of decisions or actions taken in both Contracting States resulting in taxation not in accordance with the Convention, the time limit begins to run only from the first notification of the most recent decision or action. This means that where, for example, a Contracting State levies a tax that is not in accordance with the Convention but the other State provides relief for such tax pursuant to Article 23 A or Article 23 B so that there is no double taxation, a taxpayer will in practice often not initiate the mutual agreement procedure in relation to the action of the first State. If, however, the other State subsequently notifies the taxpayer that the relief is denied so that double taxation now arises, a new time limit begins from that notification, since the combined actions of both States then result in the taxpayer’s being subjected to double taxation contrary to the provisions of the Convention. In some cases, especially of this type, the records held by taxing authorities may have been routinely destroyed before the period of the time limit ends, in accordance with the normal practice of one or both of the States. The Convention obligations do not prevent such destruction, or require a competent authority to accept the taxpayer’s arguments without proof, but in such cases the taxpayer should be given the opportunity to supply the evidential deficiency, as the mutual agreement procedure continues, to the extent domestic law allows. In some cases, the other Contracting State may be able to provide sufficient evidence, in accordance with Article 26 of the Model Tax Convention. It is, of course, preferable that such records be retained by tax authorities for the full period during which a taxpayer is able to seek to initiate the mutual agreement procedure in relation to a particular matter.*

25. *The three-year period continues to run during any domestic law (including administrative) proceedings (e.g. a domestic appeal process). This could create difficulties by in effect requiring a taxpayer to choose between domestic law and mutual agreement procedure remedies. Some taxpayers may rely solely on the mutual agreement procedure, but many taxpayers will attempt to*



*address these difficulties by initiating a mutual agreement procedure whilst simultaneously initiating domestic law action, even though the domestic law process is initially not actively pursued. This could result in mutual agreement procedure resources being inefficiently applied. Where domestic law allows, some States may wish to specifically deal with this issue by allowing for the three-year (or longer) period to be suspended during the course of domestic law proceedings. Two approaches, each of which is consistent with Article 25 are, on one hand, requiring the taxpayer to initiate the mutual agreement procedure, with no suspension during domestic proceedings, but with the competent authorities not entering into talks in earnest until the domestic law action is finally determined, or else, on the other hand, having the competent authorities enter into talks, but without finally settling an agreement unless and until the taxpayer agrees to withdraw domestic law actions. This second possibility is discussed at paragraph 42 of this Commentary. In either of these cases, the taxpayer should be made aware that the relevant approach is being taken. Whether or not a taxpayer considers that there is a need to lodge a “protective” appeal under domestic law (because, for example, of domestic limitation requirements for instituting domestic law actions) the preferred approach for all parties is often that the mutual agreement procedure should be the initial focus for resolving the taxpayer’s issues, and for doing so on a bilateral basis.*

*26. Some States may deny the taxpayer the ability to initiate the mutual agreement procedure under paragraph 1 of Article 25 in cases where the transactions to which the request relates are regarded as abusive. This issue is closely related to the issue of “improper use of the Convention” discussed in paragraph 9.1 and following of the Commentary on Article 1. In the absence of a special provision, there is no general rule denying perceived abusive situations going to the mutual agreement procedure, however. The simple fact that a charge of tax is made under an avoidance provision of domestic law should not be a reason to deny access to mutual agreement. However, where serious violations of domestic laws resulting in significant penalties are involved, some States may wish to deny access to MAP. The circumstances in which a State would deny access to MAP should be made clear in the Convention.*

*27. Some States regard certain issues as not susceptible to resolution by the mutual agreement procedure generally, or at least by taxpayer-initiated mutual agreement procedure, because of constitutional or other domestic law provisions or decisions. An example would be a case where granting the taxpayer relief would be contrary to a final court decision that the tax authority is required to adhere to under that State’s constitution. The recognised general principle for tax and other treaties is that domestic law, even domestic constitutional law, does not justify a failure to meet treaty obligations, however. Article 27 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties reflects this general principle of treaty law. It follows that any justification for what would otherwise be a breach of the Convention needs to be found in the terms of the Convention itself, as interpreted in accordance with accepted tax treaty interpretation principles. Such a justification would be rare, because it would not merely govern how a matter will be dealt with by the two States once the matter is within the mutual agreement procedure, but would instead prevent the matter from even reaching the stage when it is considered by both States. Since such a determination might in practice be reached by one of the States without consultation with the other, and since there might be a bilateral solution that therefore remains unconsidered, the view that a matter is not susceptible of taxpayer-initiated mutual agreement procedure should not be lightly made, and needs to be supported by the terms of the Convention as negotiated. A competent authority relying upon a domestic law impediment as the reason for not allowing the mutual agreement procedure to be initiated by a taxpayer should inform the other competent authority of this and duly explain the legal basis of its position. More usually, genuine domestic law impediments will not prevent a matter from entering into the mutual agreement procedure, but if they will clearly and unequivocally prevent a competent authority from resolving the issue in*

*a way that avoids taxation of the taxpayer which is not in accordance with the Convention, and there is no realistic chance of the other State resolving the issue for the taxpayer, then that situation should be made public to taxpayers, so that taxpayers do not have false expectations as to the likely outcomes of the procedure.*

*28. In other cases, initiation of the mutual agreement procedure may have been allowed but domestic law issues that have arisen since the negotiation of the treaty may prevent a competent authority from resolving, even in part, the issue raised by the taxpayer. Where such developments have a legally constraining effect on the competent authority, so that bilateral discussions can clearly not resolve the matter, most States would accept that this change of circumstances is of such significance as to allow that competent authority to withdraw from the procedure. In some cases, the difficulty may be only temporary however; such as whilst rectifying legislation is enacted, and in that case, the procedure should be suspended rather than terminated. The two competent authorities will need to discuss the difficulty and its possible effect on the mutual agreement procedure. There will also be situations where a decision wholly or partially in the taxpayer's favour is binding and must be followed by one of the competent authorities but where there is still scope for mutual agreement discussions, such as for example in one competent authority's demonstrating to the other that the latter should provide relief.*

*29. There is less justification for relying on domestic law for not implementing an agreement reached as part of the mutual agreement procedure. The obligation of implementing such agreements is unequivocally stated in the last sentence of paragraph 2, and impediments to implementation that were already existing should generally be built into the terms of the agreement itself. As tax conventions are negotiated against a background of a changing body of domestic law that is sometimes difficult to predict, and as both parties are aware of this in negotiating the original Convention and in reaching mutual agreements, subsequent unexpected changes that alter the fundamental basis of a mutual agreement would generally be considered as requiring revision of the agreement to the extent necessary. Obviously where there is a domestic law development of this type, something that should only rarely occur, good faith obligations require that it be notified as soon as possible, and there should be a good faith effort to seek a revised or new mutual agreement, to the extent the domestic law development allows. In these cases, the taxpayer's request should be regarded as still operative, rather than a new application's being required from that person.*

~~19.~~<sup>30.</sup> As regards the procedure itself, it is necessary to consider briefly the two distinct stages into which it is divided (cf. paragraph ~~6~~<sup>7</sup> above).

~~20.~~<sup>31.</sup> In the first stage, which opens with the presentation of the taxpayer's objections, the procedure takes place exclusively at the level of dealings between him and the competent authorities of his State of residence (except where the procedure for the application of paragraph 1 of Article 24 is set in motion by the taxpayer in the State of which he is a national). The provisions of paragraph 1 give the taxpayer concerned the right to apply to the competent authority of the State of which he is a resident, whether or not he has exhausted all the remedies available to him under the domestic law of each of the two States. On the other hand, that competent authority is under an obligation to consider whether the objection is justified and, if it appears to be justified, take action on it in one of the two forms provided for in paragraph 2.

~~21.~~<sup>32.</sup> If the competent authority duly approached recognises that the complaint is justified and considers that the taxation complained of is due wholly or in part to a measure taken in the taxpayer's State of residence, it must give the complainant satisfaction as speedily as possible by making such adjustments or allowing such reliefs as appear to be justified. In this situation, the issue can be resolved

without resort to the mutual agreement procedure. On the other hand, it may be found useful to exchange views and information with the competent authority of the other Contracting State, in order, for example, to confirm a given interpretation of the Convention.

~~22-33.~~ If, however, it appears to that competent authority that the taxation complained of is due wholly or in part to a measure taken in the other State, it will be incumbent on it, indeed it will be its duty — as clearly appears by the terms of paragraph 2 — to set in motion the mutual agreement procedure proper. It is important that the authority in question carry out this duty as quickly as possible, especially in cases where the profits of associated enterprises have been adjusted as a result of transfer pricing adjustments.

~~23-34.~~ A taxpayer is entitled to present his case under paragraph 1 to the competent authority of the State of which he is a resident whether or not he may also have made a claim or commenced litigation under the domestic law of that State. If litigation is pending, the competent authority of the State of residence should not wait for the final adjudication, but should say whether it considers the case to be eligible for the mutual agreement procedure. If it so decides, it has to determine whether it is itself able to arrive at a satisfactory solution or whether the case has to be submitted to the competent authority of the other Contracting State. An application by a taxpayer to set the mutual agreement procedure in motion should not be rejected without good reason.

~~24-35.~~ If a claim has been finally adjudicated by a court in the State of residence, a taxpayer may wish even so to present or pursue a claim under the mutual agreement procedure. In some States, the competent authority may be able to arrive at a satisfactory solution which departs from the court decision. In other States, the competent authority is bound by the court decision. It may nevertheless present the case to the competent authority of the other Contracting State and ask the latter to take measures for avoiding double taxation.

~~25-36.~~ In its second stage — which opens with the approach to the competent authority of the other State by the competent authority to which the taxpayer has applied — the procedure is henceforward at the level of dealings between States, as if, so to speak, the State to which the complaint was presented had given it its backing. But ~~while~~*whilst* this procedure is indisputably a procedure between States, it may, on the other hand, be asked:

- whether, as the title of the Article and the terms employed in the first sentence of paragraph 2 suggest, it is no more than a simple procedure of mutual agreement, or constitutes the implementation of a *pactum de contrahendo* laying on the parties a mere duty to negotiate but in no way laying on them a duty to reach agreement;
- or whether on the contrary, it is to be regarded (*based on the existence of the arbitration process provided for in paragraph 5 to address unresolved issues or on the assumption of course that ~~it~~ the procedure takes place within the framework of a joint commission*) as a procedure of a jurisdictional nature laying on the parties a duty to resolve the dispute.

~~26-37.~~ Paragraph 2 no doubt entails a duty to negotiate; but as far as reaching mutual agreement through the procedure is concerned, the competent authorities are under a duty merely to use their best endeavours and not to achieve a result. ~~However, Contracting States could agree on a more far-reaching commitment whereby the mutual agreement procedure, and above all the discussions in the joint commission, would produce a solution to the dispute. Such a rule could be established either by an amendment to paragraph 2 or by an interpretation specified in a protocol or an exchange of letters annexed to the Convention. Paragraph 5, however, provides a mechanism that will allow an agreement to be reached even if there are issues on which the competent authorities have been unable to reach agreement through negotiations.~~

~~27.~~**38.** In seeking a mutual agreement, the competent authorities must first, of course, determine their position in the light of the rules of their respective taxation laws and of the provisions of the Convention, which are as binding on them as much as they are on the taxpayer. Should the strict application of such rules or provisions preclude any agreement, it may reasonably be held that the competent authorities, as in the case of international arbitration, can, subsidiarily, have regard to considerations of equity in order to give the taxpayer satisfaction.

~~28.~~**39.** The purpose of the last sentence of paragraph 2 is to enable countries with time limits relating to adjustments of assessments and tax refunds in their domestic law to give effect to an agreement despite such time limits. This provision does not prevent, however, such States as are not, on constitutional or other legal grounds, able to overrule the time limits in the domestic law from inserting in the mutual agreement itself such time limits as are adapted to their internal statute of limitation. In certain extreme cases, a Contracting State may prefer not to enter into a mutual agreement, the implementation of which would require that the internal statute of limitation had to be disregarded. Apart from time limits there may exist other obstacles such as “final court decisions” to giving effect to an agreement. Contracting States are free to agree on firm provisions for the removal of such obstacles. As regards the practical implementation of the procedure, it is generally recommended that every effort should be made by tax administrations to ensure that as far as possible the mutual agreement procedure is not in any case frustrated by operational delays or, where time limits would be in point, by the combined effects of time limits and operational delays.

~~29.~~**40.** The Committee on Fiscal Affairs made a number of recommendations on the problems raised by corresponding adjustments of profits following transfer pricing adjustments (implementation of paragraphs 1 and 2 of Article 9) and of the difficulties of applying the mutual agreement procedure to such situations:

- a) Tax authorities should notify taxpayers as soon as possible of their intention to make a transfer pricing adjustment (and, where the date of any such notification may be important, to ensure that a clear formal notification is given as soon as possible), since it is particularly useful to ensure as early and as full contacts as possible on all relevant matters between tax authorities and taxpayers within the same jurisdiction and, across national frontiers, between the associated enterprises and tax authorities concerned.
- b) Competent authorities should communicate with each other in these matters in as flexible a manner as possible, whether in writing, by telephone, or by face-to-face or round-the-table discussion, whichever is most suitable, and should seek to develop the most effective ways of solving relevant problems. Use of the provisions of Article 26 on the exchange of information should be encouraged in order to assist the competent authority in having well-developed factual information on which a decision can be made.
- c) In the course of mutual agreement proceedings on transfer pricing matters, the taxpayers concerned should be given every reasonable opportunity to present the relevant facts and arguments to the competent authorities both in writing and orally.

~~30.~~**41.** As regards the mutual agreement procedure in general, the Committee recommended that:

- a) The formalities involved in instituting and operating the mutual agreement procedure should be kept to a minimum and any unnecessary formalities eliminated.
- b) Mutual agreement cases should each be settled on their individual merits and not by reference to any balance of the results in other cases.
- c) Competent authorities should, where appropriate, formulate and publicise domestic rules, guidelines and procedures concerning use of the mutual agreement procedure.

~~31.42.~~ ~~Finally,~~ The case may arise where a mutual agreement is concluded in relation to a taxpayer who has brought a suit for the same purpose in the competent court of either Contracting State and such suit is still pending. In such a case, there would be no grounds for rejecting a request by a taxpayer that he be allowed to defer acceptance of the solution agreed upon as a result of the mutual agreement procedure until the court had delivered its judgment in that suit ~~still pending~~. *[the rest of the existing paragraph becomes the last part of paragraph 45, with some modifications]* **Also, a view that competent authorities might reasonably take is that where the taxpayer's suit is ongoing as to the particular issue upon which mutual agreement is sought by that same taxpayer, discussions of any depth at the competent authority level should await a court decision. If the taxpayer's request for a mutual agreement procedure applied to different tax years than the court action, but to essentially the same factual and legal issues, so that the court outcome would in practice be expected to affect the treatment of the taxpayer in years not specifically the subject of litigation, the position might be the same, in practice, as for the cases just mentioned. In either case, awaiting a court decision or otherwise holding a mutual agreement procedure in abeyance whilst formalised domestic recourse proceedings are underway will not infringe upon, or cause time to expire from, the two-year period referred to in paragraph 5 of the Article. Of course, if competent authorities consider, in either case, that the matter might be resolved notwithstanding the domestic law proceedings (because, for example, the competent authority where the court action is taken will not be bound or constrained by the court decision) then the mutual agreement procedure may proceed as normal.**

43. *The situation is also different if there is a suit ongoing on an issue, but the suit has been taken by another taxpayer than the one who is seeking to initiate the mutual agreement procedure. In principle, if the case of the taxpayer seeking the mutual agreement procedure supports action by one or both competent authorities to prevent taxation not in accordance with the Convention, that should not be unduly delayed pending a general clarification of the law at the instance of another taxpayer - although the taxpayer seeking mutual agreement might agree to this if the clarification is likely to favour that taxpayer's case. In other cases, delaying competent authority discussions as part of a mutual agreement procedure may be justified in all the circumstances, but the competent authorities should as far as possible seek to prevent disadvantage to the taxpayer seeking mutual agreement in such a case. This could be done, where domestic law allows, by deferring payment of the amount outstanding during the course of the delay, or at least during that part of the delay which is beyond the taxpayer's control.*

44. *Depending upon domestic procedures, the choice of redress is normally that of the taxpayer and in most cases it is the domestic recourse provisions such as appeals or court proceedings that are held in abeyance in favour of the less formal and bilateral nature of mutual agreement procedure.*

45. *As noted above, there may be a pending suit by the taxpayer on an issue, or else the taxpayer may have preserved the right to take such domestic law action, yet the competent authorities might still consider that an agreement can be reached. In such cases, it is, however, ~~On the other hand,~~ it is necessary to take into account the concern of ~~the~~ **a particular** competent authority to avoid any divergences or contradictions between the decision of the court and the mutual agreement **that is being sought**, with the difficulties or risks of abuse that these could entail. In short, therefore, ~~it seems normal that~~ the implementation of **such** a mutual agreement should **normally** be made subject:*

- to the acceptance of such mutual agreement by the taxpayer, and
- to the taxpayer's withdrawal of ~~his~~ **the** suit at law concerning ~~the~~ **those** points settled in the mutual agreement.

46. *Some States take the view that a mutual agreement procedure may not be initiated by a taxpayer unless and until payment of all or a specified portion of the tax amount in dispute has*

*been made. They consider that the requirement for payment of outstanding taxes, subject to repayment in whole or in part depending on the outcome of the procedure, is an essentially procedural matter not governed by Article 25, and is therefore consistent with it. A contrary view, held by many States, is that Article 25 indicates all that a taxpayer must do before the procedure is initiated, and that it imposes no such requirement. Those States find support for their view in the fact that the procedure may be implemented even before the taxpayer has been charged to tax or notified of a liability (as noted at paragraph 14 above) and in the acceptance that there is clearly no such requirement for a procedure initiated by a competent authority under paragraph 3.*

*47. Article 25 gives no absolutely clear answer as to whether a taxpayer-initiated mutual agreement procedure may be denied on the basis that there has not been the necessary payment of all or part of the tax in dispute. However, whatever view is taken on this point, in the implementation of the Article it should be recognised that the mutual agreement procedure supports the substantive provisions of the Convention and that the text of Article 25 should therefore be understood in its context and in light of the object and purposes of the Convention, including avoiding double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion and avoidance. States therefore should as far as possible take into account the cash flow and possible double taxation issues in requiring advance payment of an amount that the taxpayer contends was at least in part levied contrary to the terms of the relevant Convention. As a minimum, payment of outstanding tax should not be a requirement to initiate the mutual agreement procedure if it is not a requirement before initiating domestic law review. It also appears, as a minimum, that if the mutual agreement procedure is initiated prior to the taxpayer's being charged to tax (such as by an assessment), a payment should only be required once that charge to tax has occurred.*

*48. There are several reasons why suspension of the collection of tax pending resolution of a mutual agreement procedure can be a desirable policy, although many States may require legislative changes for the purpose of its implementation. Any requirement to pay a tax assessment specifically as a condition of obtaining access to the mutual agreement procedure in order to get relief from that very tax would generally be inconsistent with the policy of making the mutual agreement procedure broadly available to resolve such disputes. Even if a mutual agreement procedure ultimately eliminates any double taxation or other taxation not in accordance with the Convention, the requirement to pay tax prior to the conclusion of the mutual agreement procedure may permanently cost the taxpayer the time value of the money represented by the amount inappropriately imposed for the period prior to the mutual agreement procedure resolution, at least in the fairly common case where the respective interest policies of the relevant Contracting States do not fully compensate the taxpayer for that cost. Thus, this means that in such cases the mutual agreement procedure would not achieve the goal of fully eliminating, as an economic matter, the burden of the double taxation or other taxation not in accordance with the Convention. Moreover, even if that economic burden is ultimately removed, a requirement on the taxpayer to pay taxes on the same income to two Contracting States can impose cash flow burdens that are inconsistent with the Convention's goals of eliminating barriers to cross-border trade and investment. Finally, another unfortunate complication may be delays in the resolution of cases if a country is less willing to enter into good faith mutual agreement procedure discussions when a probable result could be the refunding of taxes already collected. Where States take the view that payment of outstanding tax is a precondition to the taxpayer-initiated mutual agreement procedure, this should be notified to the treaty partner during negotiations on the terms of a Convention. Where both States party to a Convention take this view, there is a common understanding, but also the particular risk of the taxpayer's being required to pay an amount twice. Where domestic law allows it, one possibility which States might consider to deal with this would be for the higher of the two amounts to be held in trust, escrow or similar, pending the outcome of the mutual agreement procedure. Alternatively, a bank guarantee provided by the*

*taxpayer's bank could be sufficient to meet the requirements of the competent authorities. As another approach, one State or the other (decided by time of assessment, for example, or by residence State status under the treaty) could agree to seek a payment of no more than the difference between the amount paid to the other State, and that which it claims, if any. Which of these possibilities is open will ultimately depend on the domestic law (including administrative requirements) of a particular State, but they are the sorts of options that should as far as possible be considered in seeking to have the mutual agreement procedure operate as effectively as possible. Where States require some payment of outstanding tax as a precondition to the taxpayer-initiated mutual agreement procedure, or to the active consideration of an issue within that procedure, they should have a system in place for refunding an amount of interest on any underlying amount to be returned to the taxpayer as the result of a mutual agreement reached by the competent authorities. Any such interest payment should sufficiently reflect the value of the underlying amount and the period of time during which that amount has been unavailable to the taxpayer.*

*49. States take differing views as to whether administrative interest and penalty charges are treated as taxes covered by Article 2 of the Convention. Some States treat them as taking the character of the underlying amount in dispute, but other States do not. It follows that there will be different views as to whether such interest and penalties are subject to a taxpayer-initiated mutual agreement procedure. Where they are covered by the Convention as taxes to which it applies, the object of the Convention in avoiding double taxation, and the requirement for States to implement conventions in good faith, suggest that as far as possible interest and penalty payments should not be imposed in a way that effectively discourages taxpayers from initiating a mutual agreement procedure, because of the cost and the cash flow impact that this would involve. Even when administrative interest and penalties are not regarded as taxes covered by the Convention under Article 2, they should not be applied in a way that severely discourages or nullifies taxpayer reliance upon the benefits of the Convention, including the right to initiate the mutual agreement procedure as provided by Article 25. For example, a State's requirements as to payment of outstanding penalties and interest should not be more onerous to taxpayers in the context of the mutual agreement procedure than they would be in the context of taxpayer-initiated domestic law review.*

### *Paragraph 3*

~~32.~~**50.** The first sentence of this paragraph invites and authorises the competent authorities to resolve, if possible, difficulties of interpretation or application by means of mutual agreement. These are essentially difficulties of a general nature which concern, or which may concern, a category of taxpayers, even if they have arisen in connection with an individual case normally coming under the procedure defined in paragraphs 1 and 2.

~~33.~~**51.** This provision makes it possible to resolve difficulties arising from the application of the Convention. Such difficulties are not only those of a practical nature, which might arise in connection with the setting up and operation of procedures for the relief from tax deducted from dividends, interest and royalties in the Contracting State in which they arise, but also those which could impair or impede the normal operation of the clauses of the Convention as they were conceived by the negotiators, the solution of which does not depend on a prior agreement as to the interpretation of the Convention.

~~34.~~**52.** Under this provision the competent authorities can, in particular:

- where a term has been incompletely or ambiguously defined in the Convention, complete or clarify its definition in order to obviate any difficulty;

- where the laws of a State have been changed without impairing the balance or affecting the substance of the Convention, settle any difficulties that may emerge from the new system of taxation arising out of such changes;
- determine whether, and if so under what conditions, interest may be treated as dividends under thin capitalisation rules in the country of the borrower and give rise to relief for double taxation in the country of residence of the lender in the same way as for dividends (for example relief under a parent/subsidiary regime when provision for such relief is made in the relevant bilateral convention).

35.53. Paragraph 3 confers on the “competent authorities of the Contracting States”, i.e. generally the Ministers of Finance or their authorised representatives normally responsible for the administration of the Convention, authority to resolve by mutual agreement any difficulties arising as to the interpretation of the Convention. However, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that, depending on the domestic law of Contracting States, other authorities (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, courts) have the right to interpret international treaties and agreements as well as the “competent authority” designated in the Convention, and that this is sometimes the exclusive right of such other authorities.

36.54. Mutual agreements resolving general difficulties of interpretation or application are binding on administrations as long as the competent authorities do not agree to modify or rescind the mutual agreement.

37.55. The second sentence of paragraph 3 enables the competent authorities to deal also with such cases of double taxation as do not come within the scope of the provisions of the Convention. Of special interest in this connection is the case of a resident of a third State having permanent establishments in both Contracting States. It is ~~of course~~ **not merely** desirable, **but in most cases also will particularly reflect the role of Article 25 and the mutual agreement procedure in providing that the competent authorities may consult together as a way of ensuring the Convention as a whole operates effectively**, that the mutual agreement procedure should result in the effective elimination of the double taxation which can occur in such a situation. **The opportunity for such matters to be dealt with under the mutual agreement procedure becomes increasingly important as Contracting States seek more coherent frameworks for issues of profit allocation involving branches, and this is an issue that could usefully be discussed at the time of negotiating conventions or protocols to them. There will be** ~~An exception must, however, be made for the case of~~ Contracting States whose domestic law prevents the Convention from being complemented on points which are not explicitly or at least implicitly dealt with; **in the Convention, however, and in such a case in these situations** the Convention could be complemented ~~only~~ by a protocol ~~subject, like the Convention itself, to ratification or approval~~ **dealing with this issue. In most cases, however, the terms of the Convention itself, as interpreted in accordance with accepted tax treaty interpretation principles, will sufficiently support issues involving two branches of a third state entity being subject to the paragraph 3 procedures.**

#### Paragraph 4

38.56. This paragraph determines how the competent authorities may consult together for the resolution by mutual agreement, either of an individual case coming under the procedure defined in paragraphs 1 and 2 or of general problems relating in particular to the interpretation or application of the Convention, and which are referred to in paragraph 3.

39.57. It provides first that the competent authorities may communicate with each other directly. It would therefore not be necessary to go through diplomatic channels.



~~40-58.~~ The competent authorities may communicate with each other by letter, facsimile transmission, telephone, direct meetings, or any other convenient means. They may, if they wish, formally establish a joint commission for this purpose.

~~41-59.~~ As to this joint commission, paragraph 4 leaves it to the competent authorities of the Contracting States to determine the number of members and the rules of procedure of this body.

~~42-60.~~ However, ~~while~~*whilst* the Contracting States may avoid any formalism in this field, it is nevertheless their duty to give taxpayers whose cases are brought before the joint commission under paragraph 2 certain essential guarantees, namely:

- the right to make representations in writing or orally, either in person or through a representative;
- the right to be assisted by counsel.

~~43-61.~~ However, disclosure to the taxpayer or his representatives of the papers in the case does not seem to be warranted, in view of the special nature of the procedure.

~~44-62.~~ Without infringing upon the freedom of choice enjoyed in principle by the competent authorities in designating their representatives on the joint commission, it would be desirable for them to agree to entrust the chairmanship of each Delegation — which might include one or more representatives of the service responsible for the procedure — to a high official or judge chosen primarily on account of his special experience; it is reasonable to believe, in fact, that the participation of such persons would be likely to facilitate reaching an agreement.

### **~~III. Interaction of the mutual agreement procedure with the dispute resolution mechanism provided by the General Agreement on Trade in Services~~**

~~44.1—~~ The application of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), which entered into force on 1 January 1995 and which all Member countries have signed, raises particular concerns in relation to the mutual agreement procedure.

~~44.2—~~ Paragraph 3 of Article XXII of the GATS provides that a dispute as to the application of Article XVII of the Agreement, a national treatment rule, may not be dealt with under the dispute resolution mechanisms provided by Articles XXII and XXIII of the Agreement if the disputed measure “falls within the scope of an international agreement between them relating to the avoidance of double taxation” (e.g. a tax convention). If there is disagreement over whether a measure “falls within the scope” of such an international agreement, paragraph 3 goes on to provide that either State involved in the dispute may bring the matter to the Council on Trade in Services, which shall refer the dispute for binding arbitration. A footnote to paragraph 3, however, contains the important exception that if the dispute relates to an international agreement “which exist[s] at the time of the entry into force” of the Agreement, the matter may not be brought to the Council on Trade in Services unless both States agree.

~~44.3—~~ That paragraph raises two particular problems with respect to tax treaties.

~~44.4—~~ First, the footnote thereto provides for the different treatment of tax conventions concluded before and after the entry into force of the GATS, something that may be considered inappropriate, in particular where a convention in existence at the time of the entry into force of the GATS is

subsequently renegotiated or where a protocol is concluded after that time in relation to a convention existing at that time.

44.5—Second, the phrase “falls within the scope” is inherently ambiguous, as indicated by the inclusion in paragraph 3 of Article XXII of the GATS of both an arbitration procedure and a clause exempting pre-existing conventions from its application in order to deal with disagreements related to its meaning. While it seems clear that a country could not argue in good faith<sup>8</sup> that a measure relating to a tax to which no provision of a tax convention applied fell within the scope of that convention, it is unclear whether the phrase covers all measures that relate to taxes that are covered by all or only some provisions of the tax convention.

44.6—Contracting States may wish to avoid these difficulties by extending bilaterally the application of the footnote to paragraph 3 of Article XXII of the GATS to conventions concluded after the entry into force of the GATS. Such a bilateral extension, which would supplement—but not violate in any way—the Contracting States' obligations under the GATS, could be incorporated in the convention by the addition of the following provision:

“For purposes of paragraph 3 of Article XXII (Consultation) of the General Agreement on Trade in Services, the Contracting States agree that, notwithstanding that paragraph, any dispute between them as to whether a measure falls within the scope of this Convention may be brought before the Council for Trade in Services, as provided by that paragraph, only with the consent of both Contracting States. Any doubt as to the interpretation of this paragraph shall be resolved under paragraph 3 of Article 25 or, failing agreement under that procedure, pursuant to any other procedure agreed to by both Contracting States.”

44.7—Problems similar to those discussed above may arise in relation with other bilateral or multilateral agreements related to trade or investment. Contracting States are free, in the course of their bilateral negotiations, to amend the provision suggested above so as to ensure that issues relating to the taxes covered by their tax convention are dealt with through the mutual agreement procedure rather than through the dispute settlement mechanism of such agreements.

#### **IV. Final observations**

45.—On the whole, the mutual agreement procedure has proved satisfactory. Treaty practice shows that Article 25 has generally represented the maximum that Contracting States were prepared to accept. It must, however, be admitted that this provision is not yet entirely satisfactory from the taxpayer's viewpoint. This is because the competent authorities are required only to seek a solution and are not obliged to find one (cf. paragraph 26 above). The conclusion of a mutual agreement depends to a large extent on the powers of compromise which the domestic law allows the competent authorities. Thus, if a convention is interpreted or applied differently in two Contracting States, and if the competent authorities are unable to agree on a joint solution within the framework of a mutual agreement procedure, double taxation is still possible although contrary to the sense and purpose of a convention aimed at avoiding double taxation.

46.—It is difficult to avoid this situation without going outside the framework of the mutual agreement procedure. The first approach to a solution might consist of seeking an advisory opinion:

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8.—The obligation of applying and interpreting treaties in good faith is expressly recognized in Articles 26 and 31 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties; thus, the exception in paragraph 3 of Article XXII of the GATS applies only to good faith disputes.

the two Contracting States would agree to ask the opinion of an impartial third party, although the final decision would still rest with the States.

47. — The provisions embodied in this Convention, as well as the Commentary related thereto, are the result of close international joint work within the Committee on Fiscal Affairs. A possibility near at hand would be to call upon the Committee on Fiscal Affairs to give an opinion on the correct understanding of the provisions where special difficulties of interpretation arise as to particular points. Such a practice, which would be in line with the mandate and aims of the Committee on Fiscal Affairs, might well make a valuable contribution to arriving at a desirable uniformity in the application of the provisions.

48. — Another solution is that of arbitration. This is the solution adopted by the Member States of the European Communities through their multilateral Arbitration Convention, which was signed on 23 July 1990 and which provides that certain cases of double taxation that have not been solved through the mutual agreement procedure must be submitted to an arbitration procedure. Also, some recent bilateral conventions provide that the Contracting States may agree to submit unresolved disagreements to arbitration.

#### *Paragraph 5*

63. *This paragraph provides that, in the cases where the competent authorities are unable to reach an agreement under paragraph 2 within two years, the unresolved issues will, at the request of the person who presented the case, be solved through an arbitration process. This process is not dependent on a prior authorization by the competent authorities: once the requisite procedural requirements have been met, the unresolved issues that prevent the conclusion of a mutual agreement must be submitted to arbitration.*

64. *The arbitration process provided for by the paragraph is not an alternative or additional recourse: where the competent authorities have reached an agreement that does not leave any unresolved issues as regards the application of the Convention, there are no unresolved issues that can be brought to arbitration even if the person who made the mutual agreement request does not consider that the agreement reached by the competent authorities provides a correct solution to the case. The paragraph is, therefore, an extension of the mutual agreement procedure that serves to enhance the effectiveness of that procedure by ensuring that where the competent authorities cannot reach an agreement on one or more issues that prevent the resolution of a case, a resolution of the case will still be possible by submitting those issues to arbitration. Thus, under the paragraph, the resolution of the case continues to be reached through the mutual agreement procedure, whilst the resolution of a particular issue which is preventing agreement in the case is handled through an arbitration process. This distinguishes the process established in paragraph 5 from other forms of commercial or government-private party arbitration where the jurisdiction of the arbitral panel extends to resolving the whole case.*

65. *It is recognised, however, that in some States, national law, policy or administrative considerations may not allow or justify the type of arbitration process provided for in the paragraph. For example, there may be constitutional barriers preventing arbitrators from deciding tax issues. In addition, some countries may only be in a position to include this paragraph in treaties with particular States. For these reasons, the paragraph should only be included in the Convention where each State concludes that the process is capable of effective implementation.*

66. *In addition, some States may wish to include paragraph 5 but limit its application to a more restricted range of cases. For example, access to arbitration could be restricted to cases involving issues which are primarily factual in nature. It could also be possible to provide that arbitration would always be available for issues arising in certain classes of cases, for example, highly factual cases such as those related to transfer pricing or the question of the existence of a permanent establishment, whilst extending arbitration to other issues on a case-by-case basis.*

67. *States which are members of the European Union must co-ordinate the scope of paragraph 5 with their obligations under the European Arbitration Convention.*

68. *The taxpayer should be able to request arbitration of unresolved issues in all cases dealt with under the mutual agreement procedure that have been presented under paragraph 1 on the basis that the actions of one or both of the Contracting States have resulted for a person in taxation not in accordance with the provisions of this Convention. Where the mutual agreement procedure is not available, for example because of the existence of serious violations involving significant penalties (see paragraph 26), it is clear that paragraph 5 is not applicable.*

69. *Where two Contracting States that have not included the paragraph in their Convention wish to implement an arbitration process for general application or to deal with a specific case, it is still possible for them to do so by mutual agreement. In that case, the competent authorities can conclude a mutual agreement along the lines of the sample wording presented in the annex, to which they would add the following first paragraph:*

1. *Where,*

- a) *under paragraph 1 of Article 25 of the Convention, a person has presented a case to the competent authority of a Contracting State on the basis that the actions of one or both of the Contracting States have resulted for that person in taxation not in accordance with the provisions of this Convention, and*
- b) *the competent authorities are unable to reach an agreement to resolve that case pursuant to paragraph 2 of the Article within two years from the presentation of the case to the competent authority of the other Contracting State,*

*any unresolved issues arising from the case shall be submitted to arbitration in accordance with the following paragraphs if the person so requests. These unresolved issues shall not, however, be submitted to arbitration if a decision on these issues has already been rendered by a court or administrative tribunal of either State. Unless a person directly affected by the case does not accept the mutual agreement that implements the arbitration decision, the competent authorities hereby agree to consider themselves bound by the arbitration decision and to resolve the case pursuant to paragraph 2 of Article 25 on the basis of that decision.*

*This agreement would go on to address the various structural and procedural issues discussed in the annex. Whilst the competent authorities would thus be bound by such process, such agreement would be given as part of the mutual agreement procedure and would therefore only be effective as long as the competent authorities continue to agree to follow that process to solve cases that they have been unable to resolve through the traditional mutual agreement procedure.*

70. *Paragraph 5 provides that a person who has presented a case to the competent authority of a Contracting State pursuant to paragraph 1 on the basis that the actions of one or both of the Contracting States have resulted for that person in taxation not in accordance with the provisions of this Convention may request that any unresolved issues arising from the case be submitted to arbitration. This request may be made at any time after a period of two years that begins when the case is presented to the competent authority of the other Contracting State. Recourse to arbitration*

*is therefore not automatic; the person who presented the case may prefer to wait beyond the end of the two-year period (for example, to allow the competent authorities more time to resolve the case under paragraph 2) or simply not to pursue the case. States are free to provide that, in certain circumstances, a longer period of time will be required before the request can be made.*

71. *Under paragraph 2 of Article 25, the competent authorities must endeavour to resolve a case presented under paragraph 1 with a view to the avoidance of taxation not in accordance with the Convention. For the purposes of paragraph 5, a case should therefore not be considered to have been resolved as long as there is at least one issue on which the competent authorities disagree and which, according to one of the competent authorities, indicates that there has been taxation not in accordance with the Convention. One of the competent authorities could not, therefore, unilaterally decide that such a case is closed and that the person involved cannot request the arbitration of unresolved issues; similarly, the two competent authorities could not consider that the case has been resolved and deny the request for arbitration if there are still unresolved issues that prevent them from agreeing that there has not been taxation not in accordance with the Convention. Where, however, the two competent authorities agree that taxation by both States has been in accordance with the Convention, there are no unresolved issues and the case may be considered to have been resolved, even in the case where there might be double taxation that is not addressed by the provisions of the Convention.*

72. *The arbitration process is only available in cases where the person considers that taxation not in accordance with the provisions of the Convention has actually resulted from the actions of one or both of the Contracting States; it is not available, however, in cases where it is argued that such taxation will eventually result from such actions even if the latter cases may be presented to the competent authorities under paragraph 1 of the Article (see paragraph 70 above). For that purpose, taxation should be considered to have resulted from the actions of one or both of the Contracting States as soon as, for example, tax has been paid, assessed or otherwise determined or even in cases where the taxpayer is officially notified by the tax authorities that they intend to tax him on a certain element of income.*

73. *As drafted, paragraph 5 only provides for arbitration of unresolved issues arising from a request made under paragraph 1 of the Article. States wishing to extend the scope of the paragraph to also cover mutual agreement cases arising under paragraph 3 of the Article are free to do so. In some cases, a mutual agreement case may arise from other specific treaty provisions, such as subparagraph 2 d) of Article 4. Under that subparagraph, the competent authorities are, in certain cases, required to settle by mutual agreement the question of the status of an individual who is a resident of both Contracting States. As indicated in paragraph 20 of the Commentary on Article 4, such cases must be resolved according to the procedure established in Article 25. If the competent authorities fail to reach an agreement on such a case and this results in taxation not in accordance with the Convention (according to which the individual should be a resident of only one State for purposes of the Convention), the taxpayer's case comes under paragraph 1 of Article 25 and, therefore, paragraph 5 is applicable.*

74. *In some States, it may be possible for the competent authorities to deviate from a court decision on a particular issue arising from the case presented to the competent authorities. Those States should therefore be able to omit the second sentence of the paragraph.*

75. *The presentation of the case to the competent authority of the other State, which is the beginning of the two-year period referred to in the paragraph, may be made by the person who presented the case to the competent authority of the first State under paragraph 1 of Article 25 (e.g. by presenting the case to the competent authority of the other State at the same time or at a*

later time) or by the competent authority of the first State, who would contact the competent authority of the other State pursuant to paragraph 2 if it is not itself able to arrive at a satisfactory solution of the case. For the purpose of determining the start of the two-year period, a case will only be considered to have been presented to the competent authority of the other State if sufficient information has been presented to that competent authority to allow it to decide whether the objection underlying the case appears to be justified. The mutual agreement providing for the mode of application of paragraph 5 (see the annex) should specify which type of information will normally be sufficient for that purpose.

76. The paragraph also deals with the relationship between the arbitration process and rights to domestic remedies. For the arbitration process to be effective and to avoid the risk of conflicting decisions, a person should not be allowed to pursue the arbitration process if the issues submitted to arbitration have already been resolved through the domestic litigation process of either State (which means that any court or administrative tribunal of one of the Contracting States has already rendered a decision that deals with these issues and that applies to that person). This is consistent with the approach adopted by most countries as regards the mutual agreement procedure and according to which:

- a) A person cannot pursue simultaneously the mutual agreement procedure and domestic legal remedies. Where domestic legal remedies are still available, the competent authorities will generally either require that the taxpayer agree to the suspension of these remedies or, if the taxpayer does not agree, will delay the mutual agreement procedure until these remedies are exhausted.
- b) Where the mutual agreement procedure is first pursued and a mutual agreement has been reached, the taxpayer and other persons directly affected by the case are offered the possibility to reject the agreement and pursue the domestic remedies that had been suspended; conversely, if these persons prefer to have the agreement apply, they will have to renounce the exercise of domestic legal remedies as regards the issues covered by the agreement.
- c) Where the domestic legal remedies are first pursued and are exhausted in a State, a person may only pursue the mutual agreement procedure in order to obtain relief of double taxation in the other State. Indeed, once a legal decision has been rendered in a particular case, most countries consider that it is impossible to override that decision through the mutual agreement procedure and would therefore restrict the subsequent application of the mutual agreement procedure to trying to obtain relief in the other State.

The same general principles should be applicable in the case of a mutual agreement procedure that would involve one or more issues submitted to arbitration. It would not be helpful to submit an issue to arbitration if it is known in advance that one of the countries is limited in the response that it could make to the arbitral decision. This, however, would not be the case if the country could, in a mutual agreement procedure, deviate from a court decision (see paragraph 74) and in that case paragraph 5 could be adjusted accordingly.

77. A second issue involves the relationship between existing domestic legal remedies and arbitration where the taxpayer has not undertaken (or has not exhausted) these legal remedies. In that case, the approach that would be the most consistent with the basic structure of the mutual agreement procedure would be to apply the same general principles when arbitration is involved. Thus, the legal remedies would be suspended pending the outcome of the mutual agreement procedure involving the arbitration of the issues that the competent authorities are unable to resolve and a tentative mutual agreement would be reached on the basis of that decision. As in

*other mutual agreement procedure cases, that agreement would then be presented to the taxpayer who would have to choose to accept the agreement, which would require abandoning any remaining domestic legal remedies, or reject the agreement to pursue these remedies.*

78. *This approach is in line with the nature of the arbitration process set out in paragraph 5. The purpose of that process is to allow the competent authorities to reach a conclusion on the unresolved issues that prevent an agreement from being reached. When that agreement is achieved though the aid of arbitration, the essential character of the mutual agreement remains the same.*

79. *In some cases, this approach will mean that the parties will have to expend time and resources in an arbitration process that will lead to a mutual agreement that will not be accepted by the taxpayer. As a practical matter, however, experience shows that there are very few cases where the taxpayer rejects a mutual agreement to resort to domestic legal remedies. Also, in these rare cases, one would expect the domestic courts or administrative tribunals to take note of the fact that the taxpayer had been offered an administrative solution to his case that would have bound both States.*

80. *In some States, unresolved issues between competent authorities may only be submitted to arbitration if domestic legal remedies are no longer available. In order to implement an arbitration approach, these States could consider the alternative approach of requiring a person to waive the right to pursue domestic legal remedies before arbitration can take place. This could be done by replacing the second sentence of the paragraph by “these unresolved issues shall not, however, be submitted to arbitration if any person directly affected by the case is still entitled, under the domestic law of either State, to have courts or administrative tribunals of that State decide these issues or if a decision on these issues has already been rendered by such a court or administrative tribunal.” To avoid a situation where a taxpayer would be required to waive domestic legal remedies without any assurance as to the outcome of the case, it would then be important to also modify the paragraph to include a mechanism that would guarantee, for example, that double taxation would in fact be relieved. Also, since the taxpayer would then renounce the right to be heard by domestic courts, the paragraph should also be modified to ensure that sufficient legal safeguards are granted to the taxpayer as regards his participation in the arbitration process to meet the requirements that may exist under domestic law for such a renunciation to be acceptable under the applicable legal system (e.g. in some countries, such renunciation might not be effective if the person were not guaranteed the right to be heard orally during the arbitration).*

81. *Paragraph 5 provides that, unless a person directly affected by the case does not accept the mutual agreement that implements the arbitration decision, that decision shall be binding on both States. Thus, the taxation of any person directly affected by the case will have to conform with the decision reached on the issues submitted to arbitration and the decisions reached in the arbitral process will be reflected in the mutual agreement that will be presented to these persons.*

82. *As noted in subparagraph 76b) above, where a mutual agreement is reached before domestic legal remedies have been exhausted, it is normal for the competent authorities to require, as a condition for the application of the agreement, that the persons affected renounce the exercise of domestic legal remedies that may still exist as regards the issues covered by the agreement. Without such renunciation, a subsequent court decision could indeed prevent the competent authorities from applying the agreement. Thus, for the purpose of paragraph 5, if a person to whom the mutual agreement that implements the arbitration decision has been*

*presented does not agree to renounce the exercise of domestic legal remedies, that person must be considered not to have accepted that agreement.*

83. *The arbitration decision is only binding with respect to the specific issues submitted to arbitration. Whilst nothing would prevent the competent authorities from solving other similar cases (including cases involving the same persons but different taxable periods) on the basis of the decision, there is no obligation to do so and each State therefore has the right to adopt a different approach to deal with these other cases.*

84. *Some States may wish to allow the competent authorities to depart from the arbitration decision, provided that they can agree on a different solution (this, for example, is allowed under Article 12 of the EU Arbitration Convention). States wishing to do so are free to amend the third sentence of the paragraph as follows:*

*[...] Unless a person directly affected by the case does not accept the mutual agreement that implements the arbitration decision or the competent authorities and the persons directly affected by the case agree on a different solution within six months after the decision has been communicated to them, the arbitration decision shall be binding on both States and shall be implemented notwithstanding any time limits in the domestic laws of these States.*

85. *The last sentence of the paragraph leaves the mode of application of the arbitration process to be settled by mutual agreement. Some aspects could also be covered in the Article itself, a protocol or through an exchange of diplomatic notes. Whatever form the agreement takes, it should set out the structural and procedural rules to be followed in applying the paragraph, taking into account the paragraph's requirement that the arbitration decision be binding on both States. Ideally, that agreement should be drafted at the same time as the Convention so as to be signed, and to apply, immediately after the paragraph becomes effective. Also, since the agreement will provide the details of the process to be followed to bring unresolved issues to arbitration, it would be important that this agreement be made public. A sample form of such agreement is provided in the annex together with comments on the procedural rules that it puts forward.*

#### *Use of other supplementary dispute resolution mechanisms*

86. *Regardless of whether or not paragraph 5 is included in a Convention or an arbitration process is otherwise implemented using the procedure described in paragraph 69 above, it is clear that supplementary dispute resolution mechanisms other than arbitration can be implemented on an ad hoc basis as part of the mutual agreement procedure. Where there is disagreement about the relative merits of the positions of the two competent authorities, the case may be helped if the issues are clarified by a mediator. In such situations the mediator listens to the positions of each party and then communicates a view of the strengths and weaknesses of each side. This helps each party to better understand its own position and that of the other party. Some tax administrations are now successfully using mediation to resolve internal disputes and the extension of such techniques to mutual agreement procedures could be useful.*

87. *If the issue is a purely factual one, the case could be referred to an expert whose mandate would simply be to make the required factual determinations. This is often done in judicial procedures where factual matters are referred to an independent party who makes factual findings which are then submitted to the court. Unlike the dispute resolution mechanism which is established in paragraph 5, these procedures are not binding on the parties but nonetheless can be helpful in allowing them to reach a decision before an issue would have to be submitted to arbitration under that paragraph.*



### **III. Interaction of the mutual agreement procedure with the dispute resolution mechanism provided by the General Agreement on Trade in Services**

~~44.188.~~ The application of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), which entered into force on 1 January 1995 and which all Member countries have signed, raises particular concerns in relation to the mutual agreement procedure.

~~44.289.~~ Paragraph 3 of Article XXII of the GATS provides that a dispute as to the application of Article XVII of the Agreement, a national treatment rule, may not be dealt with under the dispute resolution mechanisms provided by Articles XXII and XXIII of the Agreement if the disputed measure “falls within the scope of an international agreement between them relating to the avoidance of double taxation” (e.g. a tax convention). If there is disagreement over whether a measure “falls within the scope” of such an international agreement, paragraph 3 goes on to provide that either State involved in the dispute may bring the matter to the Council on Trade in Services, which shall refer the dispute for binding arbitration. A footnote to paragraph 3, however, contains the important exception that if the dispute relates to an international agreement “which exist[s] at the time of the entry into force” of the Agreement, the matter may not be brought to the Council on Trade in Services unless both States agree.

~~44.390.~~ That paragraph raises two particular problems with respect to tax treaties.

~~44.491.~~ First, the footnote thereto provides for the different treatment of tax conventions concluded before and after the entry into force of the GATS, something that may be considered inappropriate, in particular where a convention in existence at the time of the entry into force of the GATS is subsequently renegotiated or where a protocol is concluded after that time in relation to a convention existing at that time.

~~44.592.~~ Second, the phrase “falls within the scope” is inherently ambiguous, as indicated by the inclusion in paragraph 3 of Article XXII of the GATS of both an arbitration procedure and a clause exempting pre-existing conventions from its application in order to deal with disagreements related to its meaning. ~~While~~ *Whilst* it seems clear that a country could not argue in good faith<sup>9</sup> that a measure relating to a tax to which no provision of a tax convention applied fell within the scope of that convention, it is unclear whether the phrase covers all measures that relate to taxes that are covered by all or only some provisions of the tax convention.

~~44.693.~~ Contracting States may wish to avoid these difficulties by extending bilaterally the application of the footnote to paragraph 3 of Article XXII of the GATS to conventions concluded after the entry into force of the GATS. Such a bilateral extension, which would supplement — but not violate in any way — the Contracting States' obligations under the GATS, could be incorporated in the convention by the addition of the following provision:

For purposes of paragraph 3 of Article XXII (Consultation) of the General Agreement on Trade in Services, the Contracting States agree that, notwithstanding that paragraph, any dispute between them as to whether a measure falls within the scope of this Convention may be brought before the Council for Trade in Services, as provided by that paragraph, only with the consent of both Contracting States. Any doubt as to the interpretation of this paragraph shall be resolved under

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2. *The obligation of applying and interpreting treaties in good faith is expressly recognized in Articles 26 and 31 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties; thus, the exception in paragraph 3 of Article XXII of the GATS applies only to good faith disputes.*

paragraph 3 of Article 25 or, failing agreement under that procedure, pursuant to any other procedure agreed to by both Contracting States.

~~44.794.~~ Problems similar to those discussed above may arise in relation with other bilateral or multilateral agreements related to trade or investment. Contracting States are free, in the course of their bilateral negotiations, to amend the provision suggested above so as to ensure that issues relating to the taxes covered by their tax convention are dealt with through the mutual agreement procedure rather than through the dispute settlement mechanism of such agreements.

## ANNEX

### SAMPLE MUTUAL AGREEMENT ON ARBITRATION

1. The following is a sample form of agreement that the competent authorities may use as a basis for a mutual agreement to implement the arbitration process provided for in paragraph 5 of the Article (see paragraph 85 above). Paragraphs 2 to 43 below discuss the various provisions of the agreement and, in some cases, put forward alternatives. Competent authorities are of course free to modify, add or delete any provisions of this sample agreement when concluding their bilateral agreement.

#### *Mutual agreement on the implementation of paragraph 5 of Article 25*

The competent authorities of [State A] and [State B] have entered into the following mutual agreement to establish the mode of application of the arbitration process provided for in paragraph 5 of Article 25 of the [title of the Convention], which entered into force on [date of entry into force]. The competent authorities may modify or supplement this agreement by an exchange of letters between them.

1. Request for submission of case to arbitration. A request that unresolved issues arising from a mutual agreement case be submitted to arbitration pursuant to paragraph 5 of Article 25 of the Convention (the “request for arbitration”) shall be made in writing and sent to one of the competent authorities. The request shall contain sufficient information to identify the case. The request shall also be accompanied by a written statement by each of the persons who either made the request or is directly affected by the case that no decision on the same issues has already been rendered by a court or administrative tribunal of the States. Within 10 days of the receipt of the request, the competent authority who received it shall send a copy of the request and the accompanying statements to the other competent authority.

2. Time for submission of the case to arbitration. A request for arbitration may only be made after two years from the date on which a case presented to the competent authority of one Contracting State under paragraph 1 of Article 25 has also been presented to the competent authority of the other State. For this purpose, a case shall be considered to have been presented to the competent authority of the other State only if the following information has been presented: [the necessary information and documents will be specified in the agreement].

3. Terms of Reference. Within three months after the request for arbitration has been received by both competent authorities, the competent authorities shall agree on the questions to be resolved by the arbitration panel and communicate them in writing to the person who made the request for arbitration. This will constitute the “Terms of Reference” for the case. Notwithstanding the following paragraphs of this agreement, the competent authorities may also, in the Terms of Reference, provide procedural rules that are additional to, or different from, those included in these paragraphs and deal with such other matters as are deemed appropriate.

4. Failure to communicate the Terms of Reference. If the Terms of Reference have not been communicated to the person who made the request for arbitration within the period referred to in paragraph 3 above, that person and each competent authority may, within one month after the end of that period, communicate in writing to each other a list of issues to be resolved by the arbitration. All the lists so communicated during that period shall constitute the tentative Terms of

*Reference. Within one month after all the arbitrators have been appointed as provided in paragraph 5 below, the arbitrators shall communicate to the competent authorities and the person who made the request for arbitration a revised version of the tentative Terms of Reference based on the lists so communicated. Within one month after the revised version has been received by both of them, the competent authorities will have the possibility to agree on different Terms of Reference and to communicate them in writing to the arbitrators and the person who made the request for arbitration. If they do so within that period, these different Terms of Reference shall constitute the Terms of Reference for the case. If no different Terms of Reference have been agreed to between the competent authorities and communicated in writing within that period, the revised version of the tentative Terms of Reference prepared by the arbitrators shall constitute the Terms of Reference for the case.*

5. *Selection of arbitrators.* *Within three months after the Terms of Reference have been received by the person who made the request for arbitration or, where paragraph 4 applies, within four months after the request for arbitration has been received by both competent authorities, the competent authorities shall each appoint one arbitrator. Within two months of the latter appointment, the arbitrators so appointed will appoint a third arbitrator who will function as Chair. If any appointment is not made within the required time period, the arbitrator(s) not yet appointed shall be appointed by the Director of the OECD Centre for Tax Policy and Administration within 10 days of receiving a request to that effect from the person who made the request for arbitration. The same procedure shall apply with the necessary adaptations if for any reason it is necessary to replace an arbitrator after the arbitral process has begun. Unless the Terms of Reference provide otherwise, the remuneration of all arbitrators .... [the mode of remuneration should be described here; one possibility would be to refer to the method used in the Code of Conduct on the EC Arbitration Convention]*

6. *Streamlined arbitration process.* *If the competent authorities so indicate in the Terms of Reference (provided that these have not been agreed to after the selection of arbitrators pursuant to paragraph 4 above), the following rules shall apply to a particular case notwithstanding paragraphs 5, 11, 15, 16 and 17 of this agreement:*

- a) *Within one month after the Terms of Reference have been received by the person who made the request for arbitration, the two competent authorities shall, by common consent, appoint one arbitrator. If, at the end of that period, the arbitrator has not yet been appointed, the arbitrator will be appointed by the Director of the OECD Centre for Tax Policy and Administration within 10 days of receiving a request to that effect from the person who made the request referred to in paragraph 1. The remuneration of the arbitrator shall be determined as follows ... [the mode of remuneration should be described here; one possibility would be to refer to the method used in the Code of Conduct on the EC Arbitration Convention]*
- b) *Within two months from the appointment of the arbitrator, each competent authority will present in writing to the arbitrator its own reply to the questions contained in the Terms of Reference.*
- c) *Within one month from having received the last of the replies from the competent authorities, the arbitrator will decide each question included in the Terms of Reference in accordance with one of the two replies received from the competent authorities as regards that question and will notify the competent authorities of the choice, together with short reasons explaining that choice. Such decision will be implemented as provided in paragraph 19.*

7. **Eligibility and appointment of arbitrators.** Any person, including a government official of a Contracting State, may be appointed as an arbitrator, unless that person has been involved in prior stages of the case that results in the arbitration process. An arbitrator will be considered to have been appointed when a letter confirming that appointment has been signed both by the person or persons who have the power to appoint that arbitrator and by the arbitrator himself.

8. **Communication of information and confidentiality.** For the sole purposes of the application of the provisions of Articles 25 and 26, and of the domestic laws of the Contracting States, concerning the communication and the confidentiality of the information related to the case that results in the arbitration process, each arbitrator shall be designated as authorised representative of the competent authority that has appointed that arbitrator or, if that arbitrator has not been appointed exclusively by one competent authority, of the competent authority of the Contracting State to which the case giving rise to the arbitration was initially presented. For the purposes of this agreement, where a case giving rise to arbitration was initially presented simultaneously to both competent authorities, “the competent authority of the Contracting State to which the case giving rise to the arbitration was initially presented” means the competent authority referred to in paragraph 1 of Article 25.

9. **Failure to provide information in a timely manner.** Notwithstanding paragraphs 5 and 6, where both competent authorities agree that the failure to resolve an issue within the two-year period provided in paragraph 5 of Article 25 is mainly attributable to the failure of a person directly affected by the case to provide relevant information in a timely manner, the competent authorities may postpone the nomination of the arbitrator for a period of time corresponding to the delay in providing that information.

10. **Procedural and evidentiary rules.** Subject to this agreement and the Terms of Reference, the arbitrators shall adopt those procedural and evidentiary rules that they deem necessary to answer the questions set out in the Terms of Reference. They will have access to all information necessary to decide the issues submitted to arbitration, including confidential information. Unless the competent authorities agree otherwise, any information that was not available to both competent authorities before the request for arbitration was received by both of them shall not be taken into account for purposes of the decision.

11. **Participation of the person who requested the arbitration.** The person who made the request for arbitration may, either directly or through his representatives, present his position to the arbitrators in writing to the same extent that he can do so during the mutual agreement procedure. In addition, with the permission of the arbitrators, the person may present his position orally during the arbitration proceedings.

12. **Logistical arrangements.** Unless agreed otherwise by the competent authorities, the competent authority to which the case giving rise to the arbitration was initially presented will be responsible for the logistical arrangements for the meetings of the arbitral panel and will provide the administrative personnel necessary for the conduct of the arbitration process. The administrative personnel so provided will report only to the Chair of the arbitration panel concerning any matter related to that process.

13. **Costs.** Unless agreed otherwise by the competent authorities:

- a) each competent authority and the person who requested the arbitration will bear the costs related to his own participation in the arbitration proceedings (including travel costs and costs related to the preparation and presentation of his views);

- b) *each competent authority will bear the remuneration of the arbitrator appointed exclusively by that competent authority, or appointed by the Director of the OECD Centre for Tax Policy and Administration because of the failure of that competent authority to appoint that arbitrator, together with that arbitrator's travel, telecommunication and secretariat costs;*
- c) *the remuneration of the other arbitrators and their travel, telecommunication and secretariat costs will be borne equally by the two Contracting States;*
- d) *costs related to the meetings of the arbitral panel and to the administrative personnel necessary for the conduct of the arbitration process will be borne by the competent authority to which the case giving rise to the arbitration was initially presented, or if presented in both States, will be shared equally; and*
- e) *all other costs (including costs of translation and of recording the proceedings) related to expenses that both competent authorities have agreed to incur, will be borne equally by the two Contracting States.*

14. *Applicable Legal Principles.* *The arbitrators shall decide the issues submitted to arbitration in accordance with the applicable provisions of the treaty and, subject to these provisions, of those of the domestic laws of the Contracting States. Issues of treaty interpretation will be decided by the arbitrators in light of the principles of interpretation incorporated in Articles 31 to 34 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, having regard to the Commentaries of the OECD Model Tax Convention as periodically amended, as explained in paragraphs 28 to 36.1 of the Introduction to the OECD Model Tax Convention. Issues related to the application of the arm's length principle should similarly be decided having regard to the OECD Transfer Pricing Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and Tax Administrations. The arbitrators will also consider any other sources which the competent authorities may expressly identify in the Terms of Reference.*

15. *Arbitration decision.* *Where more than one arbitrator has been appointed, the arbitration decision will be determined by a simple majority of the arbitrators. Unless otherwise provided in the Terms of Reference, the decision of the arbitral panel will be presented in writing and shall indicate the sources of law relied upon and the reasoning which led to its result. With the permission of the person who made the request for arbitration and both competent authorities, the decision of the arbitral panel will be made public in redacted form without mentioning the names of the parties involved or any details that might disclose their identity and with the understanding that the decision has no formal precedential value.*

16. *Time allowed for communicating the arbitration decision.* *The arbitration decision must be communicated to the competent authorities and the person who made the request for arbitration within six months from the date on which the Chair notifies in writing the competent authorities and the person who made the request for arbitration that he has received all the information necessary to begin consideration of the case. Notwithstanding the first part of this paragraph, if at any time within two months from the date on which the last arbitrator was appointed, the Chair, with the consent of one of the competent authorities, notifies in writing the other competent authority and the person who made the request for arbitration that he has not received all the information necessary to begin consideration of the case, then*

- a) *if the Chair receives the necessary information within two months after the date on which that notice was sent, the arbitration decision must be communicated to the*

*competent authorities and the person who made the request for arbitration within six months from the date on which the information was received by the Chair, and*

- b) *if the Chair has not received the necessary information within two months after the date on which that notice was sent, the arbitration decision must, unless the competent authorities agree otherwise, be reached without taking into account that information even if the Chair receives it later and the decision must be communicated to the competent authorities and the person who made the request for arbitration within eight months from the date on which the notice was sent.*

**17. Failure to communicate the decision within the required period.** *In the event that the decision has not been communicated to the competent authorities within the period provided for in paragraphs 6c or 16, the competent authorities may agree to extend that period for a period not exceeding six months or, if they fail to do so within one month from the end of the period provided for in paragraphs 6c or 16, they shall appoint a new arbitrator or arbitrators in accordance with paragraph 5 or 6a, as the case may be.*

**18. Final decision.** *The arbitration decision shall be final, unless that decision is found to be unenforceable by the courts of one of the Contracting States because of a violation of paragraph 5 of Article 25 or of any procedural rule included in the Terms of Reference or in this agreement that may reasonably have affected the decision. If a decision is found to be unenforceable for one of these reasons, the request for arbitration shall be considered not to have been made and the arbitration process shall be considered not to have taken place (except for the purposes of paragraphs 8 “Communication of information and confidentiality” and 13 “Costs”).*

**19. Implementing the arbitration decision.** *The competent authorities will implement the arbitration decision within six months from the communication of the decision to them by reaching a mutual agreement on the case that led to the arbitration.*

**20. Where no arbitration decision will be provided.** *Notwithstanding paragraphs 6, 15, 16 and 17, where, at any time after a request for arbitration has been made and before the arbitrators have delivered a decision to the competent authorities and the person who made the request for arbitration, the competent authorities notify in writing the arbitrators and that person that they have solved all the unresolved issues described in the Terms of Reference, the case shall be considered as solved under the mutual agreement procedure and no arbitration decision shall be provided.*

*This agreement applies to any request for arbitration made pursuant to paragraph 5 of Article 25 of the Convention after that provision has become effective.*

*[Date of signature of the agreement]*

*[Signature of the competent authority of each Contracting State]*

### **General approach of the sample agreement**

**2.** *A number of approaches can be taken to structuring the arbitral process which is used to supplement the MAP. Under one approach, which might be referred to as the “independent opinion” approach, the arbitrators would be presented with the facts and arguments by the parties*

*based on the applicable law, and would then reach their own independent decision which would be based on a written, reasoned analysis of the facts involved and applicable legal sources.*

3. *Alternatively, under the so-called “last best offer” or “final offer” approach, each competent authority would be required to give to the arbitral panel a proposed resolution of the issue involved and the arbitral panel would choose between the two proposals which were presented to it. There are obviously a number of variations between these two positions. For example, the arbitrators could reach an independent decision but would not be required to submit a written decision but simply their conclusions. To some extent, the appropriate method depends on the type of issue to be decided.*

4. *The above sample agreement takes as its starting point the “independent opinion” approach which is thus the generally applicable process but, in recognition of the fact that many cases, especially those which involve primarily factual questions, may be best handled differently, it also provides for an alternative “streamlined” process, based on the “last best offer” or “final offer” approach. Competent authorities can therefore agree to use that streamlined process on a case-by-case basis. Competent authorities may of course adopt this combined approach, adopt the streamlined process as the generally applicable process with the independent opinion as an option in some circumstances or limit themselves to only one of the two approaches.*

#### *The request for arbitration*

5. *Paragraph 1 of the sample agreement provides the manner in which a request for arbitration should be made. Such request should be presented in writing to one of the competent authorities involved in the case. That competent authority should then inform the other competent authority within 10 days of the receipt of the request.*

6. *In order to determine that the conditions of paragraph 5 of Article 25 have been met (see paragraph 76 of the Commentary on this Article) the request should be accompanied by statements indicating that no decision on these issues has already been rendered by domestic courts or administrative tribunals in either Contracting State.*

7. *Since the arbitration process is an extension of the mutual agreement procedure that is intended to deal with cases that cannot be solved under that procedure, it would seem inappropriate to ask the person who makes the request to pay in order to make such request or to reimburse the expenses incurred by the competent authorities in the course of the arbitration proceedings. Unlike taxpayers’ requests for rulings or other types of advance agreements, where a charge is sometimes made, providing a solution to disputes between the Contracting States is the responsibility of these States for which they in general should bear the costs.*

8. *A request for arbitration may not be made before two years from the date when a mutual agreement case presented to the competent authority of a Contracting State has also been presented to the competent authority of the other Contracting State. Paragraph 2 of the sample agreement provides that for this purpose, a case shall only be considered to have been presented to the competent authority of that other State if the information specified in that paragraph has been so provided. The paragraph should therefore include a list of the information required; in general, that information will correspond to the information and documents that were required to initiate the mutual agreement procedure.*



### *Terms of Reference*

9. Paragraph 3 of the sample agreement refers to the “Terms of Reference”, which is the document that sets forth the questions to be resolved by the arbitrators. It establishes the jurisdictional basis for the issues which are to be decided by the arbitral panel. It is to be established by the competent authorities who may wish in that connection to consult with the person who made the request for arbitration. If the competent authorities cannot agree on the Terms of Reference within the period provided for in paragraph 3, some mechanism is necessary to ensure that the procedure goes forward. Paragraph 4 provides for that eventuality.

10. Whilst the Terms of Reference will generally be limited to a particular issue or set of issues, it would be possible for the competent authorities, given the nature of the case and the interrelated nature of the issues, to draft the Terms of Reference so that the whole case (and not only certain specific issues) be submitted to arbitration.

11. The procedural rules provided for in the sample agreement shall apply unless the competent authorities provide otherwise in the Terms of Reference. It is therefore possible for the competent authorities, through the Terms of Reference, to depart from any of these rules or to provide for additional rules in a particular case.

### *Streamlined process*

12. The normal process provided for by the sample agreement allows the consideration of questions of either law or fact, as well as of mixed questions of law and fact. Generally, it is important that the arbitrators support their decision with the reasoning leading to it. Showing the method through which the decision was reached may be important in assuring acceptance of the decision.

13. In some cases, however, the unresolved issues will be primarily factual and the decision may be simply a statement of the final disposition, for example a determination of the amount of adjustments to the income and deductions of the respective related parties. Such circumstances will often arise in transfer pricing cases, where the unresolved issue may be simply the determination of an arm’s length transfer price or range of prices (although there are other transfer pricing cases that involve complex factual issues); there are also cases in which an analogous principle may apply, for example, the determination of the existence of a permanent establishment. In some cases, the decision may be a statement of the factual premises on which the appropriate legal principles should then be applied by the competent authorities. Paragraph 5 of the sample agreement provides a streamlined process which the competent authorities may wish to apply in these types of cases. That process, which will then override other procedural rules of the sample agreement, takes the form of the so-called “last best offer” or “final offer” arbitration, under which each competent authority is required to give to an arbitrator appointed by common consent that competent authority’s own reply to the questions included in the Terms of Reference and the arbitrator simply chooses one of the submitted replies. The competent authorities may, as for most procedural rules, amend or supplement the streamlined process through the Terms of Reference applicable to a particular case.

### *Selection of arbitrators*

14. Paragraph 5 of the sample agreement describes how arbitrators will be selected unless the Terms of Reference drafted for a particular case provide otherwise (for instance, by opting for the streamlined process described in the preceding paragraph or by providing for more than one

arbitrator to be appointed by each competent authority). Normally, the two competent authorities will each appoint one arbitrator. These appointments must be made within three months after the Terms of Reference have been received by the person who made the request for arbitration (a different deadline is provided for cases where the competent authorities do not agree on the Terms of Reference within the required period). The arbitrators thus appointed will select a Chair who must be appointed within two months of the time at which the last of the initial appointments was made. If the competent authorities do not appoint an arbitrator during the required period, or if the arbitrators so appointed do not appoint the third arbitrator within the required period, the paragraph provides that the appointment will be made by the Director of the OECD Centre for Tax Policy and Administration. The competent authorities may, of course, provide for other ways to address these rare situations but it seems important to provide for an independent appointing authority to solve any deadlock in the selection of the arbitrators.

15. There is no need for the agreement to stipulate any particular qualifications for an arbitrator as it will be in the interests of the competent authorities to have qualified and suitable persons act as arbitrators and in the interests of the arbitrators to have a qualified Chair. However, it might be possible to develop a list of qualified persons to facilitate the appointment process and this function could be developed by the Committee on Fiscal Affairs. It is important that the Chair of the panel have experience with the types of procedural, evidentiary and logistical issues which are likely to arise in the course of the arbitral proceedings as well as having familiarity with tax issues. There may be advantages in having representatives of each Contracting State appointed as arbitrators as they would be familiar with this type of issue. Thus it should be possible to appoint to the panel governmental officials who have not been directly involved in the case. Once an arbitrator has been appointed, it should be clear that his role is to decide the case on a neutral and objective basis; he is no longer functioning as an advocate for the country that appointed him.

16. Paragraph 9 of the sample agreement provides that the appointment of the arbitrators may be postponed where both competent authorities agree that the failure to reach a mutual agreement within the two-year period is mainly attributable to the lack of cooperation by a person directly affected by the case. In that case, the approach taken by the sample agreement is to allow the competent authorities to postpone the appointment of the arbitrators by a period of time corresponding to the undue delay in providing them with the relevant information. If that information has not yet been provided when the request for arbitration is submitted, the period of time corresponding to the delay in providing the information continues to run until such information is finally provided. Where, however, the competent authorities are not provided with the information necessary to solve a particular case, there is nothing that prevents them from resolving the case on the basis of the limited information that is at their disposal, thereby preventing any access to arbitration. Also, it would be possible to provide in the agreement that if within an additional period (e.g. one year), the taxpayer still had not provided the necessary information for the competent authorities to properly evaluate the issue, the issue would no longer be required to be submitted to arbitration.

#### *Communication of information and confidentiality*

17. It is important that arbitrators be allowed full access to the information needed to resolve the issues submitted to arbitration but, at the same time, be subjected to the same strict confidentiality requirements as regards that information as apply to the competent authorities themselves. The proposed approach to ensure that result, which is incorporated in paragraph 8 of the sample agreement, is to make the arbitrators authorised representatives of the competent authorities. This, however, will only be for the purposes of the application of the relevant

*provisions of the Convention (i.e. Articles 25 and 26) and of the provisions of the domestic laws of the Contracting States, which would normally include the sanctions applicable in case of a breach of confidentiality. The designation of the arbitrator as authorised representative of a competent authority would typically be confirmed in the letter of appointment but may need to be done differently if domestic law requires otherwise or if the arbitrator is not appointed by a competent authority.*

#### *Procedural and evidentiary rules*

*18. The simplest way to establish the evidentiary and other procedural rules that will govern the arbitration process and that have not already been provided in the agreement or the Terms of Reference is to leave it to the arbitrators to develop these rules on an ad hoc basis. In doing so, the arbitrators are free to refer to existing arbitration procedures, such as the International Chamber of Commerce Rules which deal with many of these questions. It should be made clear in the procedural rules that as general matter, the factual material on which the arbitral panel will base its decision will be that developed in the mutual agreement procedure. Only in special situations would the panel be allowed to investigate factual issues which had not been developed in the earlier stages of the case.*

*19. Paragraph 10 of the sample agreement follows that approach. Thus, decisions as regards the dates and format of arbitration meetings will be made by the arbitrators unless the agreement or Terms of Reference provide otherwise. Also, whilst the arbitrators will have access to all information necessary to decide the issues submitted to arbitration, including confidential information, any information that was not available to both competent authorities shall not be taken into account by the arbitrators unless the competent authorities agree otherwise.*

#### *Taxpayer participation in the supplementary dispute resolution process*

*20. Paragraph 11 of the sample agreement provides that the person requesting arbitration, either directly or through his representatives, is entitled to present a written submission to the arbitrators and, if the arbitrators agree, to make an oral presentation during a meeting of the arbitrators.*

#### *Practical arrangements*

*21. A number of practical arrangements will need to be made in connection with the actual functioning of the arbitral process. They include the location of the meetings, the language of the proceedings and possible translation facilities, the keeping of a record, dealing with practical details such as filing etc.*

*22. As regards the location and the logistical arrangements for the arbitral meetings, the easiest solution is to leave the matter to be dealt with by the competent authority to which the case giving rise to the arbitration was initially presented. That competent authority should also provide the administrative personnel necessary for the conduct of the arbitration process. This is the approach put forward in paragraph 12 of the sample agreement. It is expected that, for these purposes, the competent authority will use meeting facilities and personnel that it already has at its disposal. The two competent authorities are, however, entitled to agree otherwise (e.g. to take advantage of another meeting in a different location that would be attended by both competent authorities and the arbitrators).*

23. *It is provided that the administrative personnel provided for the conduct of the arbitration process will report only to the Chair of the arbitration panel concerning any matter related to that procedure.*

24. *The language of the proceedings and whether, and which, translation facilities should be provided is a matter that should normally be dealt with in the Terms of Reference. It may be, however, that a need for translation or recording will only arise after the beginning of the proceedings. In that case, the competent authorities are entitled to reach agreement for that purpose. In the absence of such agreement, the arbitrators could, at the request of one competent authority and pursuant to paragraph 10 of the sample agreement, decide to provide such translation or recording; in that case, however, the costs thereof would have to be borne by the requesting party (see under “Costs” below).*

25. *Other practical details (e.g. notice and filing of documents) should be similarly dealt with. Thus, any such matter should be decided by agreement between the competent authorities (ideally, included in the Terms of Reference) and, failing such agreement, by decision of the arbitrators.*

#### **Costs**

26. *Different costs may arise in relation to the arbitration process and it should be clear who should bear these costs. Paragraph 13 of the sample agreement, which deals with this issue, is based on the principle that where a competent authority or a person involved in the case can control the amount of a particular cost, this cost should be borne by that party and that other costs should be borne equally by the two competent authorities.*

27. *Thus, it seems logical to provide that each competent authority, as well as the person who requested the arbitration, should pay for its own participation in the arbitration proceedings. This would include costs of being represented at the meetings and of preparing and presenting a position and arguments, whether in writing or orally.*

28. *The fees to be paid to the arbitrators are likely to be one of the major costs of the arbitration process. Each competent authority will bear the remuneration of the arbitrator appointed exclusively by that competent authority (or appointed by the Director of the OECD Centre for Tax Policy and Administration because of the failure of that competent authority to appoint that arbitrator), together with that arbitrator’s travel, telecommunication and secretariat costs.*

29. *The fees and the travel, telecommunication and secretariat costs of the other arbitrators will, however, be shared equally by the competent authorities. The competent authorities will normally agree to incur these costs at the time that the arbitrators are appointed and this would typically be confirmed in the letter of appointment. The fees should be large enough to ensure that appropriately qualified experts could be recruited. One possibility would be to use a fee structure similar to that established under the EU Arbitration Convention Code of Conduct.*

30. *The costs related to the meetings of the arbitral panel, including those of the administrative personnel necessary for the conduct of the arbitration process, should be borne by the competent authority to which the case giving rise to the arbitration was initially presented, as long as that competent authority is required to arrange such meetings and provide the administrative personnel (see paragraph 12 of the sample agreement). In most cases, that competent authority will use meeting facilities and personnel that it already has at its disposal and it would seem inappropriate to try to allocate part of the costs thereof to the other competent authority. Clearly,*

*the reference to “costs related to the meetings” does not include the travel and accommodation costs incurred by the participants; these are dealt with above.*

*31. The other costs (not including any costs resulting from the taxpayers’ participation in the process) should be borne equally by the two competent authorities as long as they have agreed to incur the relevant expenses. This would include costs related to translation and recording that both competent authorities have agreed to provide. In the absence of such agreement, the party that has requested that particular costs be incurred should pay for these.*

*32. As indicated in paragraph 13 of the sample agreement, the competent authorities may, however, agree to a different allocation of costs. Such agreement can be included in the Terms of Reference or be made afterwards (e.g. when unforeseen expenses arise).*

#### *Applicable legal principles*

*33. An examination of the issues on which competent authorities have had difficulties reaching an agreement shows that these are typically matters of treaty interpretation or of applying the arm’s length principle underlying Article 9 and paragraph 2 of Article 7. As provided in paragraph 14 of the sample agreement, matters of treaty interpretation should be decided by the arbitrators in light of the principles of interpretation incorporated in Articles 31 to 34 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, having regard to these Commentaries as periodically amended, as explained in paragraphs 28 to 36.1 of the Introduction. Issues related to the application of the arm’s length principle should similarly be decided in light of the OECD Transfer Pricing Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and Tax Administrations. Since Article 32 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties permits a wide access to supplementary means of interpretation, arbitrators will, in practice, have considerable latitude in determining relevant sources for the interpretation of treaty provisions.*

*34. In many cases, the application of the provisions of a tax convention depends on issues of domestic law (for example, the definition of immovable property in paragraph 2 of Article 6 depends primarily on the domestic law meaning of that term). As a general rule, it would seem inappropriate to ask arbitrators to make an independent determination of purely domestic legal issues and the description of the issues to be resolved, which will be included in the Terms of Reference, should take this into account. There may be cases, however, where there would be legitimate differences of views on a matter of domestic law and in such cases, the competent authorities may wish to leave that matter to be decided by an arbitrator who is an expert in the relevant area.*

*35. Also, there may be cases where the competent authorities agree that the interpretation or application of provision of a tax treaty depends on a particular document (e.g. a memorandum of understanding or mutual agreement concluded after the entry into force of a treaty) but may disagree about the interpretation of that document. In such a case, the competent authorities may wish to make express reference to that document in the Terms of Reference.*

#### *Arbitration decision*

*36. Paragraph 15 of the sample agreement provides that where more than one arbitrator has been appointed, the arbitration decision will be determined by a simple majority of the arbitrators. Unless otherwise provided in the Terms of Reference, the decision is presented in writing and indicates the sources of law relied upon and the reasoning which led to its result. It is important that the arbitrators support their decision with the reasoning leading to it. Showing the method*

*through which the decision was reached is important in assuring acceptance of the decision by all relevant participants.*

*37. Pursuant to paragraph 16, the arbitration decision must be communicated to the competent authorities and the person who made the request for arbitration within six months from the date on which the Chair notifies in writing the competent authorities and the person who made the request for arbitration that he has received all of the information necessary to begin consideration of the case. However, at any time within two months from the date on which the last arbitrator was appointed, the Chair, with the consent of one of the competent authorities, may notify in writing the other competent authority and the person who made the request for arbitration that he has not received all the information necessary to begin consideration of the case. In that case, a further two months will be given for the necessary information to be sent to the Chair. If the information is not received by the Chair within that period, it is provided that the decision will be rendered within the next six months without taking that information into account (unless both competent authorities agree otherwise). If, on the other hand, the information is received by the Chair within the two month period, that information will be taken into account and the decision will be communicated within six months from the reception of that information.*

*38. In order to deal with the unusual circumstances in which the arbitrators may be unable or unwilling to present an arbitration decision, paragraph 17 provides that if the decision is not communicated within the relevant period, the competent authorities may agree to extend the period for presenting the arbitration decision or, if they fail to reach such agreement within one month, appoint new arbitrators to deal with the case. In the case of the appointment of new arbitrators, the arbitration process would go back to the point where the original arbitrators were appointed and will continue with the new arbitrators.*

#### *Publication of the decision*

*39. Decisions on individual cases reached under the mutual agreement procedure are generally not made public. In the case of reasoned arbitral decisions, however, publishing the decisions would lend additional transparency to the process. Also, whilst the decision would not be in any sense a formal precedent, having the material in the public domain could influence the course of other cases so as to avoid subsequent disputes and lead to a more uniform approach to the same issue.*

*40. Paragraph 15 of the sample agreement therefore provides for the possibility to publish the decision. Such publication, however, should only be made if both competent authorities and the person who made the arbitration request so agree. Also, in order to maintain the confidentiality of information communicated to the competent authorities, the publication should be made in a form that would not disclose the names of the parties nor any element that would help to identify them.*

#### *Implementing the decision*

*41. Once the arbitration process has provided a binding solution to the issues that the competent authorities have been unable to resolve, the competent authorities will proceed to conclude a mutual agreement that reflects that decision and that will be presented to the persons directly affected by the case. In order to avoid further delays, it is suggested that the mutual agreement that incorporates the solution arrived at should be completed and presented to the*

*taxpayer within six months from the date of the communication of the decision. This is provided in paragraph 19 of the sample agreement.*

*42. Paragraph 2 of Article 25 provides that the competent authorities have the obligation to implement the agreement reached notwithstanding any time limit in their domestic law. Paragraph 5 of the Article also provides that the arbitration decision is binding on both Contracting States. Failure to assess taxpayers in accordance with the agreement or to implement the arbitration decision through the conclusion of a mutual agreement would therefore result in taxation not in accordance with the Convention and, as such, would allow the person whose taxation is affected to seek relief through domestic legal remedies or by making a new request pursuant to paragraph 1 of the Article.*

*43. Paragraph 20 of the sample agreement deals with the case where the competent authorities are able to solve the unresolved issues that led to arbitration before the decision is rendered. Since the arbitration process is an exceptional mechanism to deal with issues that cannot be solved under the usual mutual agreement procedure, it is appropriate to put an end to that exceptional mechanism if the competent authorities are able to resolve these issues by themselves. The competent authorities may agree on a resolution of these issues as long as the arbitration decision has not been rendered.*

## ANNEX 1

### CHANGES MADE TO THE PROPOSED PARAGRAPHS DEALING WITH THE TAX TREATY TREATMENT OF SERVICES (RELEASED IN DRAFT FORM IN DECEMBER 2006)

[Changes made to the paragraphs as they appeared in the discussion draft are shown in *bold italics* for additions and ~~strike through~~ for deletions]

#### *The taxation of services*

42.11 The combined effect of this Article and Article 7 is that the profits from services performed in the territory of a Contracting State by an enterprise of the other Contracting State are not taxable in the first-mentioned State if they are not attributable to a permanent establishment situated therein (as long as they are not covered by other Articles of the Convention that would allow such taxation). This result, under which these profits are only taxable in the other State, is supported by various policy and administrative considerations. It is consistent with the principle of Article 7 that until an enterprise of one State sets up a permanent establishment in another State, it should not be regarded as participating in the economic life of that State to such an extent that it comes within the taxing jurisdiction of that other State. Also, the provision of services should, as a general rule subject to a few exceptions for some types of service (e.g. those covered by Article 8 and 17), be treated the same way as other business activities and, therefore, the same permanent establishment threshold of taxation should apply to all business activities, including the provision of independent services.

42.12 One of the administrative considerations referred to above is that the extension of the cases where source taxation of profits from services performed in the territory of a Contracting State by an enterprise of the other Contracting State would be allowed would increase the compliance and administrative burden of enterprises and tax administrations. This would be especially problematic with respect to services provided to *non-business* consumers, which would not *need to* be disclosed to the source country's tax administration for purposes of claiming a business expense deduction. Since the rules that have typically been designed for that purpose are based on the amount of time spent in a State, both tax administrations and enterprises would need to take account of the time spent in a country by personnel of service enterprises and these enterprises would face the risk of having a permanent establishment in unexpected circumstances in cases where they would be unable to determine in advance how long personnel would be present in a particular country (e.g. in situations where that presence would be extended because of unforeseen difficulties or at the request of a client). These cases create particular compliance difficulties as they require an enterprise to retroactively comply with a number of administrative requirements associated with a permanent establishment. These concerns relate to the need to maintain books and records, the taxation of the employees (e.g. the need to make source deductions in another country) as well as other non-income tax requirements.

42.13 Also, the source taxation of profits from services performed in the territory of a Contracting State by an enterprise of the other Contracting State that does not have a fixed place of business in the first-mentioned State would create difficulties concerning the determination of the profits to be taxed and the collection of the relevant tax. In most cases, the enterprise would not have the accounting records and assets typically associated with a permanent establishment and there would be no dependent agent which could comply with information and collection requirements. Moreover, ~~while~~ *whilst* it is a common feature of States' domestic law to tax profits from services performed in their territory, it does not necessarily represent optimal tax treaty policy.



42.14 Some States, however, are reluctant to adopt the principle of exclusive residence taxation of services that are not attributable to a permanent establishment situated ~~in~~ their territory but that are performed ~~in~~ that territory. These States propose changes to the Article in order to preserve source taxation rights, in certain circumstances, with respect to the profits from such services. States that believe that additional source taxation rights should be allocated under a treaty with respect to services performed in their territory rely on various arguments to support their position.

42.15 These States may consider that profits from services performed in a given state should be taxable in that state on the basis of the generally-accepted policy principles for determining when business profits should be considered to have their source within a jurisdiction. They consider that, from the exclusive angle of the pure policy question of where business profits originate, the ~~State~~ state where services are performed should have a right to tax even when these services are not attributable to a permanent establishment *as defined in Article 5*. They would note that the domestic law of many countries provides for the taxation of services performed in these countries even in the absence of a permanent establishment (even though services performed over very short periods of time may not always be taxed in practice).

42.16 These States are concerned that some service businesses do not require a fixed place of business in their territory in order to carry on a substantial level of business activities therein and consider that these additional rights are therefore appropriate.

42.17 Also, these States consider that even if the taxation of profits of enterprises carried on by non-residents that are not attributable to a permanent establishment raises certain compliance and administrative difficulties, these difficulties do not justify exempting from tax the profits from all services performed on their territory by such enterprises. Those who support that view may refer to mechanisms that are already in place in some States to ensure taxation of services performed in these States but not attributable to permanent establishments (such mechanisms are based on requirements for resident payers to report, and possibly withhold tax on, payments to non-residents for services performed in these States).

42.18 It should be noted, however, that all Member States agree that a State should not have source taxation rights on income derived from the provision of services performed by a non-resident outside that State. Under tax conventions, the profits from the sale of goods that are merely imported by a resident of a country and that are neither produced nor distributed through a permanent establishment in that country are not taxable therein and the same principle should apply in the case of services. The mere fact that the payer of the consideration for services is a resident of a *State, or that such consideration is borne by a permanent establishment situated in that State or that the result of the services is used within the State* does not constitute a sufficient nexus to warrant allocation of income taxing rights to that State.

42.19 Another fundamental issue on which there is general agreement relates to the determination of the amount on which tax should be levied. In the case of non-employment services (and subject to possible exceptions such as Article 17) only the profits derived from the services should be taxed. Thus, provisions that are sometimes included in bilateral conventions and that allow a State to tax the gross amount of the fees paid for certain services if the payer of the fees is a resident of that State do not seem to provide an appropriate way of taxing services. First, because these provisions are not restricted to services performed in the State of source, they have the effect of allowing a State to tax business activities that do not take place in that State. Second, these rules allow taxation of the gross payments for services as opposed to the profits therefrom.

42.20 Also, Member States agree that it is appropriate, for compliance and other reasons, not to allow a State to tax the profits from services performed in their territory in certain circumstances (e.g. when such services are provided during a very short period of time).

42.21 The Committee therefore considered that it was important to circumscribe the circumstances in which States that did not agree with the conclusion in paragraph 42.1142-above could, if they wished to, provide that profits from services performed in the territory of a Contracting State by an enterprise of the other Contracting State would be taxable by that State *even if there was ~~no~~ they are not attributable to a permanent establishment, as defined in Article 5, to which the profits were attributable. situated therein.*

42.22 Clearly, such taxation should not extend to services performed outside the territory of a State and should apply only to the profits from these services rather than to the payments for them. Also, there should be a minimum level of presence in a State before such taxation is allowed.

42.23 The following is an example of a provision that would conform to these requirements; States are free to agree bilaterally to include such a provision in their tax treaties:

Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraphs 1, 2 and 3, where an enterprise of a Contracting State performs services in the other Contracting State

- a) through an individual who is present in that other State ~~for~~ during a period or periods exceeding in the aggregate 183 days in any twelve month period, and more than 50 per cent of the gross revenues attributable to active business activities of the enterprise during this period or periods are derived from the services performed in that other State through that individual, or
- b) ~~for~~ during a period or periods exceeding in the aggregate 183 days in any twelve month period, and these services are performed for the same project or for connected projects through one or more individuals who are *present and* performing such services in that other State ~~or are present in that other State for the purpose of performing such services,~~

the activities carried on in that other State in performing these services shall be deemed to be carried on through a permanent establishment ~~of that~~ the enterprise *situated* ~~has~~ in that other State, unless these services are limited to those mentioned in paragraph 4 which, if performed through a fixed place of business, would not make this fixed place of business a permanent establishment under the provisions of that paragraph. *For the purposes of this paragraph, services performed by an individual on behalf of one enterprise shall not be considered to be performed by another enterprise through that individual unless that other enterprise supervises, directs or controls the manner in which these services are performed by the individual.*

42.24 That alternative provision constitutes an extension of the permanent establishment definition that allows taxation of income from services provided by enterprises carried on by non-residents but does so in conformity with the principles described in paragraph 42.22.

42.25 The provision has the effect of deeming a permanent establishment to exist where one would not otherwise exist under the definition provided in paragraph 1 and the examples of paragraph 2. It therefore applies notwithstanding these paragraphs. As is the case of paragraph 5 of the Article, the provision provides a supplementary basis under which an enterprise may be found to have a permanent establishment in a State; it could apply, for example, where a consultant provides services over a long period in a country but at different locations that do not meet the conditions of paragraph 1 to constitute one or more permanent establishments. If it can be shown that the

enterprise has a permanent establishment within the meaning of paragraphs 1 and 2 (subject to the provisions of paragraph 4), it is not necessary to apply the provision in order to find a permanent establishment. Since the provision simply creates a permanent establishment when none would otherwise exist, it does not provide an alternative definition of the concept of permanent establishment and obviously cannot limit the scope of the definition in paragraph 1 and of the examples in paragraph 2.

42.26 The provision also applies notwithstanding paragraph 3. Thus, an enterprise may be deemed to have a permanent establishment because it performs services in a country for the periods of time provided for in the suggested paragraph even if the various locations where these services are performed do not constitute permanent establishments pursuant to paragraph 3. The following example illustrates that result. A self-employed individual resident of one Contracting State provides services and is present in the other Contracting State for more than 183 days during a 12-month period but his services are performed for equal periods of time at a location that is not a construction site (and are not in relation to a construction or installation project) as well as on two unrelated building sites which each lasts less than the period of time provided for in paragraph 3. Whilst paragraph 3 would deem the two sites not to constitute permanent establishments, the proposed paragraph, which applies notwithstanding paragraph 3, would deem the enterprise carried on by that person to have a permanent establishment (*since the individual is self-employed, it must be assumed that the 50% of gross revenues test will be met with respect to his enterprise*).

42.27 Another example is that of a large construction enterprise that carries on a single construction project in a country. If the project is carried on at a single site, the provision should not have a significant impact as long as the period required for the site to constitute a permanent establishment is not substantially different from the period required for the provision to apply. States that wish to use the alternative provision may therefore wish to consider referring to the same periods of time in that provision and in paragraph 3 of Article 5.

42.28 The situation, however, may be different if the project, or connected projects, are carried out in different parts of a country. If the individual sites where a single project is carried on do not last sufficiently long for each of them to constitute a permanent establishment (see, however, paragraph 20 of the Commentary on Article 5), a permanent establishment will still be deemed to exist if the conditions of the alternative provision are met. That result is consistent with the purpose of the provision, which is to subject to source taxation ~~foreign non-resident~~ enterprises that are present in a country for a sufficiently long period of time notwithstanding the fact that their presence at any particular location in that country is not sufficiently long to make that location a fixed place of business of the enterprise. Some States, however, may consider that paragraph 3 should prevail over the alternative provision and may wish to amend the provision accordingly.

42.29 The suggested paragraph only applies to services. Other types of activities that do not constitute services are therefore excluded from its scope. Thus, for instance, the paragraph would not apply to a foreign enterprise that carries on fishing activities in the territorial waters of a State and derives revenues from selling its catches (in some treaties, however, activities such as fishing and oil extraction may be covered by specific provisions).

42.30 The provision applies to services performed by an enterprise. Thus, services must be provided by the enterprise to third parties. Clearly, the provision could not have the effect of deeming an enterprise to have a permanent establishment merely because services are provided to that enterprise. For example, services might be provided by an individual to his employer without that employer performing any services (e.g. an employee who provides manufacturing services to an enterprise that sells manufactured products). *Another example would be where* Similarly, if the

employees of ~~one~~ separate enterprise (e.g. an enterprise providing outsourced services) provide services to ***an associated enterprise under detailed instructions and close supervision of third parties*** pursuant to a contract that the enterprise has concluded with another enterprise, the services performed through these employees are not performed by the latter enterprise; ***in that case, assuming the services in question are not for the*** even if they may provide an economic benefit of ***any third party,*** ~~to the latter enterprise does not itself perform any services to which the provision could apply.~~ business of that other enterprise.

42.31 Also, the provision only applies to services that are performed in a State by a foreign enterprise. ~~Whether or~~ It is therefore not sufficient that the relevant services ***are*** be furnished to a resident of the State ***does not matter; what matters is that the*** ; these services ***are*** must also be performed in ***the*** that State. Where, for example, an enterprise provides telecommunication services to customers located in a State through ***an individual present in that State.*** ~~satellite located outside that State, the services performed through the satellite would not be covered by the provision because they are not performed in the State.~~

42.32 The alternative provision does not specify that the services must be provided “through employees or other personnel engaged by the enterprise”, a phrase that is sometimes found in bilateral treaties. It simply provides that the services must be performed by an enterprise. As explained in paragraph 10, the business of an enterprise (which, in the context of the paragraph, would include the services performed in a Contracting State) “is carried on mainly by the entrepreneur or persons who are in paid-employment relationship with the enterprise (personnel). This personnel includes employees and other persons receiving instructions from the enterprise (e.g. dependent agents).” For the purposes of the alternative provision, the individuals through which an enterprise provides services will therefore be the individuals referred to in paragraph 10, ***subject to the exception included in the last sentence of that provision (see paragraph 42.43 below).***

42.33 The ~~circumstances in which the~~ alternative provision will apply ***in two different sets*** will vary depending on whether or not the services are primarily performed by a single individual. If that is the case, subparagraph a) of ***circumstances. Subparagraph a)*** the provision looks at the duration of the presence of the individual ***through whom an enterprise derives most of its revenues*** in a way that is similar to that of subparagraph 2 a) of Article 15; if that is not the case, subparagraph b) looks at the duration of the activities, ~~or the presence,~~ of the individuals through ***whom*** which the services are performed.

42.34 Subparagraph a) deals primarily with the situation of an enterprise carried on by a single individual. It also covers, however, the case of an enterprise which, during the relevant period ***or periods,*** derives most of its revenues from services provided by one individual. Such extension is necessary to avoid a different treatment ***between,*** where, for example, ***a case where*** the same services are provided by an individual and ***a case where similar services are provided*** by a company all the shares of which are owned by the only employee of that company.

42.35 The subparagraph may apply in different situations where an enterprise performs services through an individual, such as when the services are performed by a sole proprietorship, by the partner of a partnership, by the employee of a company etc. The main conditions are that

- the individual through which the services are performed be present in a State ***for*** during a period or periods exceeding in the aggregate 183 days in any twelve month period, and
- more than 50 per cent of the gross revenues attributable to active business activities of the enterprise during the period or periods of presence be derived from the services performed in that State through that individual.

42.36 The first condition refers to the days of presence of an individual. Since the formulation is identical to that of subparagraph 2 a) of Article 15, the principles applicable to the computation of the days of presence for purposes of that last subparagraph are also applicable to the computation of the days of presence for the purpose of the suggested paragraph.

42.37 For the purposes of the second condition, according to which more than 50 per cent of the gross revenues attributable to active business activities of the enterprise during the relevant period or periods must be derived from the services performed in that State through that individual, the gross revenues attributable to active business activities of the enterprise would represent what the enterprise has charged or should charge for its active business activities, regardless of when the actual billing will occur or of domestic law rules concerning when such revenues should be taken into account for tax purposes. Such active business activities are not restricted to activities related to the provision of services. Gross revenues attributable to “active business activities” would clearly exclude income from passive investment activities, including, for example, receiving interest and dividends from investing surplus funds. States may, however, prefer to use a different test, such as “50% of the business profits of the enterprise during this period or periods is derived from the services” or “the services represent the most important part of the business activities of the enterprise”, in order to identify an enterprise that derives most of its revenues from services performed by an individual on their territory.

**42.38** *The following examples illustrate the application of subparagraph a) (assuming that the alternative provision has been included in a treaty between States R and S):*

- *Example 1: W, a resident of State R, is a consultant who carries on her business activities in her own name (i.e. that enterprise is a sole proprietorship). Between 2 February 00 and 1 February 01, she is present in State S for a period or periods of 190 days and during that period all the revenues from her business activities are derived from services that she performs in State S. Since subparagraph a) applies in that situation, these services shall be deemed to be performed through a permanent establishment in State S.*
- *Example 2: X, a resident of State R, is one of the two shareholders and employees of XCO, a company resident of State R that provides engineering services. Between 20 December 00 and 19 December 01, X is present in State S for a period or periods of 190 days and during that period, 70% of all the gross revenues of XCO attributable to active business activities are derived from the services that X performs in State S. Since subparagraph a) applies in that situation, these services shall be deemed to be performed through a permanent establishment of XCO in State S.*
- *Example 3: X and Y, who are residents of State R, are the two partners of X&Y, a partnership established in State R which provides legal services. For tax purposes, State R treats partnerships as transparent entities. Between 15 July 00 and 14 July 01, Y is present in State S for a period or periods of 240 days and during that period, 55% of all the fees of X&Y attributable to X&Y’s active business activities are derived from the services that Y performs in State S. Subparagraph a) applies in that situation and, for the purposes of the taxation of X and Y, the services performed by Y are deemed to be performed through a permanent establishment in State S.*
- *Example 4: Z, a resident of State R, is one of 10 employees of ACO, a company resident of State R that provides accounting services. Between 10 April 00 and 9 April 01, Z is present in State S for a period or periods of 190 days and during that period, 12% of all the gross revenues of ACO attributable to its active business activities are derived from the services that Z performs in State S. Subparagraph a) does not apply in that situation and, unless*

*subparagraph b) applies to ACO, the alternative provision will not deem ACO to have a permanent establishment in State S.*

~~42.39~~<sup>42.38</sup> Subparagraph b) addresses the situation of an enterprise that performs services in a Contracting State in relation to a particular project (or for connected projects) and which performs these through one or more individuals over a substantial period. The period or periods referred to in the subparagraph apply in relation to the enterprise and not to the individuals. It is therefore not necessary that it be the same individual or individuals who perform the services ~~and~~ are present throughout these periods. As long as, on a given day, the enterprise is performing its services through at least one individual who is doing so ~~and~~ ~~is present in the State, for that purpose,~~ that day would be included in the period or periods referred to in the subparagraph. ***Clearly, however, that day will count as a single day regardless of how many individuals are performing such services for the enterprise during that day.***

~~42.40~~<sup>42.39</sup> The reference to an “enterprise [...] performing these services for the same project” ~~or for connected projects~~ should be interpreted from the perspective of the enterprise that provides the services. Thus, an enterprise may have two different projects to provide services to a single customer (e.g. to provide tax advice and to provide training in an area unrelated to tax) and ~~while~~<sup>whilst</sup> these may be related to a single project of the customer, one should not consider that the services are performed for the same project.

~~42.41~~<sup>42.40</sup> The reference to “connected projects” is intended to cover cases where the services are provided in the context of separate projects carried on by an enterprise but these projects ***have a commercial coherence (see paragraphs 5.3 and 5.4 above). The determination of whether projects are connected will depend on the facts and circumstances of each case but factors that would generally be relevant for that purpose include*** ~~involve the provision of services of the same or of a similar nature and within the framework of contracts concluded with the same enterprise or with associated enterprises. [The Working Group invites comments in particular on the meaning of “connected projects”]~~

- *whether the projects are covered by a single master contract;*
- *where the projects are covered by different contracts, whether these different contracts were concluded with the same person or with related persons and whether the conclusion of the additional contracts would reasonably have been expected when concluding the first contract;*
- *whether the nature of the work involved under the different projects is the same;*
- *whether the same individuals are performing the services under the different projects.*

~~42.42~~<sup>42.41</sup> Subparagraph b) requires that during the relevant periods, the enterprise is performing services through individuals who are ~~either performing such services in that other~~ <sup>the State.</sup> ~~or are present in that State for the purpose of performing such services.~~ For that purpose, a period during which individuals are performing services means a period during which the services are actually provided, which would normally correspond to the working days of these individuals. ***An enterprise that agrees to keep personnel available in case a client needs the services of such personnel and charges the client standby charges for making such personnel available is performing services through the relevant individuals even though they are idle during the working days when they remain available.*** ~~On the other hand, a period during which an individual is present in a State for the purpose of performing such services would normally be any period of presence computed by reference to the principles applicable for the purposes of subparagraph 2 a) of Article 15, but taking into account the periods of presence when the individual has travelled to a State for purpose of~~

~~performing the services. Since local employees hired for purposes of a specific project could generally not be considered to be present in a State for purposes of performing services in that State, their periods of services would most often be covered by the part of the subparagraph that deals with a period during which the services are actually provided rather than to the part that deals with periods of presence for purposes of performing such services.~~

**42.43** *As indicated in paragraph 42.32, for the purposes of the alternative provision, the individuals through whom an enterprise provides services will be the individuals referred to in paragraph 10 above. If, however, an individual is providing the services on behalf of one enterprise, the exception included in the last sentence of the provision clarifies that the services performed by that individual will only be taken into account for another enterprise if the work of that individual is exercised under the supervision, direction or control of the last-mentioned enterprise. Thus, for example, where a company that has agreed by contract to provide services to third parties provides these services through the employees of a separate enterprise (e.g. an enterprise providing outsourced services), the services performed through these employees will not be taken into account for purposes of the application of subparagraph b) to the company that entered into the contract to provide services to third parties.*

**42.44** *The following examples illustrate the application of subparagraph b) (assuming that the alternative provision has been included in a treaty between States R and S):*

- *Example 1: X, a company resident of State R, has agreed with company Y to carry on geological surveys in various locations in State S where company Y owns exploration rights. Between 15 May 00 and 14 May 01, these surveys are carried on over 185 working days by employees of X as well as by self-employed individuals to whom X has sub-contracted part of the work but who work under the direction, supervision or control of X. Since subparagraph b) applies in that situation, these services shall be deemed to be performed through a permanent establishment of X in State S.*
- *Example 2: Y, a resident of State T, is one of the two shareholders and employees of WYCO, a company resident of State R that provides training services. Between 10 June 00 and 9 June 01, Y performs services in State S under a contract that WYCO has concluded with a company which is a resident of State S to train the employees of that company. These services are performed in State S over 185 working days. During the period of Y's presence in State S, the revenues from these services account for 40% of the gross revenues of WYCO from its active business activities. Whilst subparagraph a) does not apply in that situation, subparagraph b) applies and these services shall be deemed to be performed through a permanent establishment of WYCO in State S.*
- *Example 3: ZCO, a resident of State R, has outsourced to company OCO, which is a resident of State S, the technical support that it provides by telephone to its clients. OCO operates a call center for a number of companies similar to ZCO. During the period of 1 January 00 to 31 December 00, the employees of OCO provide technical support to various clients of ZCO. Since the employees of OCO are not under the supervision, direction or control of ZCO, it cannot be considered, for the purposes of subparagraph b), that ZCO is performing services in State S through these employees. Additionally, whilst the services provided by OCO's employees to the various clients of ZCO are similar, these are provided under different contracts concluded by ZCO with unrelated clients: these services cannot, therefore, be considered to be rendered for the same or connected projects.*

**42.45**~~42.42~~ *The 183-day*~~The 183 days~~ thresholds provided for in the alternative provision may give rise to the same type of abuse as is described in paragraph 18 above. As indicated in that paragraph, legislative or judicial anti-avoidance rules may apply to prevent such abuses. Some States, however,

may prefer to deal with them by including a specific provision in the Article. Such a provision could be drafted along the following lines:

For the purposes of paragraph [x], where an enterprise of a Contracting State that is performing services in the other Contracting State is, during a period of time, associated with another enterprise that performs substantially similar services in that other State for the same project or for connected projects through one or more individuals who, during that period, are **present and** performing such services in that State, ~~or are present in that State for the purpose of performing these similar services,~~ the first-mentioned enterprise shall be deemed, during that period of time, to be performing services in the other State for that same project or for connected projects through these individuals. For the purpose of the preceding sentence, an enterprise shall be associated with another enterprise if one is controlled directly or indirectly by the other, or both are controlled directly or indirectly by the same persons, regardless of whether or not these persons are residents of one of the Contracting States.

~~42.4642-43~~ According to the provision, the activities carried on in the other State by the individuals referred to in subparagraph a) or b) through which the services are performed by the enterprise during the period or periods referred to in these subparagraphs are deemed to be carried on through a permanent establishment that the enterprise has in that other State. The enterprise is therefore deemed to have a permanent establishment in that other State for the purposes of all the provisions of the Convention (including, for example, paragraph 5 of Article 11 and paragraph 2 of Article 15) and the profits derived from the activities carried on in the other State in providing these services are attributable to that permanent establishment and are therefore taxable in that State pursuant to Article 7.

~~42.4742-44~~ By deeming the activities carried on in performing the relevant services to be carried on through a permanent establishment that the enterprise has in a Contracting State, the provision allows the application of Article 7 and therefore, the taxation, by that State, of the profits attributable to these activities. As a general rule, it is important to ensure that only the profits derived from the activities carried on in performing the services are taxed; whilst there may be certain exceptions, it would be detrimental to the cross-border trade in services if payments received for these services were taxed regardless of the **direct or indirect** expenses incurred for the purpose of performing these services.

~~42.4842-45~~ This alternative provision will not apply if the services performed are limited to those mentioned in paragraph 4 of the Article 5 which, if performed through a fixed place of business, would not make this fixed place of business a permanent establishment under the provisions of that paragraph. Since the provision refers to the performance of services by the enterprise and this would not cover services provided to the enterprise itself, most of the provisions of paragraph 4 would not appear to be relevant. It may be, however, that the services that are performed are exclusively of a preparatory or auxiliary character (e.g. the supply of information to prospective customers when this is merely preparatory to the conduct of the ordinary business activities of the enterprise; see paragraph 23 above) and in that case, it is logical not to consider that the performance of these services will constitute a permanent establishment.



## ANNEX 2

### CHANGES MADE TO THE REVISED COMMENTARY ON ARTICLE 7 (RELEASED IN DRAFT FORM IN MAY 2007)

#### I. Preliminary remarks

1. This Article is in many respects a continuation of, and a corollary to, Article 5 on the definition of the concept of permanent establishment. The permanent establishment criterion is commonly used in international double taxation conventions to determine whether a particular kind of income shall or shall not be taxed in the country from which it originates but the criterion does not of itself provide a complete solution to the problem of the double taxation of business profits; in order to prevent such double taxation it is necessary to supplement the definition of permanent establishment by adding to it an agreed set of rules by reference to which the profits attributable to the permanent establishment are to be calculated. To put the matter in a slightly different way, when an enterprise of a Contracting State carries on business in the other Contracting State the authorities of that second State have to ask themselves two questions before they levy tax on the profits of the enterprise: the first question is whether the enterprise has a permanent establishment in their country; if the answer is in the affirmative the second question is what, if any, are the profits on which that permanent establishment should pay tax. It is with the rules to be used in determining the answer to this second question that Article 7 is concerned. Rules for ascertaining the profits of an enterprise of a Contracting State which is trading with an enterprise of the other Contracting State when both enterprises are associated are dealt with in Article 9.

2. Articles 7 and 9 are not particularly detailed and were not strikingly novel when they were adopted by the OECD. The question of what criteria should be used in attributing profits to a permanent establishment, and of how to allocate profits from transactions between associated enterprises, has had to be dealt with in a large number of double taxation conventions and in various models developed by the League of Nations before the OECD first dealt with it and the solutions adopted have generally conformed to a standard pattern.

3. It is generally recognised that the essential principles on which this standard pattern is based are well founded, and, when the OECD first examined that question, it was thought sufficient to restate them with some slight amendments and modifications primarily aimed at producing greater clarity. The two Articles incorporate a number of directives. They do not, nor in the nature of things could they be expected to, lay down a series of precise rules for dealing with every kind of problem that may arise when an enterprise of one State makes profits in another. Modern commerce organises itself in an infinite variety of ways, and it would be quite impossible within the fairly narrow limits of an Article in a double taxation convention to specify an exhaustive set of rules for dealing with every kind of problem that may arise.

4. It must be acknowledged, however, that there has been considerable variation in the interpretation of the general directives of Article 7 and of the provisions of earlier conventions and models on which the wording of the Article is based. This lack of a common interpretation of Article

7 can lead to problems of double taxation and non-taxation. For that reason, it is important for tax authorities to agree on mutually consistent methods of dealing with these problems, using, where appropriate, the mutual agreement procedure provided for in Article 25.

5. Over the years, the Committee on Fiscal Affairs has therefore spent considerable time and effort trying to ensure a more consistent interpretation and application of the rules of the Article. Minor changes to the wording of the Article and a number of changes to the Commentary were made when the 1977 Model Tax Convention was adopted. A report that addressed that question in the specific case of banks was published in 1984.<sup>10</sup> In 1987, noting that the determination of profits attributable to a permanent establishment could give rise to some uncertainty, the Committee undertook a review of the question which led to the adoption, in 1993, of the report entitled “Attribution of Income to Permanent Establishments”<sup>11</sup> and to subsequent changes to the Commentary.

6. Despite that work, the practices of OECD and non-OECD countries regarding the attribution of profits to permanent establishments and these countries’ interpretation of Article 7 continued to vary considerably. The Committee acknowledged the need to provide more certainty to taxpayers: in its report “Transfer Pricing Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and Tax Administrations”, adopted in 1995, it indicated that further work would address the application of the arm’s length principle to permanent establishments. That work resulted, in **2008**,~~[2007]~~, in a report entitled “Attribution of Profits to Permanent Establishments”. The approach developed in that report was not constrained by either the original intent or by the historical practice and interpretation of Article 7. Instead, the focus has been on formulating the most preferable approach to attributing profits to a permanent establishment under Article 7 given modern-day multinational operations and trade.

7. The approach put forward in that Report deals with the attribution of profits both to permanent establishments in general (Part I of the Report) and, in particular, to permanent establishments of businesses operating in the financial sector, where trading through a permanent establishment is widespread (Part II of the Report, which deals with permanent establishments of banks, ~~and~~ Part III, which deals with permanent establishments of enterprises carrying on global trading **and Part IV, which deals with permanent establishments of enterprises carrying on insurance activities**). The Committee considers that the guidance included in the Report represents a better approach to attributing profits to permanent establishments than has previously been available. It does recognise, however, that there are differences between some of the conclusions of the Report and the interpretation of the Article previously given in this Commentary. For that reason, this Commentary has been amended to incorporate a number of conclusions of the Report that did not conflict with the previous version of this Commentary, which prescribed specific approaches in some areas and left considerable leeway in others. The Report therefore represents internationally agreed principles and, to the extent that it does not conflict with this Commentary, provides guidelines for the application of the arm's length principle incorporated in the Article.

8. Before 2000, income from professional services and other activities of an independent character was dealt with under a separate Article, i.e. Article 14. The provisions of that Article were similar to those applicable to business profits but it used the concept of fixed base rather than that of permanent establishment since it had originally been thought that the latter concept should be reserved

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10. *“The Taxation of Multinational Banking Enterprises”, in Transfer Pricing and Multinational Enterprises - Three Taxation Issues, OECD, Paris, 1984.*
2. *Attribution of Income to Permanent Establishments, Issues in International Taxation No. 5, OECD, Paris, 1994; reproduced in Volume II of the loose-leaf version of the OECD Model Tax Convention at page R(13)-1.*

to commercial and industrial activities. However, it was not always clear which activities fell within Article 14 as opposed to Article 7. The elimination of Article 14 in 2000 reflected the fact that there were no intended differences between the concepts of permanent establishment, as used in Article 7, and fixed base, as used in Article 14, or between how profits were computed and tax was calculated according to which of Article 7 or 14 applied. The effect of the deletion of Article 14 is that income derived from professional services or other activities of an independent character is now dealt with under Article 7 as business profits. This was confirmed by the addition of a definition of the term “business” which expressly provides that this term includes professional services or other activities of an independent character.

## II. Commentary on the provisions of the Article

### *Paragraph 1*

9. This paragraph is concerned with two questions. First, it restates the generally accepted principle of double taxation conventions that an enterprise of one State shall not be taxed in the other State unless it carries on business in that other State through a permanent establishment situated therein. It is hardly necessary to argue here the merits of this principle. It is perhaps sufficient to say that it has come to be accepted in international fiscal matters that until an enterprise of one State sets up a permanent establishment in another State it should not properly be regarded as participating in the economic life of that other State to such an extent that it comes within the jurisdiction of that other State’s taxing rights.

10. The second *principle, which* point is *reflected* laid down in the second sentence ~~÷ when an enterprise carries on business through a permanent establishment in another State, that State may tax the profits of the~~ *paragraph*, enterprise but only so much of them as is *that* attributable to the permanent establishment; in other words, the right to tax *of the State where the permanent establishment is situated* does not extend to profits that the enterprise may derive from that State *but that are not attributable to* otherwise than through the permanent establishment. This is a question on which there have historically been differences of view, *a few some* countries having *some time ago* occasionally pursued a principle of general “force of attraction” according to which income such as other business profits, dividends, interest and royalties arising from sources in their territory was fully taxable by them if the beneficiary had a permanent establishment therein even though such income was clearly not attributable to that permanent establishment. Whilst some bilateral tax conventions include a limited anti-avoidance rule based on a restricted force of attraction approach that only applies to business profits derived from activities similar to those carried on by a permanent establishment, the general force of attraction approach *described above* has now been rejected. The principle that is now generally accepted in double taxation conventions is based on the view that in taxing the profits that a foreign enterprise derives from a particular country, the *tax* fiscal authorities of that country should look at the separate sources of profit that the enterprise derives from their country and should apply to each the permanent establishment *test, subject* test. This is of course without prejudice to *the possible application of* other Articles *of the Convention*. This solution *allows simpler* is conducive to simple and *more* efficient *tax* administration *and compliance*, and is more closely adapted to the way in which business is commonly *carried on* transacted. The organisation of modern business is highly complex. There are a considerable number of companies each of which is engaged in a wide diversity of activities and is carrying on business extensively in many countries. ~~It may be that such a company may have set up a permanent establishment in another second country and may be transacting a considerable amount of business through~~ *which it carries on manufacturing activities whilst* that permanent establishment in one particular kind of manufacture; that a different part of the same company *sells* may be selling quite different goods or manufactures in that *other second* country through independent *agents*. *That*

agents; and that the company may have perfectly *valid commercial* genuine reasons for *doing so: these may be* taking this course, reasons based, for example, either on the historical pattern of its business or on commercial convenience. *If the country in which* Is it desirable that the *permanent establishment is situated wished to* fiscal authorities should go so far as to *try* insist on trying to *determine, and tax,* search out the profit element of each of the transactions carried on through independent agents, with a view to aggregating that profit with the profits of the permanent *establishment, that* establishment? Such an approach would interfere seriously with ordinary commercial *activities* processes, and would be contrary to the aims of the Convention.

11. When referring to the part of the profits of an enterprise that is attributable to a permanent establishment, the second sentence of paragraph 1 refers directly to paragraph 2, which provides the directive for determining what profits should be attributed to a permanent establishment. As paragraph 2 is part of the context in which the sentence must be read, that sentence should not be interpreted in a way that could contradict paragraph 2, e.g. by interpreting it as restricting the amount of profits that can be attributed to a permanent establishment to the amount of profits of the enterprise as a whole. Thus, whilst paragraph 1 provides that a Contracting State may only tax the profits of an enterprise of the other Contracting to the extent that they are attributable to a permanent establishment situated in the first State, it is paragraph 2 that determines the meaning of the phrase “profits attributable to a permanent establishment”. In other words, the directive of paragraph 2 may result in profits being attributed to a permanent establishment even though the enterprise as a whole has never made profits; *conversely, that directive may result in no profits being attributed to a permanent establishment even though the enterprise as a whole has made profits.*

12. Clearly, however, the Contracting State of the enterprise has an interest in the directive of paragraph 2 being correctly applied by the State where the permanent establishment is located. Since that directive applies to both Contracting States, the State of the enterprise must, in accordance with Article 23, eliminate double taxation on the profits properly attributable to the permanent establishment. In other words, if the State where the permanent establishment is located attempts to tax profits that are not attributable to the permanent establishment under Article 7, this may result in double taxation of profits that should properly be taxed only in the State of the enterprise.

13. The purpose of paragraph 1 is to provide limits to the right of one Contracting State to tax the business profits of enterprises of the other Contracting State. The paragraph does not limit the right of a Contracting State to tax its own residents under controlled foreign companies provisions found in its domestic law even though such tax imposed on these residents may be computed by reference to the part of the profits of an enterprise that is resident of the other Contracting State that is attributable to these residents’ participation in that enterprise. Tax so levied by a State on its own residents does not reduce the profits of the enterprise of the other State and may not, therefore, be said to have been levied on such profits (see also paragraph 23 of the Commentary on Article 1 and paragraphs 37 to 39 of the Commentary on Article 10).

#### *Paragraph 2*

14. This paragraph contains the central directive on which the attribution of profits to a permanent establishment is intended to be based. The paragraph incorporates the view that the profits to be attributed to a permanent establishment are those which that permanent establishment would have made if, instead of dealing with the rest of the enterprise, it had been dealing with an entirely separate enterprise under conditions and at prices prevailing in the ordinary market. This corresponds to the “arm’s length principle” discussed in the Commentary on Article 9. Normally, the profits so determined would be the same profits that one would expect to be determined by the ordinary processes of good business accountancy.

**15.** *The paragraph requires that this principle be applied in each Contracting State. Clearly, this does not mean that the amount on which the enterprise will be taxed in the source State will, for a given period of time, be exactly the same as the amount of income with respect to which the other State will have to provide relief pursuant to Articles 23 A or 23 B. Variations between the domestic laws of the two States concerning matters such as depreciation rates, the timing of the recognition of income and restrictions on the deductibility of certain expenses that are in accordance with paragraph 3 of this Article will normally result in a different amount of taxable income in each State.*

~~16.~~ In the great majority of cases, trading accounts of the permanent establishment — which are commonly available if only because a well-run business organisation is normally concerned to know what is the profitability of its various branches — will be used to ascertain the profit properly attributable to that establishment. Exceptionally there may be no separate accounts (cf. paragraphs ~~5146~~ to ~~5550~~ below). But where there are such accounts they will naturally form the starting point for any processes of adjustment in case adjustment is required to produce the amount of profits that are properly attributable to the permanent establishment under the directive contained in paragraph 2. It should perhaps be emphasized that this directive is no justification to construct hypothetical profit figures *in vacuo*; it is always necessary to start with the real facts of the situation as they appear from the business records of the permanent establishment and to adjust as may be shown to be necessary the profit figures which those facts produce. As noted in paragraph 19 below and as explained in paragraph 39 of Part I of the Report “Attribution of Profits to Permanent Establishments”, however, records and documentation must satisfy certain requirements in order to be considered to reflect the real facts of the situation.

~~17.~~ In order to determine whether such an adjustment is required by paragraph 2, it will be necessary to determine the profits that would have been realized if the permanent establishment had been a separate and distinct enterprise engaged in the same or similar activities under the same or similar conditions and dealing wholly independently with the rest of the enterprise. Sections D-2 and D-3 of Part I of the Report “Attribution of Profits to Permanent Establishments” describe the two-step approach through which this should be done. This approach will allow the calculation of the profits attributable to all the activities carried on through the permanent establishment, including transactions with other unrelated enterprises, transactions with related enterprises and dealings (e.g. the internal transfer of capital or property or the internal provision of services – see for instance paragraphs 31 and 32) with other parts of the enterprise (under the second step described above), in accordance with the directive of paragraph 2.

~~18.~~ The first step of that approach requires the identification of the activities carried on through the permanent establishment. This should be done through a functional and factual analysis (the guidance found in the *Transfer Pricing Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and Tax Administrations*<sup>12</sup> will be relevant for that purpose). Under that first step, the economically significant activities and responsibilities undertaken through the permanent establishment will be identified. This analysis should, to the extent relevant, consider the activities and responsibilities undertaken through the permanent establishment in the context of the activities and responsibilities undertaken by the enterprise as a whole, particularly those parts of the enterprise that engage in dealings with the permanent establishment. Under the second step of that approach, the remuneration of any such dealings will be determined by applying by analogy the principles developed for the application of

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12. *The original version of that report was approved by the Council of the OECD on 27 June 1995. Published in a loose-leaf format as Transfer Pricing Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and Tax Administrations, OECD, Paris, 1995.*

the arm's length principle between associated enterprises (these principles are articulated in the *Transfer Pricing Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and Tax Administrations*) by reference to the functions performed, assets used, and risk assumed by the enterprise through the permanent establishment and through the rest of the enterprise.

~~19.18.~~ A question that may arise is to what extent accounting records should be relied upon when they are based on agreements between the head office and its permanent establishments (or between the permanent establishments themselves). Clearly, such internal agreements cannot qualify as legally binding contracts. However, to the extent that the trading accounts of the head office and the permanent establishments are both prepared symmetrically on the basis of such agreements and that those agreements reflect the functions performed by the different parts of the enterprise, these trading accounts could be accepted by tax authorities. Accounts should not be regarded as prepared symmetrically, however, unless the values of transactions or the methods of attributing profits or expenses in the books of the permanent establishment corresponded exactly to the values or methods of attribution in the books of the head office in terms of the national currency or functional currency in which the enterprise recorded its transactions. Also, as explained in paragraph ~~1615~~, records and documentation must satisfy certain requirements in order to be considered to reflect the real facts of the situation. For example, where trading accounts are based on internal agreements that reflect purely artificial arrangements instead of the real economic functions of the different parts of the enterprise, these agreements should simply be ignored and the accounts corrected accordingly. One such case would be where a permanent establishment involved in sales were, under such an internal agreement, given the role of principal (accepting all the risks and entitled to all the profits from the sales) when in fact the permanent establishment concerned was nothing more than an intermediary or agent (incurring limited risks and entitled to receive only a limited share of the resulting income) or, conversely, were given the role of intermediary or agent when in reality it was a principal.

~~20.19.~~ It may therefore be concluded that accounting records and contemporaneous documentation that meet the above-mentioned requirements constitute a useful starting point for the purposes of attributing profits to a permanent establishment. Taxpayers are encouraged to prepare such documentation, as it may reduce substantially the potential for controversies. Section D-2 (vi) b) of Part I of the Report "Attribution of Profits" discusses the conditions under which tax administrations would give effect to such documentation.

~~21.20.~~ There may be a realisation of a taxable profit when an asset, whether or not trading stock, forming part of the business property of a permanent establishment situated within a State's territory is transferred to a permanent establishment or the head office of the same enterprise situated in another State. Article 7 allows the former State to tax profits deemed to arise in connection with such a transfer. Such profits may be determined as indicated below. In cases where such transfer takes place, whether or not it is a permanent one, the question arises as to when taxable profits are realised. In practice, where such property has a substantial market value and is likely to appear on the balance sheet of the importing permanent establishment or other part of the enterprise after the taxation year during that in which the transfer occurred, the realisation of the taxable profits will not, so far as the enterprise as a whole is concerned, necessarily take place in the taxation year of the transfer under consideration. However, the mere fact that the property leaves the purview of a tax jurisdiction may trigger the taxation of the accrued gains attributable to that property as the concept of realisation depends on each country's domestic law.

~~22.21.~~ Where the countries in which the permanent establishments operate levy tax on the profits accruing from an internal transfer as soon as it is made, even when these profits are not actually realised until a subsequent commercial year, there will be inevitably a time lag between the moment when tax is paid abroad and the moment it can be taken into account in the country where the

enterprise's head office is located. A serious problem is inherent in the time lag, especially when a permanent establishment transfers fixed assets or — in the event that it is wound up — its entire operating equipment stock, to some other part of the enterprise of which it forms part. In such cases, it is up to the head office country to seek, on a case by case basis, a bilateral solution with the outward country where there is serious risk of overtaxation.

**23. Paragraph 3 of Article 5 sets forth a special rule for a fixed place of business that is a building site or a construction or installation project. Such a fixed place of business is a permanent establishment only if it lasts more than twelve months. Experience has shown that these types of permanent establishments can give rise to special problems in attributing income to them under Article 7.**

**24. These problems arise chiefly where goods are provided, or services performed, by the other parts of the enterprise or a related party in connection with the building site or construction or installation project. Whilst these problems can arise with any permanent establishment, they are particularly acute for building sites and construction or installation projects. In these circumstances, it is necessary to pay close attention to the general principle that income is attributable to a permanent establishment only when it results from activities carried on by the enterprise through that permanent establishment.**

**25. For example, where such goods are supplied by the other parts of the enterprise, the profits arising from that supply do not result from the activities carried on through the permanent establishment and are not attributable to it. Similarly, profits resulting from the provision of services (such as planning, designing, drawing blueprints, or rendering technical advice) by the parts of the enterprise operating outside the State where the permanent establishment is located do not result from the activities carried on through the permanent establishment and are not attributable to it.**

~~26.22.~~ Where, under paragraph 5 of Article 5, a permanent establishment of an enterprise of a Contracting State is deemed to exist in the other Contracting State by reason of the activities of a so-called dependent agent (see paragraph 32 of the Commentary on Article 5), the same principles used to attribute profits to other types of permanent establishment will apply to attribute profits to that deemed permanent establishment. As a first step, the activities that the dependent agent undertakes for the enterprise will be identified through a functional and factual analysis that will determine the functions undertaken by the dependent agent both on its own account and on behalf of the enterprise. The dependent agent and the enterprise on behalf of which it is acting constitute two separate potential taxpayers. On the one hand, the dependent agent will derive its own income or profits from the activities that it performs on its own account for the enterprise; if the agent is itself a resident of either Contracting State, the provisions of the Convention (including Article 9 if that agent is an enterprise associated to the enterprise on behalf of which it is acting) will be relevant to the taxation of such income or profits. On the other hand, the deemed permanent establishment of the enterprise will be attributed the assets and risks of the enterprise relating to the functions performed by the dependent agent on behalf of that enterprise (i.e. the activities that the dependent agent undertakes for that enterprise), together with sufficient capital to support those assets and risks. Profits will then be attributed to the deemed permanent establishment on the basis of those assets, risks and capital; these profits will be separate from, and will not include, the income or profits that are properly attributable to the dependent agent itself (see section D-5 of Part I of the Report “Attribution of Profits to Permanent Establishments”).

*Paragraph 3*

**27.23-** This paragraph clarifies, in relation to the expenses of a permanent establishment, the general directive laid down in paragraph 2. The paragraph specifically recognises that in calculating the profits of a permanent establishment allowance is to be made for expenses, wherever incurred, that were incurred for the purposes of the permanent establishment. Clearly in some cases it will be necessary to estimate or to calculate by conventional means the amount of expenses to be taken into account. In the case, for example, of general administrative expenses incurred at the head office of the enterprise, it may be appropriate to take into account a proportionate part based on the ratio that the permanent establishment's turnover (or perhaps gross profits) bears to that of the enterprise as a whole. Subject to this, it is considered that the amount of expenses to be taken into account as incurred for the purposes of the permanent establishment should be the actual amount so incurred. The deduction allowable to the permanent establishment for any of the expenses of the enterprise attributed to it does not depend upon the actual reimbursement of such expenses by the permanent establishment.

**28.24-** It has sometimes been suggested that the need to reconcile paragraphs 2 and 3 created practical difficulties as paragraph 2 required that prices between the permanent establishment and the head office be normally charged on an arm's length basis, giving to the transferring entity the type of profit which it might have been expected to make were it dealing with an independent enterprise, whilst the wording of paragraph 3 suggested that the deduction for expenses incurred for the purposes of permanent establishments should be the actual cost of those expenses, normally without adding any profit element.

**29.25-** In fact, whilst the application of paragraph 3 may raise some practical difficulties, especially in relation to the separate enterprise and arm's length principles underlying paragraph 2, there is no difference of principle between the two paragraphs. Paragraph 3 indicates that in determining the profits of a permanent establishment, certain expenses must be allowed as deductions whilst paragraph 2 provides that the profits determined in accordance with the rule contained in paragraph 3 relating to the deduction of expenses must be those that a separate and distinct enterprise engaged in the same or similar activities under the same or similar conditions would have made. Thus, whilst paragraph 3 provides a rule applicable for the determination of the profits of the permanent establishment, paragraph 2 requires that the profits so determined correspond to the profits that a separate and independent enterprise would have made.

**30.26-** Also, paragraph 3 only determines which expenses should be attributed to the permanent establishment for purposes of determining the profits attributable to that permanent establishment. It does not deal with the issue of whether those expenses, once attributed, are deductible when computing the taxable income of the permanent establishment since the conditions for the deductibility of expenses are a matter to be determined by domestic law, ***subject to the rules of Article 24 on Non-discrimination (in particular, paragraphs 3 and 4 of that Article).***

**31.27-** In applying these principles to the practical determination of the profits of a permanent establishment, the question may arise as to whether a particular cost incurred by an enterprise can truly be considered as an expense incurred for the purposes of the permanent establishment, keeping in mind the separate and independent enterprise principles of paragraph 2. Whilst in general independent enterprises in their dealings with each other will seek to realise a profit and, when transferring property or providing services to each other, will charge such prices as the open market would bear, nevertheless, there are also circumstances where it cannot be considered that a particular property or service would have been obtainable from an independent enterprise or when independent enterprises may agree to share between them the costs of some activity which is pursued in common for their mutual benefit. In these particular circumstances, it may be appropriate to treat any relevant costs incurred by the enterprise as an expense incurred for the permanent establishment. The difficulty arises in making a distinction between these circumstances and the cases where a cost incurred by



an enterprise should not be considered as an expense of the permanent establishment and the relevant property or service should be considered, on the basis of the separate and independent enterprises principle, to have been transferred between the head office and the permanent establishment at a price including an element of profit. The question must be whether the internal transfer of property and services, be it temporary or final, is of the same kind as those which the enterprise, in the normal course of its business, would have charged to a third party at an arm's length price, i.e. by normally including in the sale price an appropriate profit.

**32.28.** On the one hand, the answer to that question will be in the affirmative if the expense is initially incurred in performing a function the direct purpose of which is to make sales of a specific good or service and to realise a profit through a permanent establishment. On the other hand, the answer will be in the negative if, on the basis of the facts and circumstances of the specific case, it appears that the expense is initially incurred in performing a function the essential purpose of which is to rationalise the overall costs of the enterprise or to increase in a general way its sales.<sup>13</sup>

**33.29.** Where goods are supplied for resale whether in a finished state or as raw materials or semi-finished goods, it will normally be appropriate for the provisions of paragraph 2 to apply and for the supplying part of the enterprise to be allocated a profit, measured by reference to arm's length principles. But there may be exceptions even here. One example might be where goods are not supplied for resale but for temporary use in the trade so that it may be appropriate for the parts of the enterprise which share the use of the material to bear only their share of the cost of such material e.g. in the case of machinery, the depreciation costs that relate to its use by each of these parts. It should of course be remembered that the mere purchase of goods does not constitute a permanent establishment (subparagraph 4 *d*) of Article 5) so that no question of attribution of profit arises in such circumstances.

**34.30.** In the case of intangible rights, the rules concerning the relations between enterprises of the same group (e.g. payment of royalties or cost sharing arrangements) cannot be applied in respect of the relations between parts of the same enterprise. Indeed, it may be extremely difficult to allocate "ownership" of the intangible right solely to one part of the enterprise and to argue that this part of the enterprise should receive royalties from the other parts as if it were an independent enterprise. Since there is only one legal entity it is not possible to allocate legal ownership to any particular part of the enterprise and in practical terms it will often be difficult to allocate the costs of creation exclusively to one part of the enterprise. It may therefore be preferable for the costs of creation of intangible rights to be regarded as attributable to all parts of the enterprise which will make use of them and as incurred on behalf of the various parts of the enterprise to which they are relevant accordingly. In such circumstances it would be appropriate to allocate between the various parts of the enterprise the actual costs of the creation or acquisition of such intangible rights, as well as the costs subsequently incurred with respect to these intangible rights, without any mark-up for profit or royalty. In so doing, tax authorities must be aware of the fact that the possible adverse consequences deriving from any research and development activity (e.g. the responsibility related to the products and damages to the environment) shall also be allocated to the various parts of the enterprise, therefore giving rise, where appropriate, to a compensatory charge.

**35.34.** The area of services is the one in which difficulties may arise in determining whether in a particular case a service should be charged between the various parts of a single enterprise at its actual cost or at that cost plus a mark-up to represent a profit to the part of the enterprise providing the service. The trade of the enterprise, or part of it, may consist of the provision of such services and there

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13. *Internal transfers of financial assets, which are primarily relevant for banks and other financial institutions, raise specific issues which have been dealt with in Parts II and III of the Report "Attribution of Profits to Permanent Establishments".*

may be a standard charge for their provision. In such a case it will usually be appropriate to charge a service at the same rate as is charged to the outside customer.

**36.32-** Where the main activity of a permanent establishment is to provide specific services to the enterprise to which it belongs and where these services provide a real advantage to the enterprise and their costs represent a significant part of the expenses of the enterprise, the host country may require that a profit margin be included in the amount of the costs. As far as possible, the host country should then try to avoid schematic solutions and rely on the value of these services in the given circumstances of each case.

**37.33-** However, more commonly the provision of services is merely part of the general management activity of the company taken as a whole as where, for example, the enterprise conducts a common system of training and employees of each part of the enterprise benefit from it. In such a case it would usually be appropriate to treat the cost of providing the service as being part of the general administrative expenses of the enterprise as a whole which should be allocated on an actual cost basis to the various parts of the enterprise to the extent that the costs are incurred for the purposes of that part of the enterprise, without any mark-up to represent profit to another part of the enterprise.

**38.34-** The treatment of services performed in the course of the general management of an enterprise raises the question whether any part of the total profits of an enterprise should be deemed to arise from the exercise of good management. Consider the case of a company that has its head office in one country but carries on all its business through a permanent establishment situated in another country. In the extreme case it might well be that only the directors' meetings were held at the head office and that all other activities of the company apart from purely formal legal activities, were carried on in the permanent establishment. In such a case there is something to be said for the view that at least part of the profits of the whole enterprise arose from the skilful management and business acumen of the directors and that part of the profits of the enterprise ought, therefore, to be attributed to the country in which the head office was situated. If the company had been managed by a managing agency, then that agency would doubtless have charged a fee for its services and the fee might well have been a simple percentage participation in the profits of the enterprise. But whatever the theoretical merits of such a course, practical considerations weigh heavily against it. In the kind of case quoted the expenses of management would, of course, be set against the profits of the permanent establishment in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 3, but when the matter is looked at as a whole, it is thought that it would not be right to go further by deducting and taking into account some notional figure for "profits of management". In cases identical to the extreme case mentioned above, no account should therefore be taken in determining taxable profits of the permanent establishment of any notional figure such as profits of management.

**39.35-** It may be, of course, that countries where it has been customary to allocate some proportion of the total profits of an enterprise to the head office of the enterprise to represent the profits of good management will wish to continue to make such an allocation. Nothing in the Article is designed to prevent this. Nevertheless it follows from what is said in paragraph ~~3834~~ above that a country in which a permanent establishment is situated is in no way required to deduct when calculating the profits attributable to that permanent establishment an amount intended to represent a proportionate part of the profits of management attributable to the head office.

**40.36-** It might well be that if the country in which the head office of an enterprise is situated allocates to the head office some percentage of the profits of the enterprise only in respect of good management, ~~while~~ *whilst* the country in which the permanent establishment is situated does not, the resulting total of the amounts charged to tax in the two countries would be greater than it should be. In any such case the country in which the head office of the enterprise is situated should take the initiative in arranging for

such adjustments to be made in computing the taxation liability in that country as may be necessary to ensure that any double taxation is eliminated.

~~41.37.~~ The treatment of interest charges raises particular issues. First, there might be amounts which, under the name of interest, are charged by a head office to its permanent establishment with respect to internal “loans” by the former to the latter. Except for financial enterprises such as banks, it is generally agreed that such internal “interest” need not be recognised. This is because:

- From the legal standpoint, the transfer of capital against payment of interest and an undertaking to repay in full at the due date is really a formal act incompatible with the true legal nature of a permanent establishment.
- From the economic standpoint, internal debts and receivables may prove to be non-existent, since if an enterprise is solely or predominantly equity-funded it ought not to be allowed to deduct interest charges that it has manifestly not had to pay. ~~While~~ *Whilst*, admittedly, symmetrical charges and returns will not distort the enterprise’s overall profits, partial results may well be arbitrarily changed.

~~42.38.~~ For these reasons, the ban on deductions for internal debts and receivables should continue to apply generally, subject to the special situation of banks, as mentioned below.

~~43.39.~~ A different issue, however, is that of the deduction of interest on debts actually incurred by the enterprise. Such debts may relate in whole or in part to the activities of the permanent establishment; indeed, loans contracted by an enterprise will serve either the head office, the permanent establishment or both. The question that arises in relation to these debts is how to determine the part of the interest that should be deducted in computing the profits attributable to the permanent establishment.

~~44.40.~~ The approach suggested in this Commentary before 1994, namely the direct and indirect apportionment of actual debt charges, did not prove to be a practical solution, notably since it was unlikely to be applied in a uniform manner. Also, it is well known that the indirect apportionment of total interest payment charges, or of the part of interest that remains after certain direct allocations, comes up against practical difficulties. It is also well known that direct apportionment of total interest expense may not accurately reflect the cost of financing the permanent establishment because the taxpayer may be able to control where loans are booked and adjustments may need to be made to reflect economic reality, in particular the fact that an independent enterprise would normally be expected to have a certain level of “free” capital.

~~45.41.~~ Consequently, the majority of Member countries consider that it would be preferable to look for a practicable solution that would take into account a capital structure appropriate to both the organization and the functions performed. This appropriate capital structure will take account of the fact that in order to carry out its activities, the permanent establishment requires a certain amount of funding made up of “free” capital and interest-bearing debt. The objective is therefore to attribute an arm’s length amount of interest to the permanent establishment after attributing an appropriate amount of “free” capital in order to support the functions, assets and risks of the permanent establishment. Under the arm’s length principle a permanent establishment should have sufficient capital to support the functions it undertakes, the assets it economically owns, and the risks it assumes. In the financial sector regulations stipulate minimum levels of regulatory capital to provide a cushion in the event that some of the risks inherent in the business crystallise into financial loss. Capital provides a similar cushion against crystallisation of risk in non-financial sectors.

~~46.42.~~ As explained in section D-2 (v) b) *of Part I* of the Report “Attribution of Profits to Permanent Establishments”, there are different acceptable approaches for attributing “free” capital that are capable of giving an arm’s length result. Each approach has its own strengths and

weaknesses, which become more or less material depending on the facts and circumstances of particular cases. Different methods adopt different starting points for determining the amount of “free” capital attributable to a permanent establishment, which either put more emphasis on the actual structure of the enterprise of which the permanent establishment is a part or alternatively, on the capital structures of comparable independent enterprises. The key to attributing “free” capital is to recognise:

- the existence of strengths and weaknesses in any approach and when these are likely to be present;
- that there is no single arm’s length amount of “free capital”, but a range of potential capital attributions within which it is possible to find an amount of “free” capital that can meet the basic principle set out above.

~~47.43.~~ It is recognised, however, that the existence of different acceptable approaches for attributing “free” capital to a permanent establishment which are capable of giving an arm’s length result can give rise to problems of double taxation. The main concern, which is especially acute for financial institutions, is that if the domestic law rules of the State where the permanent establishment is located and of the State of the enterprise require different acceptable approaches for attributing an arm’s length amount of free capital to the permanent establishment, the amount of profits calculated by the State of the permanent establishment may be higher than the amount of profits calculated by the State of the enterprise for purposes of relief of double taxation.

~~48.44.~~ Given the ~~practical~~ importance of that issue, the Committee has looked for a practical solution. OECD ~~Member~~ countries have therefore agreed to accept, ***for the purposes of determining the amount of interest deduction that will be used*** in computing double taxation relief, the ~~attribution~~ quantum of ~~capital~~ the interest deduction derived from the application of the approach used by the State in which the permanent establishment is located if the following two conditions are ***met: first, met.*** ~~First, they will do so~~ if the difference in capital attribution between that State and the State of the enterprise results from conflicting domestic law choices of capital attribution ***methods, and second, if*** ~~methods. Second they will do so as long as~~ there is agreement that the State in which the permanent establishment is located has used an authorised approach to the attribution of capital and there is also agreement that that approach produces a result consistent with the arm’s length principle in the particular case. OECD ~~Member~~ countries consider that they are able to achieve that result either under their domestic law, through the interpretation of Articles 7 and 23 or under the mutual agreement procedure of Article 25 and, in particular, the possibility offered by that Article to resolve any issues concerning the application or interpretation of their tax treaties.

~~49.45.~~ As already mentioned, special considerations apply to internal interest charges on advances between different parts of a financial enterprise (e.g. a bank), in view of the fact that making and receiving advances is closely related to the ordinary business of such enterprises. This problem, as well as other problems relating to the application of Article 7 to the permanent establishments of banks and enterprises carrying on global trading, is discussed in Parts II and III of the Report “Attribution of Profits to Permanent Establishments”. -

***50. The determination of the investment assets attributable to a permanent establishment through which insurance activities are carried on also raises particular issues, which are discussed in Part IV of the Report.***

~~51.46.~~ It is usually found that there are, or there can be constructed, adequate accounts for each part or section of an enterprise so that profits and expenses, adjusted as may be necessary, can be allocated to a particular part of the enterprise with a considerable degree of precision. This method of allocation is, it is thought, to be preferred in general wherever it is reasonably practicable to adopt it. There are,

however, circumstances in which this may not be the case and paragraphs 2 and 3 are in no way intended to imply that other methods cannot properly be adopted where appropriate in order to arrive at the profits of a permanent establishment on a “separate enterprise” footing. It may well be, for example, that profits of insurance enterprises can most conveniently be ascertained by special methods of computation, e.g. by applying appropriate co-efficients to gross premiums received from policy holders in the country concerned. Again, in the case of a relatively small enterprise operating on both sides of the border between two countries, there may be no proper accounts for the permanent establishment nor means of constructing them. There may, too, be other cases where the affairs of the permanent establishment are so closely bound up with those of the head office that it would be impossible to disentangle them on any strict basis of branch accounts. Where it has been customary in such cases to estimate the arm’s length profit of a permanent establishment by reference to suitable criteria, it may well be reasonable that that method should continue to be followed, notwithstanding that the estimate thus made may not achieve as high a degree of accurate measurement of the profit as adequate accounts. Even where such a course has not been customary, it may, exceptionally, be necessary for practical reasons to estimate the arm's length profits *based on other methods*.-

#### *Paragraph 4*

**52.47-** It has in some cases been the practice to determine the profits to be attributed to a permanent establishment not on the basis of separate accounts or by making an estimate of arm’s length profit, but simply by apportioning the total profits of the enterprise by reference to various formulae. Such a method differs from those envisaged in paragraph 2, since it contemplates not an attribution of profits on a separate enterprise footing, but an apportionment of total profits; and indeed it might produce a result in figures which would differ from that which would be arrived at by a computation based on separate accounts. Paragraph 4 makes it clear that such a method may continue to be employed by a Contracting State if it has been customary in that State to adopt it, even though the figure arrived at may at times differ to some extent from that which would be obtained from separate accounts, provided that the result can fairly be said to be in accordance with the principles contained in the Article. It is emphasized, however, that in general the profits to be attributed to a permanent establishment should be determined by reference to the establishment’s accounts if these reflect the real facts. It is considered that a method of allocation which is based on apportioning total profits is generally not as appropriate as a method which has regard only to the activities of the permanent establishment and should be used only where, exceptionally, it has as a matter of history been customary in the past and is accepted in the country concerned both by the taxation authorities and taxpayers generally there as being satisfactory. It is understood that paragraph 4 may be deleted where neither State uses such a method. Where, however, Contracting States wish to be able to use a method which has not been customary in the past the paragraph should be amended during the bilateral negotiations to make this clear.

**53.48-** It would not, it is thought, be appropriate within the framework of this Commentary to attempt to discuss at length the many various methods involving apportionment of total profits that have been adopted in particular fields for allocating profits. These methods have been well documented in treatises on international taxation. It may, however, not be out of place to summarise briefly some of the main types and to lay down some very general directives for their use.

**54.49-** The essential character of a method involving apportionment of total profits is that a proportionate part of the profits of the whole enterprise is allocated to a part thereof, all parts of the enterprise being assumed to have contributed on the basis of the criterion or criteria adopted to the profitability of the whole. The difference between one such method and another arises for the most part from the varying criteria used to determine what is the correct proportion of the total profits. It is fair to say that the criteria commonly used can be grouped into three main categories, namely those which are

based on the receipts of the enterprise, its expenses or its capital structure. The first category covers allocation methods based on turnover or on commission, the second on wages and the third on the proportion of the total working capital of the enterprise allocated to each branch or part. It is not, of course, possible to say *in vacuo* that any of these methods is intrinsically more accurate than the others; the appropriateness of any particular method will depend on the circumstances to which it is applied. In some enterprises, such as those providing services or producing proprietary articles with a high profit margin, net profits will depend very much on turnover. For insurance enterprises it may be appropriate to make an apportionment of total profits by reference to premiums received from policy holders in each of the countries concerned. In the case of an enterprise manufacturing goods with a high cost raw material or labour content, profits may be found to be related more closely to expenses. In the case of banking and financial concerns the proportion of total working capital may be the most relevant criterion. It is considered that the general aim of any method involving apportionment of total profits ought to be to produce figures of taxable profit that approximate as closely as possible to the figures that would have been produced on a separate accounts basis, and that it would not be desirable to attempt in this connection to lay down any specific directive other than that it should be the responsibility of the taxation authority, in consultation with the authorities of other countries concerned, to use the method which in the light of all the known facts seems most likely to produce that result.

~~55.50-~~ The use of any method which allocates to a part of an enterprise a proportion of the total profits of the whole does, of course, raise the question of the method to be used in computing the total profits of the enterprise. This may well be a matter which will be treated differently under the laws of different countries. This is not a problem which it would seem practicable to attempt to resolve by laying down any rigid rule. It is scarcely to be expected that it would be accepted that the profits to be apportioned should be the profits as they are computed under the laws of one particular country; each country concerned would have to be given the right to compute the profits according to the provisions of its own laws.

#### *Paragraph 5*

~~56.51-~~ In paragraph 4 of Article 5 there are listed a number of examples of activities which, even though carried on at a fixed place of business, are deemed not to be included in the term “permanent establishment”. In considering rules for the allocation of profits to a permanent establishment the most important of these examples is the activity mentioned in paragraph 5 of this Article, i.e. the purchasing office.

~~57.52-~~ Paragraph 5 is not, of course, concerned with the organisation established solely for purchasing; such an organisation is not a permanent establishment and the profits allocation provisions of this Article would not therefore come into play. The paragraph is concerned with a permanent establishment which, although carrying on other business, also carries on purchasing for its head office. In such a case the paragraph provides that the profits of the permanent establishment shall not be increased by adding to them a notional figure for profits from purchasing. It follows, of course, that any expenses that arise from the purchasing activities will also be excluded in calculating the taxable profits of the permanent establishment.

#### *Paragraph 6*

~~58.53-~~ This paragraph is intended to lay down clearly that a method of allocation once used should not be changed merely because in a particular year some other method produces more favourable results. One of the purposes of a double taxation convention is to give an enterprise of a Contracting State some degree of certainty about the tax treatment that will be accorded to its permanent establishment in

the other Contracting State as well as to the part of it in its home State which is dealing with the permanent establishment; for this reason, paragraph 6 gives an assurance of continuous and consistent tax treatment.

#### *Paragraph 7*

~~59.54.~~ Although it has not been found necessary in the Convention to define the term “profits”, it should nevertheless be understood that the term when used in this Article and elsewhere in the Convention has a broad meaning including all income derived in carrying on an enterprise. Such a broad meaning corresponds to the use of the term made in the tax laws of most OECD Member countries.

~~60.55.~~ This interpretation of the term “profits”, however, may give rise to some uncertainty as to the application of the Convention. If the profits of an enterprise include categories of income which are treated separately in other Articles of the Convention, e.g. dividends, it may be asked whether the taxation of those profits is governed by the special Article on dividends, etc., or by the provisions of this Article.

~~61.56.~~ To the extent that an application of this Article and the special Article concerned would result in the same tax treatment, there is little practical significance to this question. Further, it should be noted that some of the special Articles contain specific provisions giving priority to a specific Article (cf. paragraph 4 of Article 6, paragraph 4 of Articles 10 and 11, paragraph 3 of Article 12, and paragraph 2 of Article 21).

~~62.57.~~ It has seemed desirable, however, to lay down a rule of interpretation in order to clarify the field of application of this Article in relation to the other Articles dealing with a specific category of income. In conformity with the practice generally adhered to in existing bilateral conventions, paragraph 7 gives first preference to the special Articles on dividends, interest, etc. It follows from the rule that this Article will be applicable to business profits which do not belong to categories of income covered by the special Articles, and, in addition, to dividends, interest, etc. which under paragraph 4 of Articles 10 and 11, paragraph 3 of Article 12 and paragraph 2 of Article 21, fall within this Article (cf. paragraphs 12 to 18 of the Commentary on Article 12 which discusses the principles governing whether, in the particular case of computer software, payments should be classified as income within Articles 7 or as a capital gains matter within Article 13 on the one hand or as royalties within Article 12 on the other). It is understood that the items of income covered by the special Articles may, subject to the provisions of the Convention, be taxed either separately, or as business profits, in conformity with the tax laws of the Contracting States.

~~63.58.~~ It is open to Contracting States to agree bilaterally upon special explanations or definitions concerning the term “profits” with a view to clarifying the distinction between this term and e.g. the concept of dividends. It may in particular be found appropriate to do so where in a convention under negotiation a deviation has been made from the definitions in the special Articles on dividends, interest and royalties. It may also be deemed desirable if the Contracting States wish to place on notice, that, in agreement with the domestic tax laws of one or both of the States, the term “profits” includes special classes of receipts such as income from the alienation or the letting of a business or of movable property used in a business. In this connection it may have to be considered whether it would be useful to include also additional rules for the allocation of such special profits.

~~64.59.~~ It should also be noted that, whilst the definition of “royalties” in paragraph 2 of Article 12 of the 1963 Draft Convention and 1977 Model Convention included payments “for the use of, or the right to use, industrial, commercial, or scientific equipment”, the reference to these payments was

subsequently deleted from that definition in order to ensure that income from the leasing of industrial, commercial or scientific equipment, including the income from the leasing of containers, falls under the provisions of Article 7 rather than those of Article 12, a result that the Committee on Fiscal Affairs considers to be appropriate given the nature of such income.