



HARMONIZED SYSTEM
REVIEW SUB-COMMITTEE

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21st Session
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O. Fr.

H11-6

Brussels, 17 January 2000.

AMENDMENT OF THE EXPLANATORY NOTE TO HEADING 85.25
REGARDING DIGITAL CAMERAS
(Item II.A.13 on Agenda)

Reference documents :

NR0072E2, Annex C, paragraph 94 (RSC/20 - Report)
NR0086E1
NR0093E1

I. BACKGROUND

1. After Docs. NR0086E1 and NR0093E1 had already been prepared, the Secretariat received a Note from the United States concerning possible amendments to the Explanatory Note to heading 85.25. The United States Administration's comments are reproduced below.

II. NOTE BY THE UNITED STATES

2. "The United States submits the following comments regarding the draft Explanatory Note to heading 85.25. These comments relate to the Review Sub-Committee's consideration of possible changes to the Explanatory Notes consequential upon the Article 16 Recommendation of 25 June 1999.
3. Taking note of the decision of the Review Sub-Committee, as reflected in paragraph 94 to the summary record of the 20th Session (Doc. NR0072E2), that the Explanatory Note to heading 85.25 should be amended, the United States suggests the following amendments :
4. Item (C) is amended by inserting the following at the end of the first paragraph :

"The television cameras of this group, which may also be referred to as video cameras, can produce either analogue or digital output. The cameras of this group differ from those of item (D) in that these cameras do not incorporate the ability to record and store images, while the cameras of Item (D) contain some recording and storage device."

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5. Item (D) is amended to read as follows :

**"(D) STILL IMAGE VIDEO CAMERAS AND OTHER VIDEO CAMERA RECORDERS;
DIGITAL CAMERAS**

6. This group covers video camera recorders and still image video cameras. These goods differ from the television cameras of Item (C) in that they incorporate a recording function.

7. Video camera recorders, which are commonly referred to as camcorders, consist of a video camera and a video recording or reproducing apparatus. These apparatus record sequential images taken by the camera along with audio, in a manner similar to a cinematographic camera. Certain camcorders may also record television programmes using an external television tuner. The images thus recorded can be reproduced by means of an external television receiver or video monitor. Some camcorders use an analogue recording system which records on magnetic tape; others record digitally.

8. Digital camcorders are often referred to as digital video cameras. They can have the ability to record individual images in a manner similar to a still image video camera (i.e., taken separately); however, this is not their primary function, which, like a cinematographic camera, is to record a series of sequential images (generally more than 20 complete images per second).

9. Still image video cameras capture and store images on media other than photographic film. Outwardly, the digital still image video camera, which is commonly referred to as a digital camera, often appears to be identical to a traditional photographic film-based camera. They both incorporate a viewfinder, a lens to focus the image, a button which when pressed causes the current image to be captured, and the whole is fitted into a light-tight box. However, the inner workings of a digital camera are quite different. In a photographic film camera the image capture and storage functions are both performed by the light-sensitive, silver-halide-based photographic film. In a digital camera, image capture and storage are separate functions.

10. The image capture in a digital camera is performed by a light-sensitive, electronic device, for example, a charge coupled device (CCD). The CCD is an electronic integrated circuit consisting of an array of light-sensitive elements, in which each picture element (pixel) is represented by a red, blue and green transistor. Each transistor converts light into a voltage proportional to its brightness. This voltage is passed to an analogue-to-digital converter (ADC) which translates the fluctuations of voltage into discrete binary code. The digital output of the ADC is sent to a digital signal processor (DSP) which adjusts contrast and detail, and compresses the image before sending it to the storage medium. A CMOS (complementary metal-oxide on semiconductor) sensor is another type of light-sensitive electronic device used for image capture in a digital camera.

11. The image storage medium in a digital camera may be fixed or removable. Fixed storage generally uses random access memory (RAM). Removable media include random access memory cards and magnetic storage disks similar to those used with automatic data processing machines. Digital cameras generally have provisions for connection to an automatic data processing machine for the purpose of downloading images which can then be manipulated by the automatic data processing machine and/or sent to a printer to produce the print equivalent of a photograph. They may also have provisions for connection to a TV monitor or other video device.

12. Some digital cameras have the ability to record sequential images with an accompanying audio track, in a manner similar to a camcorder. However, this recording capability is limited and it is not their primary function."

III. SECRETARIAT COMMENTS

13. The Secretariat would first point out that, at its last session, the Sub-Committee agreed that the amendment to be made to the Explanatory Note to heading 85.25 should explain the difference between digital cameras and traditional cameras.
14. In this respect, the United States Administration is putting forward an alternative proposal aimed at redrafting Items (C) and (D) to bring them up to date, rather than adding a new Item (E) to the Explanatory Note.
15. While acknowledging that the amendments put forward by the United States provide very useful information regarding the various categories of apparatus covered by the legal text of heading 85.25, the Secretariat considers that those amendments could have a wider scope than stipulated by the Sub-Committee (see paragraph 13 above).
16. The Secretariat also notes that the United States comments would seem to suggest that digital still image video cameras (French : "appareils de prise de vues fixes vidéo numériques") and digital cameras (French : "appareils photographiques numériques") are one and the same apparatus.
17. However, the two above-mentioned terms appear separately in the legal texts of heading 85.25 and subheading 8525.40. In this connection, it is also pointed out that though the English term "cameras" can be taken to cover both video cameras and photographic cameras, it is clearer from the French version ("caméscopes" and "appareils photographiques") that these are indeed two separate categories.
18. The Secretariat leaves it to the Sub-Committee to consider the scope of the legal texts of heading 85.25 and subheading 8525.40 with regard to the above-mentioned apparatus.

IV. CONCLUSION

19. The Sub-Committee is invited to take account of the texts put forward by the United States Administration as well as the Secretariat's comments above, when examining this Agenda item.
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