

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON
TARIFFS AND TRADE

Preferential Arrangements
Among Developing Countries
Negotiated in GATT

COMMITTEE OF PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES

Summary of Discussion at Fourteenth Meeting
held on 22 October 1976

Prepared by the Secretariat

1. The Committee of Participating Countries provided for in the Protocol Relating to Trade Negotiations Among Developing Countries held its fourteenth meeting on 22 October 1976 under the Chairmanship of Dr. P. Tomić (Yugoslavia). The Chairman, on behalf of the Committee, welcomed the representative of Bangladesh to the meeting.
2. The draft agenda circulated in document CPC/W/39 was adopted.

Request for accession by Bangladesh

3. The Chairman, in referring to document CPC/35 and Add.1, said that the Decision relating to the accession of Bangladesh to the Protocol had been adopted by the required two-thirds majority of participating countries on 20 August 1976. The Protocol of Accession of Bangladesh, which was now open for signature by Bangladesh and by participating countries, would enter into force ninety days after signature by Bangladesh. The Chairman said that statistical data on trade exchanges between Bangladesh and participating countries, provided by the Permanent Mission of Bangladesh, had been circulated as document CPC/W/38/Add.1.

4. The representative of Bangladesh expressed his Government's appreciation to the Committee for agreeing to the request for accession without negotiations submitted by Bangladesh. He said that Bangladesh, a strong supporter of economic co-operation among developing countries, would seek to contribute to achieving the objectives of the Protocol and to increasing as much as possible trade exchanges with participating countries. In this connexion, his Government would enter into negotiations for an exchange of concessions with participating countries at an appropriate time. He also mentioned that his authorities were making every effort to complete the process of ratification of the Protocol at the earliest possible date.

5. The Committee took note of developments regarding the accession of Bangladesh to the Protocol. The Committee agreed that pending the completion of accession procedures, Bangladesh be invited to participate in its activities and attend its meetings.

Countries having expressed interest in exploring possibilities for accession

6. The Chairman said that the secretariat had kept in touch with the delegations of Romania, Sri Lanka, Iran, the Dominican Republic and Madagascar which had generally reiterated their countries' interest in exploring possibilities for accession to the Protocol. Some of these delegations were awaiting instructions from their capitals. In a communication addressed to the secretariat, the Permanent Mission of Iran had recently confirmed its Government's interest in the Protocol and had stated that the Iranian administration was considering aspects relevant to the possible accession of Iran. The Chairman also informed the Committee that, upon request, the secretariat had provided the delegation of Burma with information relating to the Protocol, including a listing of items in the schedules of concessions annexed to the Protocol of apparent export interest to Burma and procedures for exploring the possibilities of accession.

7. The Committee took note of the current position concerning countries having expressed interest in exploring possibilities for accession to the Protocol and asked the secretariat to report any further developments in this connexion to the Committee at its next meeting.

Recent developments relating to enlargement

8. The Chairman recalled that the Committee had agreed to revert to the question of enlargement of the Protocol in the light of the discussions which had taken place on this matter at its earlier meetings and having regard to recent developments concerning the broad question of economic co-operation among developing countries. He noted that, as agreed by the Committee, a paper (CPC/W/35) describing the historical background to the Protocol as well as its objectives, evolution, performance and prospects had been circulated to all developing countries. As indicated in CPC/W/41, a condensed version of this document was made available to participants in the recent Mexico City Conference on Economic Co-operation among Developing Countries. CPC/W/41 also drew attention to certain of the points which emerged from Mexico City in the field of trade relations among developing countries and in paragraph 4 referred to basic work which could be undertaken by the secretariat (collection and updating of data on import régimes, developments plans, etc.) in order to provide a foundation for an assessment of the prospects for a new round of negotiations among developing countries within the framework of the Protocol and as a contribution to the objectives of the study proposed at the Mexico City Conference.

9. At the invitation of the Chairman, the observer from UNCTAD said that the recommendations adopted at the Mexico City Conference were being considered by the Trade and Development Board at its current meeting and within the secretariat. It was to be expected that the recommendations would be taken up at the first meeting of the UNCTAD Committee on Economic Co-operation Among Developing Countries in 1977. International organizations mentioned in the report of the Conference would be contacted with respect to relevant points in due course.
10. Several members of the Committee, recalling their support for the early initiation of a new round of trade negotiations open to all developing countries which would cover tariffs and other trade barriers in the framework of the Protocol, stated that the secretariat should start collecting and updating basic data on import régimes, development plans and other relevant material with a view to completing the technical preparations and providing a solid basis for a new round of negotiations when participating countries and other interested developing countries were able to initiate such action. One member, noting that his authorities had not had time to analyze the suggestion in paragraph 4 of document CPC/W/41 or consider its full implications, suggested that a decision on this matter be deferred to the next meeting of the Committee when account could also be taken of relevant developments in other international organizations.
11. In response to a question, the representative of the secretariat said that as indicated by members in the course of the discussions, the secretariat also regarded the multilateral trade negotiations as of prime importance and would continue with its technical assistance and other work connected with the negotiations on this basis. However, it was felt that certain background data collected for technical assistance and other work in relation to the MTN on commercial policies of developing countries and related matters could also have relevance to further negotiations among developing countries. There was therefore the possibility, within existing resources and with appropriate assistance from members, of assembling this material in a way which could be useful to participating countries for the purposes suggested.
12. Noting the comments made by members, the Committee agreed to revert to the question of the initiation of the collection of technical data to serve as background for assessing the prospects of a new round of trade negotiations among developing countries at the next meeting of the Committee.

Review of the situation with respect to ratification of the Protocol

13. The Chairman recalled that at its last meeting, the Committee had noted that the Philippines had still to complete ratification procedures. The Committee took note that a communication concerning this question had been sent to the Philippine authorities and that a reply was awaited.

Annual report

14. Having as background a draft prepared by the secretariat and taking into account comments made by some members, the Committee adopted its annual report¹ to the CONTRACTING PARTIES. Participating countries which had not provided the required statistical data, were urged to do so at the earliest possible date. Such additional data could be incorporated in the body of the report if received in time, or issued as addenda to the main document.

Rotation of officers

15. The Chairman said that in accordance with the rules of procedure contained in document CPC/2, his term of office had come to an end. He thanked delegations for their encouragement and co-operation in carrying out his responsibilities and supporting the activities of the Committee. The representative of Brazil, Mr. A. Bier assumed the Chairmanship of the Committee for the forthcoming period, with the representative of Chile becoming the Vice-Chairman.

Next meeting

16. The Chairman said that in accordance with the usual procedure, the date of the next regular quarterly meeting of the Committee would be fixed by the Chairman in consultation with delegations.

¹Issued as L/4412.