

# GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

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## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE BY THE SECRETARIAT TO DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

### Note by the Secretariat

1. Since the announcement in early 1972 by a number of major trading nations of their intention to enter into comprehensive multilateral trade negotiations, within the framework of GATT, the Committee on Trade and Development has devoted considerable attention to examining what should be done to meet the technical assistance needs of the developing countries in preparing themselves for these negotiations. The matter was also taken up by the Group of Three and the secretariat has prepared, in accordance with the recommendations and suggestions made by the Committee and by the Group of Three, a series of "country studies" - documentation identifying various tariff and non-tariff barriers affecting products of particular export interest to developing countries, as well as a number of analytical papers bearing on such matters as the implications for developing countries of various alternative approaches envisaged for resolving in the multilateral trade negotiations, remaining problems in regard to both tariff and non-tariff barriers. A summary of the secretariat's technical assistance activities up to the twenty-sixth session of the Committee, held on 29 and 30 October 1973, is contained in document COM.TD/94.
2. During discussions at the twenty-sixth session a number of delegations reaffirmed their view that the Committee on Trade and Development would have a rôle to play in keeping under review and providing advice in regard to the technical assistance needs of developing countries in the light of developments. With a view to facilitating the Committee's task in this regard, the present note describes certain recent developments in the secretariat's technical assistance activities, together with an indication of the studies and analyses being undertaken in follow-up of the discussions in the various Groups of the Trade Negotiations Committee.
3. As regards the programme of "country studies" it may be recalled that in the first and second series of these studies, distributed respectively towards the end of 1972 and in 1973, some thirty developing countries, of which about one third were non-GATT countries, received tabulations giving information on their present and, to the extent possible, their potentially important exports to major developed country markets at both the four-digit level of the BTN and the tariff line level. For each such market, the data shows total imports, imports from all developing countries and imports from the developing country for which the study has been prepared, together with an indication of the percentage share of both the developing country concerned

and all developing countries in the total imports of each such market. At the same level of detail, the tabulations provided data on the incidence of m.f.n. duties, the type of duty applicable (ad valorem, specific or mixed duties), their GATT binding status, existence of a levy - where applicable, status under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP), quantitative restrictions, if any, and an indication whether or not the tariff position concerned had been the subject of a notification to the GATT in regard to the existence of other non-tariff barriers.

4. Since the tabulations under the first and second series of studies have been distributed, requests for such studies have been received from more than twenty other developing countries participating in the Trade Negotiations Committee. The third series of studies, which are expected to be distributed to delegations during June/July 1974, will contain all the data elements covered in the earlier studies, as described in paragraph 3 above, certain improvements having been incorporated in the print-out programme by presenting in appropriate groupings, for ease of reference by delegations, "like and linked" products or BTN positions. In addition, in response to the requests for such information made by a number of delegations, the tabulations will also contain an indication of the main suppliers for each of the respective positions covered by the studies. Further, to the extent that information is, or has been, supplied on the exact description of the products of particular export and negotiating interest to the different countries for which such studies are prepared, assistance may be obtained from the secretariat in identifying from the comprehensive tabulations those tariff sub-positions which would be of particular relevance to the country concerned.

5. With the completion of the third series of computer print-outs, more than fifty developing countries, namely all those which requested such data, will be covered by the programme of "country studies" and will have received one or more sets of tabulations. In a number of cases, the countries that have received these tabulations have also requested, and in most cases already obtained, various relating data which could not be covered by the computer programme, in respect of items of major export interest to them. Preparatory work is also under way in the secretariat to provide complementary data for various groups of products known to be of particular interest to developing countries in the negotiations.

6. One sector that is obviously of major significance to the developing countries is that of tropical products. Group 3(f) has already given its instructions to the secretariat in regard to the documentation to be compiled, in the first instance, on a list of tropical products identified as of interest to developing countries in the multilateral trade negotiations, it being understood that the listings would not be exhaustive. In fact, certain additions to these lists have already been requested by delegations. As part of its technical assistance activities, the secretariat is assisting individual delegations in the identification of tropical products, which, although less well-known, are nevertheless of significance to the export trade of developing countries and for which appropriate action either individually or jointly by

developed importing countries concerned, might be possible. Secretariat assistance is also available for the identification of other products, which, although not "tropical products" in a strict sense, are nevertheless mainly produced and/or exported by developing countries.

7. The secretariat has also carried out a preliminary examination of certain product areas in which a number of developing countries may have significant export and negotiating interests. Among product groups which are being looked at in this context, are certain fruits and vegetables, both in fresh and processed forms, fish and fishery products, hides and skins and various items in the leather goods sector, certain wood products and various metallic ores, compounds thereof, metals and certain metal semi-manufactures. If such an approach was to be found useful by delegations of developing countries, the secretariat intends to compile for these product groups, and others identified by delegations, information in the form of a data bank, covering developments in production, trade, import treatment, etc., which would be useful in working out approaches to negotiations on items falling within each group with due regard inter alia to the different linkages involved.

8. In connexion with the examination of the implications of m.f.n. tariff reductions for the GSP, the secretariat is already in the course of preparing, in accordance with the outline in COM.IND/W/111, tabulations showing exports from developing countries into the main developed countries broken down into a number of product categories and arranged according to whether they enjoy duty-free treatment on an m.f.n. basis, are liable to m.f.n. duties or benefit from preferential treatment, etc. While some aspects of those tabulations are subject to further discussion at the next meeting of Group 3(a), it is expected that this data, together with information on the tariff or non-tariff treatment affecting those exports, supplied under the Country Studies Programme to individual developing countries would be helpful to those countries in identifying the type of tariff action that would be most conducive to the future expansion of their exports. As indicated in the note on the meeting of Group 3(a) (MIN/3A/2), the secretariat is examining what further analysis may be carried out in this area. The secretariat would be in a position to assist individual developing countries in carrying out such further investigation of the production and trade trends as well as supply/demand relationship for individual products or product groups as may be necessary to supplement the basic technical data.

9. As regards technical assistance in the field of various non-tariff barriers, attention is drawn to the secretariat notes on health and sanitary regulations (COM.TD/W/190), standards (COM.TD/W/191) and customs valuation (COM.TD/W/195). As agreed at the first meeting of Group 3(b), these documents, issued during the course of 1973, would be up-dated in the light of subsequent developments. Work has been initiated in the secretariat for the preparation of similar notes on other non-tariff measures. In relation to non-tariff barriers the secretariat has up-dated document COM.TD/W/203, covering quantitative restrictions affecting

exports of developing countries and prepared a synthesis of the proposals put forward in past discussions concerning possible differential measures for developing countries in connexion with certain types of non-tariff barriers. (MTN/3B/15)

10. Another element of technical assistance work on non-tariff barriers relates to the identification of specific non-tariff barriers of particular significance to the developing country. This process of identification is being pursued both on the basis of an examination of notifications made to the GATT and in the context of informal consultations at the technical level between the secretariat and developing countries which wish to avail themselves of this consultation facility.