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TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE BY THE SECRETARIAT TO DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Note by the Secretariat

1. A summary of the secretariat's technical assistance activities for developing countries in connection with the multilateral trade negotiations, covering the period up to the twenty-seventh session of the Committee in June 1974, is contained in document COM.TD/W/211. That document also contained a number of suggestions as to the further work which the secretariat might undertake in the field of technical assistance. These suggestions were endorsed by the Committee. The present note reports recent developments in the secretariat's technical assistance activities.
2. A Special Assistance Unit (S.A.U.) to help the developing countries in their preparations for and participation in the multilateral trade negotiations was established in September within the structure of the Trade and Development Department. The broad task of S.A.U. is to keep in continuing close touch with delegations of developing countries so as to assist them, individually or collectively, with appropriate information and advice on all relevant aspects of the various problems relating to their preparations for and participation in the multilateral trade negotiations. In addition to any other work which might be required by individual delegations, the new unit stands ready to provide assistance where developing countries encounter technical difficulties in carrying forward their analysis of the individual country print-outs and other material already submitted to them.
3. Under the "Country-Study" programme, established on the basis of recommendations by the Committee and the Group of Three, interested developing countries are supplied with all relevant data on trade flows, tariffs, GSP treatment and NTB's in developed country markets as they relate to products of major current or potential export interest of the developing country concerned.
4. Thirty-nine developing countries are covered by the present third series of computer print-out studies. For more than thirty countries the studies in this third series have been completed and distributed to delegations concerned. The remaining studies are expected to be completed shortly. Overall, fifty-seven of the developing countries participating in the TNC are covered by the first to third series of country studies.

¹Details of the data coverage of the country studies are summarized in COM.TD/W/211, paragraphs 3 and 4.

5. Reference was made in COM.TD/W/211, paragraph 6, to technical assistance extended by the secretariat to interested delegations in identifying tropical products and products exported mainly by developing countries which, although less well-known, are nevertheless of significance to certain developing countries' exports. Work in this regard is continuing. Background information on a number of additional tropical products together with material on such questions as separate tariff classification, effective protection and internal taxes etc., has also been examined recently by Group 3(f). This Group has requested the secretariat to study certain other aspects of relevance to tropical products as part of its continuing work for the multilateral trade negotiations (Report of 3(f) - MTN/12).
6. In connexion with the sector approach, Group 3(c) has asked the secretariat in the light of the various suggestions made regarding further work, inter alia, to identify the main sectors of interest to developing countries in the context of the negotiations.
7. As indicated in COM.TD/W/211, paragraph 7, the secretariat is compiling for certain products in which developing countries have significant export and negotiating interests information in the form of a data bank. Details being compiled cover developments in production, trade, import treatment and other related data which could be useful in preparing for the negotiations. The information contained in the data bank will be available for consultation by interested delegations. Moreover, certain ad hoc studies are being prepared in response to specific requests by delegations from developing countries.
8. In connexion with the examination of the implications of m.f.n. tariff reductions for the GSP, the secretariat has prepared, in accordance with the outline in COM.IND/W/111, tabulations showing exports of industrial products from developing countries to 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. (The Generalized System of Preferences and MFN Tariffs, Geneva, September 1974). The data will be supplemented by additional tabulations illustrating the m.f.n. tariff and trade structure as it would result from a linear 50 per cent tariff reduction and from two different progressive tariff reduction schemes. The resulting illustrative tariff and trade profiles will be compared with the present pattern of GSP trade so as to permit an assessment by delegations of changes in both preferential and m.f.n. benefits involved in different negotiating hypotheses. As agreed by Group 3(e) information on the GSP and m.f.n. tariffs will also be supplied with respect to agricultural products after consultation with delegations of developing and

developed countries interested in this matter. This data, together with information on the tariff and non-tariff treatment affecting those exports, supplied under the Country Studies Programme to individual developing countries will be helpful to those countries in identifying the type of action that would be most conducive to the future expansion of their exports. 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 relationships for individual products or product groups as may be necessary to supplement the basic technical data.

9. In pursuance of requests made by developing countries during the course of the discussions in the various Groups, the secretariat has been preparing background documentation on specific non-tariff measures, with a view to analyzing the problems of relevance to these countries and indicating suggestions which might be taken into account in the search for solutions to these problems. The documents prepared cover quantitative restrictions and such other non-tariff measures as customs valuation, standards, health and sanitary regulations, export subsidies and countervailing duties. The secretariat will continue to prepare, as necessary and appropriate, similar documentation on other subjects and issues of interest to developing countries that may be discussed during the course of the trade negotiations.