

# GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

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Committee on Trade and Development

## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE BY THE SECRETARIAT TO DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

### Note by the Secretariat

1. At its twenty-eighth session, the Committee on Trade and Development, in endorsing the work being carried out by the secretariat in the field of technical assistance, reaffirmed its wish to keep this matter under review at its future meetings so as to be in a position to offer comments and make suggestions in the light of developments in the Multilateral Trade Negotiations. The present note describes certain recent developments in the technical assistance activities of the secretariat, together with an indication of the studies and analyses being undertaken on the basis of requests made in the various Groups of the Trade Negotiations Committee. The activities described in this note should be related to the information contained in COM.TD/W/216 presented for consideration of the Committee at its twenty-eighth session.
2. The Special Assistance Unit (SAU), established within the structure of the Trade and Development Department, has continued to keep in close touch with delegations from developing countries assisting them with appropriate documentation, information, and advice on various problems relating to their preparations for and participation in the Multilateral Trade Negotiations. In addition to providing guidance on some of the technical questions through informal discussions with interested delegations, the Unit has also prepared, at the specific request of individual delegations, brief product studies and analytical notes on specific issues and aspects of the negotiations.
3. One of the important aspects of the work of the secretariat in the field of technical assistance is the "Country Studies" programme. As a first step under this programme, the GATT secretariat has made available to almost all developing countries participating in the Multilateral Trade Negotiations, computer print-out studies with data showing, at the relevant tariff line level, information on trade flows, tariffs (including the GSP), other charges, quantitative restrictions, other

non-tariff measures, etc. In response to points raised by developing country delegations regarding the practical possibilities presented by these country studies for the preparation of their negotiating briefs, the SAU has been endeavouring to ensure that delegations are assisted in making maximum use of the studies. One aspect of this activity has been the preparation, at the request of individual delegations, of succinct and easily handled lists of selected tariff positions of direct export interest along with the relevant technical elements and background information, which would facilitate the practical participation in the negotiations of the individual country concerned.

4. As regards tropical products, which is a sector of special significance to developing countries, the secretariat has already prepared background notes on a considerable number of tropical products identified as being of interest to developing countries in the negotiations as well as on other matters related to the negotiations in this area. Similar notes on additional tropical products suggested by delegations are under preparation as part of the continuing work in the tropical products sector. In document COM.TD/W/216 reference was made to the technical assistance extended by the secretariat to interested delegations in identifying tropical and other products exported mainly by developing countries which, although less well known, are nevertheless of significant export interest to certain developing countries. Work in this regard is expected to be completed shortly. Upon request, the secretariat is also providing assistance to developing countries in the preparation and verification of the purely factual information to be included in the request lists for concessions in connexion with the negotiations being carried out in the Group "Tropical Products".

5. The Committee endorsed, at its twenty-seventh meeting, the proposal made in COM.TD/W/211 for the preparation of "area studies" on certain selected product groups considered to be of significant export and negotiating interest to developing countries. Work in this connexion is continuing, taking into account the tasks arising from the April meeting of the Group "Sector Approach" that the secretariat would undertake a more detailed examination of the implications of the sector approach for developing countries, including the identification of possible sectors of interest to developing countries, the question of differentiated treatment and implications of the sector approach for the GSP. The secretariat has also made available to delegations from developing countries summary information on tariffs, non-tariff measures and trade for twelve selected product groups of which developing countries are important suppliers.

6. In connexion with the examination of the implications of most-favoured-nation tariff reductions for the GSP, two series of tabulations have been issued covering Chapters 25 to 99 of the BTN. The first (White Book) shows

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 a most-favoured-nation basis, are liable to most-favoured-nation duties, or benefit from preferential treatment. It has been agreed that these tabulations should be extended to BTN Chapters 1-24, once agreement had been reached on presentation and methodology through consultations among delegations with the assistance of the secretariat. The second tabulation (Brown Book) attempts to compare present rates of most-favoured-nation and GSP tariffs facing preference-receiving countries, with the structure of most-favoured-nation tariff and trade as it would result in importing developed countries on the basis of four different, illustrative, tariff-cutting formulae. It is intended to carry forward this type of analysis once specific formulae lending themselves to meaningful application in terms of tariff lines or product headings have been put on the table and in the light of comments made by delegations in the Group "Tariffs".

7. As regards technical assistance in the field of non-tariff measures, in addition to the background documentation issued previously, the secretariat has recently prepared two background notes. One deals with subsidies and countervailing duties and describes, inter alia, the relevant provisions of the General Agreement, the nature of the problem with special reference to the trade of developing countries, the various proposals for solutions and the various proposals for extending differential treatment to developing countries. The other provides broadly similar information in respect of certain other non-tariff measures affecting the trade interests of developing countries.

8. With respect to the multilateral safeguard system, a document has been prepared which contains a very brief summary of Article XIX actions affecting the interests of developing countries and provides information on the relevant provisions of Article XXXVII including references to the drafting history of this Article. In addition, a number of points concerning the feasibility of differential treatment for developing countries in the field of safeguards are raised for consideration. At the request of the Group "Safeguards", the secretariat is preparing a preliminary analysis of the impact of safeguard measures taken by developed countries which affect developing countries.

9. A further element of the technical assistance work in the field of non-tariff measures is the identification of non-tariff measures of particular significance to individual developing countries. In pursuance of specific requests made, the secretariat is compiling such additional information from the notifications in the Inventory, as well as other published sources, as would prove useful to individual delegations in negotiating for the reduction or removal of particular aspects of non-tariff measures which might be affecting the development of their export trade.