

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

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DEVELOPMENTS IN THE MULTILATERAL TRADE NEGOTIATIONS

Note by the Secretariat

1. As agreed at its meeting in May 1975, the Committee on Trade and Development undertakes, at each of its meetings, a review of developments in the multilateral trade negotiations with particular reference to points of interest to developing countries. In the following paragraphs, an attempt has been made to provide a general summary of recent developments in this regard since the Committee last met.
2. Substantive agreement on a range of major elements in the negotiations was reached as of mid-July by a number of major trading partners following a period of intensive negotiations. At meetings of participants in the negotiations, also in July, it was generally understood that the agreements then being reached by certain countries did not commit definitively any delegation as to their content, that all interested participants, including the developing countries would be engaged in all areas of the negotiations as the work proceeded and that the interests of the developing countries would be taken up in line with the provisions of the Tokyo Declaration. In this light, work on the final phase of the negotiations is continuing in the various areas, largely through bilateral and plurilateral contacts among interested participants and, as required, meetings of the Groups and Sub-Groups.
3. Because of the fluid nature of the negotiations at the present time, it is not possible for the secretariat to give more than a broad picture of recent developments. However, delegations may have particular points on which they would wish to elaborate or particular issues to raise in the light of their experience in the negotiations.
4. The tariff offers tabled by all developed countries and requests submitted for tariff concessions by both developed and developing countries continue to be the subject of negotiations and consultations between interested participants. Certain developed countries have tabled revisions to their initial offers, comprising clarifications and additions as well as in some cases possible withdrawals. With respect to negotiations on tariffs, it is also understood that some developed countries have presented indicative lists to certain of their developing country negotiating partners.

5. Specific non-tariff measures continue to be subject to negotiation in accordance with the general request and offer procedures as well as the special procedures for negotiation between developed and developing countries adopted in July 1977. When the Group "Non-Tariff Measures" reviewed progress made in these negotiations at its meeting in the beginning of September 1978, it noted that offers or responses had been made by all developed countries and that eleven developing countries or groups of developing countries had tabled contributions to the MTN, either in a detailed form or by way of communications or statements of a general nature. The Group also considered proposals for dealing with problems raised by developing countries in the anti-dumping area. It agreed that informal consultations should continue on the points raised in the discussion and it would revert to the matter at an appropriate time.
6. The Sub-Group "Technical Barriers to Trade" met in July, September and October 1978, considering at the latter meeting a proposed revised text of the code submitted by a number of delegations. Consultations and negotiations are taking place among interested delegations on the basis of this text and the other documentation before the Sub-Group, with particular reference to special and differential treatment for developing countries, institutions and dispute settlement and problems relating to levels of obligation and to national and regional certification systems.
7. The Sub-Group "Subsidies and Countervailing Duties" has had before it a draft of an arrangement which emerged from consultations between certain delegations and which a number of delegations have agreed to examine in detail, as well as a proposal for a code of conduct on export subsidies on primary products and a note submitted by certain delegations containing proposals relating to the needs of developing countries. The Sub-Group has agreed that consultations among interested delegations with a view to the preparation of an operational text should continue.
8. The Sub-Group "Government Procurement" has continued its work on the negotiation of an arrangement on government procurement, at meetings in July and September 1978. In addition to earlier documentation, the Sub-Group had before it a draft integrated text submitted by a number of major participants and a note from the Chairman outlining a possible approach to the provision of special and differential treatment for developing countries. In accordance with the procedures for negotiations on procurement entities to be covered by the provisions of the arrangement agreed by the Sub-Group at its meeting in June 1978, offers have been submitted by most developed country participants. Bilateral and plurilateral consultations and negotiations between interested participants are continuing on the entities to be covered by the arrangement and on the text, including provisions relating to special and differential treatment.

9. Negotiations on quantitative restrictions are mainly being pursued through the procedures for negotiations on specific non-tariff measures adopted by the Group "Non-Tariff Measures" in July 1977. The Sub-Group "Quantitative Restrictions", at its meeting in September 1978, heard comments by delegations with respect to the requests and indicative lists submitted under these procedures and with respect to offers and responses relating to quantitative restrictions and similar measures made in that context. The Sub-Group requested the secretariat to establish a consolidated list of requests, offers or responses, indicative lists and statements of contributions, which had been submitted. The Sub-Group further considered the proposals and suggestions relating to the possibility of formulating additional procedures for bilateral and/or plurilateral negotiations on quantitative restrictions and the possibility of working out a general formula or formulae of automatic application as well as the question of differential treatment, including special procedures in favour of developing countries; some delegations stated that they might wish to revert to some of these proposals and suggestions in the light of the outcome of the item-by-item negotiations. On import licensing procedures, the Sub-Group agreed that consultations should be undertaken among delegations with respect to the document established by the secretariat, containing revised versions of the texts on automatic import licensing and licensing to administer import restrictions, taking account of specific proposals made by delegations, and a list of general points made earlier, as well as with respect to proposals presented by a developing country delegation.

10. At its meetings in June, July and September 1978, the Sub-Group "Customs Matters" had before it revised texts of the draft valuation code resulting from consultations and negotiations among certain delegations as well as comments, proposals and amendments put forward by some participants. At its September meeting, an additional draft valuation code was submitted by the delegation of a developing country. Consultations among interested delegations on the basis of the documentation before the Sub-Group have been taking place with a view to reaching agreement on a single text. The Sub-Group has also considered the question of the customs aspects of commercial counterfeiting, on which issue consultations among interested delegations are taking place.

11. In June 1978, several delegations submitted a draft integrated text on safeguards as an informal working paper. The Group "Safeguards" has proceeded with negotiations on a possible safeguard code at meetings in July and September 1978 on the basis of that text and proposed amendments to it as well as a text containing the views of certain developing country delegations. Consultations and negotiations among interested delegations have been continuing with the Group ready to reconvene at short notice if necessary.

12. In accordance with the procedures agreed in the Group "Agriculture" in July 1977, requests and indicative lists of agricultural products not being dealt with multilaterally in the product Sub-Groups have been submitted by interested participants. Offers, either of a general or a detailed nature, have been tabled by all developed countries and statements of contributions to the MTN made by a number of developing countries. Consultations and negotiations on the requests, offers and indicative lists have been taking place among interested participants. Other points that have been the subject of consultations and negotiations among delegations in connexion with the work of the Group "Agriculture" have included the applicability of various codes worked out in the negotiations to agriculture (the Group "Agriculture" at its meeting in June 1978 continued its review of the applicability of the draft standards code to agriculture), and the establishment of fundamental understandings on trade in agricultural products and of permanent consultative machinery in GATT to improve the level of international co-operation on agricultural issues.

13. Work on a draft international dairy arrangement is now in a fairly advanced form, substantial progress having been made on the main framework, mechanisms and the specific provisions; among the other matters that continue to be subject to close consideration are possible provisions for developing countries, matters relating to developments elsewhere in the MTN and the price levels to be incorporated into the protocols. Similarly, work on the basic outline of the general provisions of an arrangement regarding bovine meat has progressed with the specific provisions and commitments to be entered into by participants, currently the subject of detailed negotiations. With regard to grains, revised drafts of a wheat trade convention, a coarse grain convention and a food aid convention together with certain written statements containing suggestions on how to deal with the specific problems of developing countries are to be submitted by the Interim Committee to the reconvened session of the United Nations "Grains" Conference when it meets in November 1978.

14. In the field of tropical products, consultations and negotiations have been taking place in connexion with requests for concessions on tropical products submitted or resubmitted in the framework of the procedures agreed in the Groups "Non-Tariff Measures" and "Agriculture", as well as in the context of the negotiations on tariffs. At its meeting in October 1978, the Group "Tropical Products" reviewed developments in the negotiations on tropical products with a view to assessing overall progress in the area and considered the question of how further progress could be made during the remaining stages of the negotiations towards maximizing results with respect to requests on tropical products. The Group noted that bilateral and plurilateral negotiations between interested countries would need to be intensified in the coming weeks with a view to clarifying outstanding issues and seeking improvements in existing offers.

15. With regard to the work of the Group "Framework", bilateral and pluri-lateral consultations and negotiations among interested participants are continuing on the basis of drafts covering the issues under consideration.