

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

Committee on Trade and Development
Thirty-Eighth Session
20 September 1979

FUTURE WORK ON TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Note by the Secretariat

1. The GATT secretariat has intensified its technical assistance to developing countries since the commencement of the multilateral trade negotiations. At each of its sessions, the Committee on Trade and Development has reviewed the technical assistance activities of the secretariat. A comprehensive note summarizing the type of assistance provided during the negotiations was submitted to the thirty-sixth session of the Committee in document COM.TD/W/283. Members of the Committee, at some recent sessions, have emphasized the continuing need for technical assistance after the conclusion of the MTN. It was also stated that at an appropriate time, the Committee would need to look at the shape and functions of the technical assistance work of the secretariat (COM.TD/100, paragraph 40).

2. Only when the appropriate GATT bodies have laid down the lines for post-MTN activities, will it be possible to fully discern where GATT secretariat technical assistance should be concentrated. In the meantime however, it would be useful for the Committee to take note of the areas mentioned below where in the light of suggestions made to it, future technical assistance by the secretariat appears to be indicated. Further, the Committee might wish to take the opportunity to draw attention to additional areas which it considers that the secretariat will need to take into account in working out practical arrangements for initiating and implementing technical assistance activities both in the near future and over the longer term.

3. Against the background of the ongoing responsibilities of the Committee on Trade and Development and the results of the multilateral trade negotiations, future work on technical assistance might include:

- (a) Assistance in the assessment of MTN results for individual developing countries;
- (b) assistance in connexion with the Codes;

- (c) assistance in relation to the "Framework" agreements and other multilateral arrangements negotiated in the MTN;
- (d) assistance in relation to the provisions of the General Agreement;
- (e) assistance in the work on further trade liberalization within the framework of the General Agreement;
- (f) assistance to the least-developed countries; and
- (g) assistance in trade negotiations among developing countries.

(a) Assessment of MTN results for individual developing countries

4. Various types of information have already been provided to a number of developing countries who have requested assistance in their assessment of MTN results in the field of tariffs so that they may see, inter alia, how their trading prospects are affected and what use they can make of new concessions. In the months ahead other developing countries might wish such assistance. Information on products at tariff-line level for developed country markets, could normally be expected to cover pre-MTN and post-MTN tariffs and non-tariff measures, trade data, the share and supplier rank of the requesting country and the names of major suppliers.

(b) Assistance on Codes

5. Technical assistance in the field of Codes might include some of the following:

- (i) Advice, information and explanation relating to the provisions of the Codes.
- (ii) Providing data, documentation and/or information required by a developing country in the context of any consultations under the Codes or in connexion with the deliberations of relevant committees.
- (iii) Co-ordinating and channelling of requests for technical assistance by developing countries in pursuance of some of the specific technical assistance provisions of the Codes.

(c) Framework Agreements

6. Some of the agreements negotiated in the Group "Framework" specifically provide that the technical assistance facilities of the secretariat be available upon request to developing countries in connexion with the matters

dealt with in those agreements. Examples are the texts on trade measures taken for balance-of-payments purposes; on safeguard action for development purposes; and on notification, consultation, dispute settlement and surveillance. It could also be envisaged that some developing countries might ask for information relevant to any periodic review of the operation of the provisions in the text on differential and more favourable treatment for developing countries.

(d) Provisions of the General Agreement

7. Technical assistance might also be required by developing countries to enable them to make greater use of the provisions and procedures available under the General Agreement not covered by the "Framework" texts. For example, it has been suggested that technical assistance could be made available to developing countries in the context of the review, notification and consultation procedures in connexion with the commitment and other provisions of Part IV.

(e) Work on further trade liberalization

8. In the context of continuing work on further liberalization of trade which may be agreed on in the GATT framework, technical assistance could be provided to developing countries upon request, so as to assist them in identifying trade barriers facing their trade in different markets.

(f) Assistance to the least-developed countries

9. In all the activities mentioned above special attention will need to be given to the least-developed countries. The GATT secretariat and the ITC are currently exploring the possibilities and practicability of joint co-operation in providing information to interested developing countries to assist them in taking advantage of trade concessions in the post-MTN period. The GATT secretariat envisages giving particular attention to the least-developed countries in this work.

(g) Trade Negotiations among developing countries

10. Delegations of developing countries have stated at recent sessions of the Committee on Trade and Development that they would need technical assistance from the secretariat in connexion with a possible new round of trade negotiations among developing countries (L/4721, paragraph 22). The actual requirements of technical assistance in this field would become clearer after the objectives, scope and coverage of the new round are agreed upon.