

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

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TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Note by the Secretariat

Background Information

1. The GATT first established a programme of technical assistance in 1956 when training courses in trade policy were introduced for qualified officials from developing countries. These training courses have provided an introduction to GATT rules and procedures, to current trade policy issues and to trade policy instruments used by governments. Since the conclusion of the Multilateral Trade Negotiations the courses have covered also an examination and analysis of the instruments or arrangements resulting from these negotiations. Two training courses each for about twenty officials are held annually alternately in English and French. Since 1979 these courses have been financed entirely from the GATT regular budget. There have also been demands from contracting parties for ad hoc courses to meet special needs. Two such courses were organized for officials from the least developed countries and were financed by a contribution made by the Nordic countries. A special training course for Spanish speaking officials has also been organized this year with financing provided by the Government of Switzerland.
2. Over the years, the number of candidates proposed by governments for these courses has increasingly outstripped the number of seats available. In view of their growing interest in GATT matters, the Spanish speaking countries have also urged for some time the need for training courses to be organized in Spanish on the same regular basis as in English and French. There have also been proposals for the organization of shorter courses to meet the needs of officials in national administrations or in Geneva missions for a more intensive introduction to GATT activities. The resources available for the training programme have not permitted the secretariat to meet these demands.
3. In 1974 with the commencement of the Tokyo Round, the technical assistance provided through training courses was supplemented by the establishment of a Special Assistance Unit. This was set up "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".
4. Technical assistance during the early part of the Tokyo Round was concerned with the preparation of background papers on possible techniques and modalities for the negotiations and, upon request, country studies identifying items of export interest to individual developing countries and the tariff and non-tariff measures applying to them. Assistance was given

to developing countries in the preparation of request lists and the evaluation of offers as well as the possibilities provided by the various tariff-cutting formulae. Assistance was also provided by way of helping individual developing countries to analyse the implications of the various draft codes for their trade.

5. In addition, the secretariat provided technical assistance to participants in various regional and sub-regional seminars dealing with MTN matters held outside Geneva.

6. With the conclusion of the Tokyo Round and in response to the wishes expressed by developing countries, the Special Assistance Unit was transformed into the Technical Co-operation Division so as to provide technical cooperation to developing countries in all fields of GATT activity including assistance related to the evaluation of the results of the Multilateral Trade Negotiations, the codes and multilateral agreements reached during the Tokyo Round and the GATT programme of work.

Present Activities

7. Since its inception, the Technical Co-operation Division has directed its activities towards ensuring and facilitating a more effective participation of developing countries in the work of GATT bearing in mind the specific interests of individual countries.

8. To this end the Technical Co-operation Division has organized seminars outside Geneva tailored to the requirements and particular interests of the country or countries concerned and covering, inter alia, the basic principles and provisions of the General Agreement and its rôle in the trading system, as well as the new activities relating to tariff and non-tariff measures and other agreements resulting from the Tokyo Round. Technical cooperation missions have also been organized to help governments of developing countries to examine issues of particular concern to them, such as for instance the question of accession to GATT and the MTN codes, the relevance of particular codes to the specific interests of particular countries and problems arising from existing national rules or regulations and the requirements of GATT or the MTN codes. Special attention has been given to requests for technical assistance missions received from least developed countries.

9. In addition to sending out country missions, the Technical Co-operation Division has provided assistance to delegations of developing countries in Geneva in following GATT activities and analysing their interest in participating in particular arrangements and in meeting their requirements of data on tariffs and trade flows etc.

Future Needs

10. Requests for technical cooperation from developing countries have grown steadily in the past year and the need for strengthening the secretariat's activities in this field has been emphasized time and again by representatives of developing countries in different GATT fora. This is in part a reflection of the growing awareness among developing countries

of the rôle of GATT in the international trading system. It also reflects an awareness of the increasing complexity of the issues being dealt with in the GATT, the very substantial development of GATT activity that has taken place in recent years, and the range of new problems which the trading system is seen to be facing in the 1980's. All these elements are of course also part of the background to the decision by the CONTRACTING PARTIES to hold their 1982 session at Ministerial level.

11. These circumstances are seen as requiring a more active rôle of assistance and technical support by the secretariat in enabling developing countries to participate in GATT activities, to assess the relevance of various issues and trade policy developments to their interests and to make their contribution to the functioning of the trading system.
12. In general, the broad directions in which the technical assistance activities of the secretariat would appear to require further reinforcement are as follows:

Training Courses

For training courses in Geneva: provision needs to be made for an increase in the number of candidates that may be admitted to each course, for the organization of courses for Spanish speaking officials at regular intervals and for supplementing the existing courses by specialized and more intensive programmes in Geneva or at higher policy levels in capitals, focused on the particular needs of developing countries.

Technical Co-operation Activities

- (i) A strengthening of the present programme of country seminars or missions: this should enable the secretariat to respond more adequately to the interests expressed by developing countries in familiarizing broad groups of trade policy officials at different levels of the administration with the working of the GATT system. A number of requests for country missions received by the secretariat during the present year are likely to remain unsatisfied because of a lack of resources.
- (ii) An extension of the coverage of the country missions and of the assistance provided to delegations in Geneva so as to ensure that new areas of interest in GATT activities such as may emerge, for instance from the GATT Ministerial Meeting are adequately covered.
- (iii) Lending cooperation to other international organizations particularly regional integration organizations in developing countries on matters involving programmes and techniques of trade liberalization and mutual trade cooperation where the GATT secretariat has special expertise and competence. The Technical Co-operation Division is already increasing its collaboration with the ITC in order to enable developing countries to take full advantage of trade liberalization measures undertaken in the GATT context.

- (iv) A more active secretariat rôle in assisting delegations in Geneva in meeting notifications and procedural requirements in the context of GATT provisions and the various MTN instruments including their requirements of factual analyses and trade data.
- (v) Continuing efforts to assist the least developed countries in taking advantage of tariff and trade concessions under the GATT and of the provisions for special treatment of their exports in the various MTN codes.
- (vi) Assistance could also be extended upon request to other developing countries to help in developing trade policy instruments and procedures that would permit them to take fuller advantage of the international trading environment.

13. In summary, while the technical assistance activities of the secretariat should remain directed towards matters falling within the competence of GATT and should continue to respond to needs defined by the countries on whose behalf they are undertaken, they should be reviewed and strengthened so as to provide for the participation of a growing number of developing countries in the GATT system and to help these countries to cope with the more complex and sophisticated trade policy environment of the 1980's.

14. It is considered in this context that the secretariat could continue to rely essentially on its own resources of personnel. However, advantage could also be taken of the expertise of officials with adequate professional experience either inside the secretariat or from outside.

Resources

15. The above proposals would require some increases in the manpower and budgetary resources available for technical assistance activities in the GATT secretariat. These additions are however not expected to reflect more than a small percentage increase in the total share of technical assistance activities in the GATT budget. Detailed proposals on the financial implications could be submitted separately after the points of substance have been discussed.