

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

Sub-Committee on Trade of
Least-Developed Countries
13 November 1980

REVIEW OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN CONNEXION WITH THE TRADE INTERESTS OF THE LEAST-DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

Note by the Secretariat

Introduction

1. As indicated in GATT/AIR/1672, the main purpose of the initial meeting of the Sub-Committee on Trade of Least-Developed Countries scheduled for 13 November is to consider the Sub-Committee's future work programme. To assist delegations in this respect, an attempt is made below to draw together a number of points which appear to be relevant to the Sub-Committee's terms of reference. Thus, in summary form, an indication has been given of some of the main developments relating to the interests of least-developed countries taking place in other international organizations, recent developments in the framework of GATT and a preliminary indication of some of the trade interests of least-developed countries (including a tabular presentation showing the post-MTN tariff situation for least-developed country products in the main developed country markets). In the concluding remarks, an effort is made to identify those matters which might be considered for possible inclusion in the Sub-Committee's work programme having regard to its terms of reference.

2. The terms of reference of the Sub-Committee state:

"In the light of paragraph 6 of the Tokyo Declaration, to give special attention to the particular situation and trade problems of the least-developed among the developing countries in GATT's work programme following the Tokyo Round, including that relating to the results of the multilateral trade negotiations, and to keep under review the special treatment which could be accorded these countries in the context of any general or specific measures taken in favour of developing countries."

3. With respect to activities in other international organizations, it might be noted that UNCTAD Resolution 122(V) provided that the international community should "launch a comprehensive and substantially expanded programme of action for the least-developed countries". An Immediate Action Programme, 1979-1981, would

be followed by a Substantial New Programme of Action for the 1980's. The overall objective of this latter programme would be to transform the economies of the least-developed countries towards self-sustained development and to enable them to provide at least internationally accepted minimum standards of economic and social welfare, infrastructural development, and the prospect of continuing development.

4. Work in this connexion is proceeding, inter alia, through an Inter-governmental Group on the Least-Developed Countries that is acting as the preparatory committee for a United Nations Conference on the Least-Developed Countries in 1981, as well as in an ad hoc group of experts on the external trade of the least-developed countries. Various activities are also being undertaken in a number of other international organizations, including the ILO, FAO, WFC, UNIDO, ITC, ITU, and by regional economic commissions of the United Nations. These various activities are summarized in Annex I to this note.

5. In the context of GATT's post-MTN work programme, points relating to the trade interests of developing countries, including the least-developed countries, have been receiving attention in a number of Committees and bodies. The Committee on Trade and Development which is responsible for reviews of the implementation of Part IV of the General Agreement, and the supervision of the operation of the Enabling Clause has a particular rôle in this respect. Its post-MTN work in such areas as "trade policy and development policies including trade liberalization in areas of special interest to developing countries" covers, among other things, tropical products, non-tariff measures and tariff escalation which have been identified as of priority interest to developing countries, and also appear relevant to the trade interests of least-developed countries. The implementation of the Tokyo Round tariff results and also of the codes on non-tariff measures may also be mentioned as important to the interests of least-developed countries in the broad framework of international trade relations. Provisions for special and differential treatment covered by these arrangements are reviewed in greater detail in the paragraphs which follow.

6. Presumably, an important element of the Sub-Committee's activities would be to provide a forum to focus on the specific trade issues and problems of the least-developed countries and review progress in the context of GATT's work relating to the trade interests of developing countries generally, in the light of the Sub-Committee's terms of reference.

Tariffs

7. Exports by least-developed countries are mainly of primary agricultural products, ores and minerals, and certain primary manufactured items. From Table 1, it will be seen that, where "manufactured goods" are a substantial proportion of total exports of individual least-developed countries, they

usually consist of a limited range of products covering such items as carpets, jute fabrics, woven; miscellaneous textile products; gems and industrial diamonds, rough and uncut; essential oils; sporting goods; bags and sacks of textile materials, etc. Certain secondary manufactured exports may nevertheless also be important for individual least-developed countries. Food (SITC 0+1+22+4), accounting on average for nearly one half of the total exports of least-developed countries, is of major importance in terms of foreign exchange earnings, and in the context of domestic development possibilities. Growth rates in exports of agricultural raw materials have varied, reflecting, *inter alia* resource endowment patterns, the degree of commodity concentration in exports, and price developments. Exports of fuels and ores and metals have been much smaller on average as a percentage of total exports than for all developing countries.

8. In connexion with the Tokyo Round, negotiations on tropical products appear to have been the main area of interest to least-developed countries where requests for tariff and non-tariff measure concessions covering a broad range of items (raw materials, semi-manufactures and manufactures) exported by developing countries, including by the least-developed among them, were addressed to developed country participants. The results of these product-related negotiations (m.f.n., GSP and non-tariff measures) have been recently assembled in document COM.TD/W/310, Add.1 and Annexes for the Committee on Trade and Development as basic material for its further work on trade liberalization.

9. As a general approach, tariff reductions made in the Multilateral Trade Negotiations are to be implemented by stages, over a period of eight years. However, concessions (m.f.n. and GSP) resulting from the tropical products negotiations were in most cases implemented without staging. Certain actions have also been taken to implement some other tariff concessions of interest to least-developed countries in advance of the general staging process. For example, the United States has implemented, in advance, concessions of interest to least-developed countries so that, with a few exceptions, the United States has been applying terminal m.f.n. rates to imports from the least-developed countries as from 1 January 1980.

10. Special and more favourable treatment has been extended to least-developed countries in the GSP of some countries. Under the Norwegian GSP, for example, imports from least-developed countries receive duty-free treatment (L/4242/Add.3). The EEC's GSP exempts imports from least-developed countries of agricultural products covered by the scheme from any duty leviable on these products, with a few exceptions (L/4804/Add.1 and attachments). In addition, tariff quotas, ceilings and maximum country amounts with respect to industrial products covered by the GSP are not applied to

Table 1

Commodity structure of exports of least developed countries: percentage distribution, latest year available

Country	Year	Total value (\$ million)	of which (per cent)						Manufactured goods	Unallocated
			Food	Agricultural raw materials	Fuels	Ores and metals	Manufactured goods	Unallocated		
	SITC	0-9	0+1+2+4	2-22-27-28	3	27+3+67+68	5+6+7+8-67-68			
Afghanistan	1975	223	36.4	33.7	20.3	-	9.6 ^{a/}	-	-	
Bangladesh	1976	414	8.4	29.7	0.4	-	61.9 ^{b/}	0.5	0.5	
Benin	1974	34	43.4	33.7	4.9	0.5	17.6	-	-	
Bhutan										
Botswana	1975	142								
Burundi	1975	32	35.2	3.8	-	21.2	30.9 ^{c/}	6.9	6.9	
Cape Verde	1976	2	83.4	1.2	-	9.9	5.5	2.1	2.1	
Central African Empire	1976	58	37.3	45.0	-	-	17.7 ^{d/}	-	-	
Chad	1974	37	19.2	66.8	9.7	0.3	3.2	0.8	0.8	
Cuba	1973	5	43.4	-	-	-	56.1 ^{e/}	0.5	0.5	
Cyprus	1975	239	82.3	11.3	3.3	0.4	1.9	0.2	0.2	
Ethiopia	1975	48	99.7	0.1	-	-	0.1	0.1	0.1	
Gambia	1975	106	10.6	1.1	-	-	0.9	-	-	
Guinea ^{b/}	1974	79	42.3	1.1	-	87.3 ^{f/}	37.9 ^{f/}	1.7	1.7	
Haiti	1975	11	2.5	4.9	-	13.0	4.1	-	-	
Laos	1974	13	26.4	81.5	-	11.9	2.9 ^{g/}	16.2	16.2	
Lesotho	1973	15	94.2	53.8	-	-	3.1	0.5	0.5	
Malawi	1976	148	100.0	1.9	-	-	-	-	-	
Maldives	1976	4								
Mali	1976	85	46.5	52.0	0.0	0.1	1.4	-	-	
Malta	1975	99	73.9	13.8	-	0.1	11.9 ^{h/}	0.3	0.3	
Mexico	1975	91	30.2	0.2	-	60.9	8.4	0.4	0.4	
Mozambique	1975	42	72.1	7.0	-	18.0	0.2	2.7	2.7	
Nicaragua	1975	7	90.5	3.7	0.3	0.6	4.8	0.1	0.1	
Niger	1975	89	90.3	6.5	-	-	2.9	0.1	0.1	
Nigeria	1975	437	42.5	53.1	3.6	0.6	0.1	-	-	
Rwanda	1975	257	84.2	11.8	-	3.9	12.0	0.2	0.2	
Saudi Arabia	1975	370	54.9	27.1	5.5	0.1	6.3	0.1	0.1	
Senegal	1975	44	74.8	18.6	-	0.3	9.3	-	-	
Sierra Leone	1976	8	33.7	56.2	0.0	0.7	0.4	-	-	
Singapore	1975	187	4.9	1.9	92.6 ^{i/}	0.2	0.4	-	-	
Tanzania	1976	4 137	48.2	22.1	8.4	7.6	12.9	0.8	0.8	
Togo	1976	117 950	30.6	8.1	17.0	11.3	32.3	0.7	0.7	
Tunisia										
Yemen Arab Rep.										
Yemen Democratic										
Total above ^{k/}										
All developing countries ^{l/}										

Sources: United Nations, Yearbook of International Trade Statistics 1976; Eurostat, ACE; Yearbook of Foreign Trade Statistics, 1968-1976; International and national sources and estimates by the UNCTAD secretariat.

Note: Components may not add up to 100 per cent because of rounding.

^{a/} Mainly carpets, etc. (SITC 657.5), which constitute 7.5 per cent of total exports.

^{b/} Mainly jute fabrics, woven (SITC 653.4), which constitute 26.1 per cent, and textile products n.e.s. (SITC 656), which constitute 23.0 per cent of total exports.

^{c/} Diamonds (SITC 667.2).

^{d/} Mainly diamonds non-industrial, unset (SITC 667.2), constituting 17.1 per cent of total exports.

^{e/} Essential oils (SITC 551.1).

^{f/} Bauxite and concentrates of aluminum (SITC 283.3) and oxide, hydroxide aluminum, alumina (SITC ex 513.6).

^{g/} Mainly sporting goods, etc. (SITC 694), which constitute 11.7 per cent of total exports.

^{h/} The structure of exports has been calculated on the basis of the structure of imports from Guinea by OMSD countries.

^{i/} Mainly jute fabrics, woven (SITC 653.4) and bags and sacks of textile materials (SITC 656.1).

^{j/} Petroleum products.

^{k/} The commodity structure relates to the year 1975.

^{l/} Excluding major petroleum exporting countries.

imports from least-developed countries under the EEC scheme. More favourable treatment for least-developed countries has been incorporated into Japan's GSP. With effect from 1 April 1980, imports from least-developed countries of all products covered by the GSP except for three products are being admitted GSP duty free. Except for four products, ceiling limitations under the scheme do not apply to least-developed countries (L/4531/Add.2). Finland has extended GSP duty-free treatment to seven products imported from least-developed countries as from 1 January 1980 (L/3694/Add.9 and Add.9/Corr.1).

11. The information available indicates that most primary product exports of least-developed countries to industrial countries enter at zero or relatively low rates of duty. As a preliminary indication of the tariff situation applying to imports from least-developed countries in the main developed country markets, reference may be made to the tariff line data contained in the Addendum issued separately. The tables show for Australia, Austria, Canada, EEC, Finland, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States products at tariff line level, in which there were imports in 1976 from least-developed countries and which were dutiable on an m.f.n. basis at the beginning of the MTN. In relation to these tariff lines, the tables indicate the pre-MTN and post-MTN tariff treatment (m.f.n. and GSP), the value of imports and the main least-developed country suppliers.

12. It would seem that with more detailed information on products of interest to least-developed countries, including information on products which may be facing trade problems supplied by the least-developed countries themselves, the Sub-Committee might be in a position to examine the issues involved in the context of work in GATT in connexion with the possibilities for further trade liberalization on products of interest to developing countries. These issues might cover such matters as further possibilities for advance implementation of m.f.n. tariff concessions on products of particular interest to least-developed countries, possibilities for special treatment in the context of further work on trade liberalization in the Committee on Trade and Development, and possibilities for further consideration both of m.f.n. and GSP tariffs affecting the trade of least-developed countries.

Agreements on non-tariff measures

13. The Tokyo Round Agreements on non-tariff measures contain provisions on special and differential treatment for developing countries. As indicated below, some non-tariff measure agreements also incorporate specific objectives, understandings and commitments relevant to the interests of least-developed countries. For more precise details, delegations may wish to refer to the agreements concerned. It might be noted that Bangladesh and Tanzania are among a number of countries which have observer status in certain of the Committees administering non-tariff measure agreements.

14. In the Agreement on Government Procurement, Article III on special and differential treatment for developing countries requires the parties to the Agreement to take due account of the development, financial and trade needs of developing countries, in particular of the least-developed countries, when they implement and administer the Agreement. It is recognized that least-developed countries and other developing countries need to safeguard their balance-of-payments position, promote the establishment or development of domestic industries, support industrial units wholly or substantially dependent on government procurement, and encourage development through regional or global economic and trade co-operation. Developed country parties to the Agreement undertake to provide all technical assistance which they may deem appropriate to developing country parties in resolving their problems in the field of government procurement (Article III:8). Special treatment for least-developed countries is provided for in Article III.11 and 12. Such treatment shall be granted to least-developed country parties and to suppliers in these countries, having regard to paragraph 6 of the Tokyo Declaration, in the procurement of products originating in these countries. Benefits under the Agreement may also be afforded to least-developed countries which are not parties to the Agreement.

15. The provision of special and differential treatment for developing countries in the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade is the subject of Article 12 of the Agreement and of provisions in other articles. Article 11:3 for example states that priority be given to the needs of least-developed countries in making available advice and technical assistance in connexion with the various provisions of the Agreement. The parties, under Article 12, agree to take into account the special needs of developing countries, including the need to remove barriers to their exports, when they prepare and apply technical regulations, standards, test methods and certification systems and determine the degree to which standards in developing countries are in conformity with international standards established under the Agreement. The Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade would as appropriate grant to developing country signatories time-limited exceptions in whole or in part from obligations under the Agreement. The Committee would take particular account of the special problems of the least-developed countries.

16. There is also a section on special and differential treatment in the Customs Valuation Code permitting a developing country signatory to delay applying its provisions for up to five years from the date of entry into force of the Agreement for it and for a further period of three years with respect to the provisions contained in Articles 1.2(b)(iii) and 6. Developed country signatories would also provide technical assistance to those of developing countries on such bases and towards the ends they shall mutually agree.

17. Least-developed countries could benefit from the special provisions in Part III of the Code on Subsidies and Countervailing Duties which would give developing country signatories more latitude than would normally be allowed to developed country signatories, in the use of specified categories of subsidies to provide assistance to industries including those in the export sector. It shall not be presumed that export subsidies granted by a developing country signatory adversely affect the trade and production of another signatory in the manner specified in the Code. Adverse effects may only be established through an economic examination of the impact of specific subsidies.

18. Recognition is given in the Revised GATT Anti-Dumping Code to the special situation of developing countries. Signatories have undertaken to explore possibilities for constructive remedies contained in the Code before they impose anti-dumping measures which would affect the essential interests of developing countries. At its May meeting, the Committee on Anti-Dumping Practices, having regard to the special situation of developing countries, adopted decisions concerning the application and interpretation of the Agreement in relation to such countries when considering the application of anti-dumping measures. It also agreed on procedures for facilitating application of the relevant provisions of the Anti-Dumping Code by developing countries.

19. With respect to the Agreement on Import Licensing Procedures, the preamble recognizes the need to take into account the particular trade, development and financial needs of developing countries. In connexion with the provision of all relevant information concerning non-automatic import licensing, Article 3(b)(iv) states that developing countries would not be expected to take additional administrative or financial burdens on this account. With respect to ensuring a reasonable distribution of licences to new importers, the Agreement provides in Article 3(1) that special consideration should be given to those importers importing products originating in developing countries and, in particular, the least-developed countries.

20. The product agreements, such as the Arrangement Regarding Bovine Meat, acknowledge the special importance to the economies of certain developing countries of trade in the products they cover, for example, bovine meat and live animals. Certain of these products are important exports of some least-developed countries.

21. While most non-tariff measure agreements are still in the early stages of implementation, and some (Customs Valuation and Government Procurement) do not enter into force until 1 January 1981, the Sub-Committee might find it useful, within its terms of reference, to keep developments under review, taking into account any particular observations or suggestions that delegations may wish to put forward for consideration in the Sub-Committee. The situation could also arise where one or more delegations may wish to raise for examination any item-related non-tariff measures falling outside the field of the various Agreements which are considered to be affecting market opportunities.

having regard to any relevant work which may be taking place in other GATT bodies and Committees.¹

Other matters

Enabling Clause

22. The Enabling Clause decision arising from the Tokyo Round which provides a standing legal basis in GATT for differential and more favourable treatment for developing countries, covers also the questions of reciprocity and the fuller participation of developing countries. Notwithstanding the provisions of Article I of the General Agreement, contracting parties may accord special treatment to developing countries, including the least-developed countries in the context of any general or specific measures in favour of developing countries, without according such treatment to other contracting parties (paragraphs 1 and 2(a)). Differential and more favourable treatment could be granted to developing countries, in respect of (i) tariff preferences accorded under the GSP; (ii) non-tariff measures governed by agreements negotiated in the Tokyo Round; (iii) exchanges of tariff and, under certain conditions, non-tariff preferences among developing countries in the framework of regional or global trade and economic co-operation arrangements; and (iv) special treatment for the least-developed countries. Developed contracting parties undertake to exercise "the utmost restraint in seeking any concessions or contributions from least-developed countries for commitments made by them to reduce or remove tariffs and other barriers to the trade of the least-developed countries. Furthermore, these countries "shall not be expected to make concessions or contributions that are inconsistent with the recognition of their particular situation and prospects" (paragraphs 6 and 8).

23. The Committee on Trade and Development has been given primary responsibility for supervising the implementation of the Enabling Clause. Attention has been drawn to the provision in its paragraph 4, concerning notification possibilities and consultations in relation to the application of special and differential treatment. Reviews of the implementation of the Enabling Clause are undertaken together with the wider reviews of action towards the implementation of Part IV of the General Agreement, a regular feature of the Committee's work.

¹ It might be noted that the GATT Inventories of Non-Tariff Measures and the documentation for the Joint Working Group on Import Restrictions are in the process of being revised and updated on the basis of a notification and verification procedure. The Sub-Committee on Protective Measures provides a forum for the examination of protective measures which may have been taken by developed countries against imports from developing countries.

24. Presumably, the question here is whether the Sub-Committee would find it useful to review, at its meetings, developments under those areas of the Enabling Clause which are of particular relevance to the least-developed countries.

Technical assistance

25. Technical assistance to least-developed countries is available in all areas of GATT activities. The secretariat will continue to give special attention to the technical assistance needs of least-developed countries. It may be recalled that the Committee on Trade and Development at its thirty-eighth session considered proposals by the secretariat contained in document COM.TD/II/296 and delegations expressed the view that the areas listed therein provided a good basis for future GATT technical assistance activities. The Sub-Committee might, at its meetings, wish to provide an opportunity for observations or suggestions with respect to work on technical assistance for least-developed countries.

Concluding remarks

26. Taking into account the essential features of the Sub-Committee's terms of reference - special attention to the particular situation and trade problems of the least-developed countries including work relating to the results of the Tokyo Round, and to keep under review the special treatment which could be accorded these countries in the context of any general or specific measures taken in favour of developing countries - it is for consideration, in the light of the summary information provided in the note, whether the work of the Sub-Committee could consist provisionally of the following items, having regard to the activities of other GATT committees and bodies:

(i) Review of developments in international trade of relevance to the trade of least-developed countries

This might provide an opportunity for the Sub-Committee to review developments in commercial policy, points relating to the implementation of the Tokyo Round, activities in other GATT bodies as well as in other international organizations etc. of relevance specifically to the trade interests of least-developed countries so as to obtain an overall perspective of the situation for these countries

(ii) Review of measures taken in favour of least-developed countries

Countries might be invited to report on measures that have been taken or are being envisaged to provide least-developed countries with special treatment as referred to in the Sub-Committee's terms of reference. This activity in the Sub-Committee could form part of the overall review of the operation of the Enabling Clause of the parent body (the Committee on Trade and Development) dealing specifically with the interests of least-developed countries.

(iii) Export interests of the least-developed countries

The consideration of this item could be based on a secretariat background note providing statistical as well as tariff and trade information on selected items exported by individual least-developed countries and showing developed country markets and the commercial policy applied. Least-developed countries could also be invited to notify additional products of export interest. Particular points relating to the application of the non-tariff measure agreements of relevance to the least-developed countries could also be raised. The object would be to identify continuing barriers to the exports of least-developed countries for discussion, comments and suggestions in the Sub-Committee, as a contribution to work in the Sub-Committee itself or in other contexts on the question of possibilities for further trade liberalization.

(iv) Secretariat assistance

The Technical Cooperation Division in particular is available to provide, upon request, technical assistance to developing countries including the least developed among them. Delegations may have comments and suggestions to offer with respect to this work in the light of the particular interests of the least-developed countries.

(v) Other matters

It would, of course, remain open to the Sub-Committee to take up, within its terms of reference, any other matters relevant to GATT's work raised by members of the Sub-Committee, which have a bearing on the trade interests of the least-developed countries.

ANNEX I

Activities in International Organizations
on the Least-Developed Countries

1. Many international organizations have undertaken varying forms of action in favour of least-developed countries including research, ad hoc meetings of private or intergovernmental experts on general or specific development problems, emergency support programmes, and technical assistance. These activities, in most cases, derive from resolutions and decisions of their governing bodies and subsidiary bodies. Some more or less direct reference is nevertheless often made to Resolution 122(V) at UNCTAD V which decided that an Immediate Action Programme, 1979-1981, should be launched (paragraphs 1, 3 and 4), to be followed by a Substantial New Programme of Action for the 1980s. In General Assembly resolutions 34/203 and 34/210, terms of reference were specified for a preparatory committee for a United Nations Conference on the Least-Developed Countries to be held in 1981. The objective of the Conference would be to finalize, adopt and support the Substantial Programme of Action for the 1980s, which would be undertaken within the framework of the New Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade.
2. In the commercial policy field, preparatory studies are being undertaken on the provision of differential and remedial measures for least-developed countries within UNCTAD's Integrated Programme for Commodities; improvements in GSP, including harmonization and simplification of rules of origin, on products exported by least-developed countries; export marketing possibilities and export planning through long-term purchase agreements, import procurement; and general trade liberalization. Pilot and individual country case studies would determine long-term export potentials, possibilities for lowering import costs, trade financing, and the provision of technical assistance. The results of some of these studies have been reviewed by an ad hoc Group of Experts on the External Trade Sector of the Least-Developed Countries which sought, inter alia, to elaborate the bases for the Substantial New Programme for the 1980s. The Group endorsed the idea of export sector planning on a country-by-country basis through "integrated package projects", enlargement of importing quotas and lowered trade barriers for least-developed country exports where they could not be eliminated, procurement by developed countries from least-developed countries, the establishment of public investment banks and of export credit insurance and guarantee facilities, a substantial expansion in the flow of financial resources on appropriate terms, and the participation of least-developed countries in preferential trade arrangements.
3. The Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on the Least-Developed Countries held its second session in Geneva on 9-17 October 1980. The Committee agreed that the United Nations Conference

should be held in September 1981. It reviewed progress made under the Immediate Action Programme, 1979-1981, and underlined the need for greatly expanded financial assistance to least-developed countries aimed at providing 'an immediate boost' to their economies and at paving the way for much larger long-term development efforts. The importance of a country-by-country approach was stressed. It was anticipated that United Nations system organizations would undertake studies and actions within their respective sectoral and regional competence on problems of least-developed countries. These would provide valuable inputs for the United Nations Conference which would determine questions of strategy, modalities for implementation, and institutional relationships.

4. The ILO programme is being developed in the framework of its global World Employment Programme Research. A series of socio-economic surveys of individual least-developed countries have been proposed, arising out of the ILO's basic work on economic and social indicators. Alternative strategies and programmes may be investigated which would more effectively contribute towards activities concerning the satisfaction of basic needs, increasing employment and raising the productivity and incomes of the employed.

5. The FAO is giving priority to the needs of least-developed countries within its general assistance programmes relating to developing countries. These were particularly acute as is evidenced in negative growth rates in per capita food and agricultural production, chronic food insecurity, declining agricultural exports and terms of trade, and rapidly rising food imports. The ITC is giving priority treatment to least-developed countries in its technical co-operation programme for trade promotion, as well as in various inter-regional activities of the ITC, including market and product development studies, trade information and functional advisory services. A special programme of co-operation with least-developed countries was instituted in 1979 designed to supplement on-going activities. It was envisaged that the ITC would co-operate with other agencies, such as FAO, UNIDO and the World Bank in special programmes for the least-developed countries. The IMF and the ICRD have a number of established financing facilities which take into account the special nature of the economic problems facing developing countries, including least-developed countries.

6. The regional economic commissions, notably the Economic Commission for Africa in whose region there are some eighteen least-developed countries, and ESCAP with seven least-developed countries in its region, have been implementing regional programmes relating to development in the least-developed countries. The ECA has held a conference on the problems and prospects of the African least-developed countries, which has made detailed proposals and recommendations on strategies, priorities and policies. ESCAP has likewise convened a conference dealing with problems of the least-developed countries in the region.