

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

Sub-Committee on Trade of
Least-Developed Countries
25 May 1983

FUTURE PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE SUB-COMMITTEE ON TRADE OF LEAST-DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

Background note by the secretariat

1. At its forty-ninth session the Committee on Trade and Development accepted a proposal that the Sub-Committee on Trade of Least-Developed Countries should (a) monitor the implementation of those aspects of the Ministerial Declaration which concern least-developed countries; and (b) hold consultations between interested least-developed countries and their respective trading partners on issues related to their development and export interests, including the examination of barriers to their trade and any other relevant commercial policy matters. The Sub-Committee was subsequently requested to make the necessary arrangements for the inclusion of the above proposal in its programme of work.

I. Ministerial Declaration and least-developed countries

2. It may be recalled that as part of the Ministerial Declaration, the Contracting Parties decided to:

"Urge contracting parties to work towards further improvement of GSP or m.f.n. treatment for products of particular export interest to least-developed countries, and the elimination or reduction of non-tariff measures affecting such products."

As guidelines on how to pursue action towards facilitating trade of least-developed countries and reducing tariff and non-tariff obstacles to their exports the Contracting Parties annexed the following decision. Contracting parties were invited to:

- (a) further improve GSP or m.f.n. treatment for products of particular export interest to least-developed countries, with the objective of providing fullest possible duty-free access to such products;
- (b) use, upon request and where feasible, of more flexible requirements for rules of origin for products of particular export interest to least-developed countries.
- (c) eliminate or reduce non-tariff measures affecting products of particular export interest to least-developed countries;

- (d) facilitate the participation of least-developed countries in MTN Agreements and Arrangements;
- (e) strengthen the technical assistance facilities of the GATT secretariat targeted to the special requirements of least-developed countries.
- (f) strengthen trade promotion activities, through the ITC and other initiatives, such as by encouraging the establishment of import promotion offices in importing countries;
- (g) give more emphasis to the discussion and examination of policy issues of interest to least-developed countries in the context of further efforts to liberalize trade.

3. The above points (a) to (f) can be conveniently integrated under item (ii) of the regular programme of work of the Sub-Committee (see Annex to document COM.TD/LLDC/1). Delegations may nevertheless wish to comment on how the Sub-Committee might best monitor implementation of the measures contemplated above.

II. Consultations with least-developed countries and their trading partners

4. With particular reference to item (g) above, it has been proposed by the Committee on Trade and Development that ad hoc consultations be held in the Sub-Committee between interested individual least-developed countries and their respective trading partners on issues related to their export interests, including the examination of barriers to their trade and any other relevant commercial policy matters. Such consultations could be carried out under item (iii) of the present programme of work of the Sub-Committee, which provides for the consideration of matters relating to export interest of the least-developed countries (Annex to COM.TD/LLDC/1, item (iii)). The stated objective of this item is "to identify continuing barriers to the exports of least-developed countries for discussion, comments and suggestions in the Sub-Committee, as a contribution to the work of the Sub-Committee itself or in other contexts on the question of possibilities for further trade liberalization". In view of the above proposal the Sub-Committee might find it expedient to consider the following procedures for ad hoc consultations.

(i) Adoption of a timetable for a programme of ad hoc consultations

A tentative timetable for such consultations could be established. Depending on the number of least-developed countries which have expressed the desire to be included in the exercise, the Sub-Committee could hold one or two sessions of consultations each year. The first of such consultations may conveniently be held in the second half of the current year.

(ii) and content of consultations

Having in view the broad objectives indicated above and the Sub-Committee's terms of reference, the consultations in the

Sub-Committee could seek to identify the major problems faced by the consulting least-developed country in expanding and diversifying its exports, and discuss possible solutions to these problems. In this context developments relating to the export sector, the flow of domestic and external resources to that sector, efforts to further diversification of products, and the problems encountered could for example be discussed. Contracting parties would thus benefit from a further clarification of issues involved and a clear understanding of the nature of the difficulties faced by the consulting least-developed country in its trade. Proposals for follow-up action could be considered as appropriate by the Sub-Committee in the light of the conclusions reached in the consultations. Participation in the consultations might be open to all interested least-developed countries both contracting and non-contracting parties to the GATT.

(iii) Documentation

A country study prepared by the secretariat will serve as a basic document for the consultations. The country study would contain basic economic data on the consulting country; a description of its export sector and economy; its trade regime and commercial policy as well as data on identified tariff and non-tariff measures affecting its exports. Least-developed countries will be invited to notify any additional measures or products not covered by the documentation where their exports appear to be adversely affected. They could also identify other country markets not shown in the documentation which may be of interest with respect to actual or potential exports.

(iv) Reporting procedures

The Sub-Committee might decide that the results of the consultations will be embodied in a report with conclusions as appropriate to be submitted to the Committee on Trade and Development.

(v) Technical assistance for the consultations

Apart from the background documentation to be prepared by the secretariat, the various technical assistance facilities of the secretariat will be made available to consulting developing countries. At the request of consulting countries, the services of the Technical Co-operation Division may be made available for preparation of necessary background material.

III. Other items on the work programme

5. The Sub-Committee may decide to organize the rest of its work around the other elements of its regular programme of work. The work programme would consequently continue to include the following items: i) review of developments in international trade of relevance to the trade interests of least-developed countries; ii) review of measures taken in favour of least-developed countries; iii) identification of continuing barriers to the exports of least-developed countries; and iv) secretariat technical assistance.