

# GENERAL AGREEMENT ON

RESTRICTED

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# TARIFFS AND TRADE

Limited Distribution

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## RELATIONSHIP OF INTERNATIONALLY-RECOGNIZED WORKER RIGHTS TO INTERNATIONAL TRADE

### Communication from the United States

The following communication, dated 2 July 1987, has been received from the United States with the request that it be circulated as a document and that this matter be included as an item on the agenda of the Council meeting scheduled for 15 July 1987.

An important objective of a liberal international trading system should be that trade benefits should contribute to raised standards of living for workers in all countries. This objective is recognized in the preamble to the General Agreement. One indication of the degree to which this objective is realized in trading countries is the extent to which workers enjoy internationally-recognized worker rights (freedom of association; freedom to organize and bargain collectively; freedom from forced or compulsory labour; a minimum age for the employment of children; and, measures setting minimum standards in respect of conditions of work).

Trade which is based on denial of worker rights does not benefit workers in either exporting or importing countries. It runs counter to the GATT objective of raising standards of living through trade expansion in the context of a liberal trading régime.

The United States is of the view that the relationship between international trade and respect for internationally-recognized worker rights deserves discussion in a multilateral forum. We believe that the GATT Council is the appropriate forum and that a working party established under the Council would be a suitable vehicle for facilitating such a discussion in a way that would be certain not to prejudice the position of any delegation on the substance of the matter.

The United States delegations has, over the past several weeks, initiated a process of consultation with other delegations on this subject and it is our intention to continue these informal contacts with a view to seeking appropriate action by the council at its next session.