

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON

RESTRICTED

COM.TD/W/467

6 October 1988

TARIFFS AND TRADE

Limited Distribution

Committee on Trade and Development
Sixty-Fifth Session
17 and 21 October 1988

TECHNICAL COOPERATION WITH DEVELOPING COUNTRIES Note by the Secretariat

1. At its Sixtieth Session in November 1986, the Committee on Trade and Development reviewed the technical cooperation programme of the GATT secretariat and discussed the question of the further strengthening of this programme as to be able to respond to the much larger anticipated technical assistance and support requirements of developing countries in connection with their participation in the Uruguay Round negotiations. For the purpose of this discussion, the Committee had before it a note by the secretariat (COM.TD/W/445) outlining the objectives, scope and the principles on the basis of which the future technical cooperation activities were proposed to be organized.
2. The secretariat has since then been providing technical assistance to developing countries in the broad areas identified in paragraph 12 of document COM.TD/W/445. At its Sixty-First and Sixty-Second Sessions, respectively in June and October 1987, the Committee reviewed these activities on the basis of notes prepared by the secretariat (COM.TD/W/450 and COM.TD/W/454).
3. At its Sixty-Fourth Session the Committee held a thorough discussion on technical assistance to developing countries in the context of the Uruguay Round. The session was addressed by the Director-General of GATT and the representatives of UNCTAD, the World Bank, the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Inter-American Development Bank made statements outlining the technical assistance activities of their organizations.
4. The Director-General of GATT highlighted the growing importance of technical assistance and emphasized that in order for developing countries to participate effectively in the negotiating process, their first priority should be to strengthen trade policy personnel in the capitals and in Geneva. In this connection he referred to the efforts of the GATT secretariat, inter alia, in briefing trade policy officials through seminars and workshops and by strengthening trade policy courses. The Director-General stated that the immediate aim of the technical cooperation programme was to ensure that developing countries can take care of their interests and participate in the collective efforts of the Uruguay Round.

To this end, attempts would be made to define with greater precision the specific needs of governments. He added that the secretariat could also concentrate on helping developing countries to meet information requirements such as by organizing national data for submission to the GATT Integrated Data Base.

5. The Director-General in his statement also referred to the need to augment the capacity of the GATT secretariat to deliver increased technical assistance by additional voluntary financial contributions. Such voluntary contributions from some contracting parties have financed a few regional and sub-regional seminars on the GATT and the Uruguay Round in recent years. As the need for organizing general or specialized trade policy seminars on a regional or sub-regional basis is increasingly being felt by many developing countries particularly as the Uruguay Round negotiations gather momentum, similar voluntary financial support from other contracting parties will enable the secretariat to carry this programme forward. The Director-General had suggested that contracting parties might wish to consider the possibility of establishing a trust-fund in the GATT for this purpose. The secretariat is planning to hold consultations with interested contracting parties in this regard.

6. The subject of cooperation between different international organizations involved in technical assistance activities was also discussed at the Sixty-Fourth Session of the Committee. It was felt that the involvement of other organizations in these activities was a positive development and that there was enough scope for their activities to complement the efforts of the GATT secretariat. The importance of transparency in regard to technical assistance activities of international organizations was recognized and the rôle of the Committee on Trade and Development as the focal point for the exchange of information was emphasized.

7. The following paragraphs give a brief account of the technical cooperation activities of the secretariat since the beginning of 1988. It will be noted that these activities have developed in accordance with the guidelines indicated at the last meeting of the Committee. Members of the Committee may have some further suggestions as to the reorientation of the GATT secretariat's technical assistance activities in the context of the Uruguay Round. The Committee may also wish to be informed by representatives of other organizations active in the area of technical assistance about the further development of their activities since the Committee's last session.

8. In so far as the suggestion for the establishment of a trust fund to provide additional support for the secretariat's technical assistance is concerned, the secretariat is examining its different aspects prior to

discussion with delegations. Members of the Committee may however wish to express some views in this regard. Regardless of the question of a trust fund, there will be need for extrabudgetary contributions to the GATT secretariat's technical assistance activities in certain areas such as the organization of regional or sub-regional seminars.

Tariffs, NTM and Trade Data

9. During the period under review the secretariat made available information to developing countries, on request, identifying items of their export interest in developed country markets together with relevant data on trade flows, tariffs and non-tariff measures. Information on tariffs, non-tariff measures and trade flows in respect of particular products in selected developed country markets was also made available to those developing countries requesting such information in connection with their participation in the negotiations in the areas of natural resource-based products, tariffs, non-tariff measures, agriculture, etc.

Tropical Products

10. The secretariat also responded to requests from a number of delegations of developing countries for technical assistance in the area of tropical products. Aspects of this work included the identification of tariff and non-tariff treatment applicable in developed country markets on products of export interest to the developing countries concerned and the trade flows in these products, assistance in the preparation of indicative lists and in the examination of offers made by developed countries, and the provision of background data for use in further consultations and negotiations.

Least Developed Countries

11. The secretariat continued to give special attention to the technical assistance needs of the least developed countries by, among other things, providing them with data and other information and responding to their requests for briefings on issues of their particular interest in the Uruguay Round negotiations. The secretariat intends to continue to consult with the least developed countries on the particular problems affecting their participation in the negotiations.

Factual Background Notes

12. Factual background notes on some subjects covered in the Uruguay Round negotiations were prepared and made available, on request, to developing country delegations.

Briefing of Delegations and Officials

13. Briefings on the progress of the Uruguay Round negotiations were provided to officials and delegations visiting Geneva from the capitals of developing countries in the sectors or areas of their particular interest.

Briefing and Information Sessions

14. In consultation with delegations of developing countries, a three-day briefing session on GATT activities was organized by the secretariat in April 1988 as part of its technical cooperation activities. The objective of the briefing session was to inform delegates, especially those who were newcomers to Geneva, on an informal basis about the ongoing activities of the GATT including work in the various negotiating groups of the Uruguay Round and the matters under discussion. The session was open to delegations of all contracting parties and those of governments with observer status in GATT. The session was found to be useful and such sessions may be organized in future at least once every year, in consultation with delegations in Geneva.

15. The Technical Cooperation Division and the Division in charge of the Group of Negotiations on Services also organized two information sessions on trade in services, respectively in April and July 1988. These sessions were organized in response to requests from developing country delegations for more information about developments in the negotiating group on services. The information sessions provided delegations with an up-to-date view of the progress of the negotiations and also the opportunity to seek clarification on specific issues. The secretariat intends to organize more such information sessions in the future on other subjects of interest to developing country delegations, in consultation with them.

Country Missions and Seminars

16. There has been a continuing demand from developing countries for trade policy seminars and for country missions with the result that this has been an important area of technical cooperation activities during the period under review.

17. The Technical Cooperation Division organized a number of trade policy seminars in developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Some of these seminars were general trade policy seminars covering all aspects of GATT's work as well as the Uruguay Round negotiations, and were designed to assist concerned officials in national administrations in a clearer understanding of the nature and operation of the rules of the international

trading system as embodied in the GATT, and the nature, scope, objectives and progress of the Uruguay Round of trade negotiations. Some other of these seminars were more specialised, focusing on a few specific subjects of particular interest to the concerned developing countries. The programme for each seminar was prepared, as in the past, in consultation with the requesting country and reflected each country's particular interests, priorities and requirements.

18. Technical missions comprising officials of the secretariat also visited some developing countries, at their request, to hold discussions on specific trade policy questions and to advise concerned officials in regard to particular issues related to GATT's work.

Regional Trade Policy Seminars

19. In addition to national seminars, the secretariat also organized or participated in a number of regional trade policy seminars during the period under review.

20. A general seminar on the Uruguay Round for developing countries of the ESCAP region was organized in Bangkok in March 1988. Senior and middle level officials from fourteen developing countries in the region attended. This seminar was organized with financial assistance from the European Communities.

21. Another seminar on the Uruguay Round was held for the ASEAN countries in Jakarta in September 1988. Officials from the six ASEAN countries attended this seminar which was organized with the financial support of the Government of the Netherlands.

22. The secretariat also participated in and provided technical support to two sub-regional seminars on the Uruguay Round, one organized by the Commonwealth Secretariat for Commonwealth countries in Africa at Nairobi, Kenya, from 25 to 29 April 1988 and the other organized by the Secretariat of the ACP Group of States at Lusaka, Zambia, from 12 to 16 September 1988. It will also assist in two further sub-regional seminars on the Uruguay Round organized by the Canadian Institute for Research on Public Policy, one for East and South African countries to be held at Nairobi, Kenya, from 4 to 7 October 1988 and the other for West African countries to be held at Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, from 11 to 14 October 1988.

23. The programmes for the regional and sub-regional seminars, as for national seminars, covering general trade policy questions as well as specific issues of more particular interest to the developing countries

concerned were prepared, as in the past, in consultation with the host countries and organisations. The secretariat will continue in its endeavour to ensure that these programmes respond and relate to the particular situation and specific needs of the relevant countries or regions, and focus on their particular interests and concerns.

Technical Assistance in the Textiles and Clothing Sector

24. The provision of technical assistance in the field of textiles has been maintained during the period under review. The Technical Consultant (Textiles) continued to make available background material and statistical data to individual delegations upon request. Many delegations of developing countries, particularly small exporters and least-developed countries, were provided assistance, on request, in securing relevant material relating to issues arising in bilateral consultations and to matters for consideration by the Textiles Surveillance Body.