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TECHNICAL COOPERATION WITH DEVELOPING COUNTRIES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE URUGUAY ROUND

Note by the Secretariat

1. The technical cooperation programme of the GATT has been in operation since 1956. The programme has evolved and kept pace with different phases of GATT's work over the past thirty years.

2. At the Ministerial Meeting held in Punta del Este in September 1986, the Chairman of the meeting, in his concluding remarks before adoption of the Ministerial Declaration launching the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations, stated that:

"In order to participate fully in the negotiations, developing countries would require technical support. There was agreement that technical support by the secretariat, adequately strengthened, should be available to developing countries participating in the negotiations."

3. In pursuance of that decision, the Committee on Trade and Development, at its sixtieth session held in November 1986, approved the objectives, policy and principles of the technical cooperation programme of the GATT secretariat. The Committee agreed that:

"The objective of the GATT technical cooperation programme would be to help developing countries in their preparations for and participation in the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations, by providing data, information and background documentation focusing on issues and problems in the negotiations of interest to developing countries. The programme would thus aim at facilitating the more effective participation of developing countries in the Uruguay Round."

4. The Uruguay Round negotiations are now in their final phase. The current session of the Committee will be the last occasion on which the secretariat reports to the Committee on its technical cooperation programme in the context of the Uruguay Round. The Committee might, therefore, wish to take note of the extent of the work which has been done since the start of the negotiations and to initiate an exchange of views on the type of technical assistance delegations would need after the conclusion of the Round.

5. The technical assistance provided by the GATT secretariat has been periodically reviewed by the Committee on Trade and Development which has served as a forum for exchanging views on these matters. Developing country delegations have indicated their needs in terms of further technical assistance which has helped the GATT secretariat to tailor its technical assistance activities to the specific requirements of developing countries.

6. The technical cooperation programme has been flexible and has been adjusted according to the priorities in different phases of the negotiations. It is therefore not possible to give a comprehensive account of the technical assistance activities since the beginning of the Uruguay Round. However, an attempt has been made in the following paragraphs to present a broad picture of the activities over the period in question.

Country studies

7. In the initial phase of the negotiations, information was compiled and made available to a number of developing countries, upon request, identifying items of export interest to them in different markets, together with data on trade flows, tariffs and non-tariff measures, to assist individual developing countries in determining their priorities in the negotiations.

Tariffs and trade data

8. Data on tariffs and trade flows were provided to delegations of developing countries, in response to their requests, in respect of either the whole range of their export items or for particular products or product groups. In the early stage of negotiations, the data were required by developing countries in their preparations for tariff negotiations. Following agreement on procedures for tariff negotiations in early 1990, data and information were made available, on request of delegations of developing countries, to assist them in submitting proposals or requests on tariffs. Information was also provided to help developing countries assess, with reference to their trade interests, the proposals and initial offers on tariffs by developed countries.

Data on non-tariff measures

9. Tabulations on non-tariff measures applicable in developed country markets to products exported by developing countries were prepared and made available to individual developing countries, in the initial phase of negotiations. During 1990, information on non-tariff measures was provided, upon request, to assist developing countries in preparing their request lists and in the context of consultations and negotiations on NTMs.

Tropical products

10. The secretariat has also provided technical assistance in the area of tropical products in response to requests from a number of developing countries. Assistance in the early stages took the form of identification

of tariff and non-tariff treatment applicable in developed country markets to products of export interest to developing countries concerned and the trade flows in these products. Subsequently, the secretariat provided information to individual developing countries to assist them in the preparation of indicative request lists, in the examination of offers made by developed countries, in the assessment of negotiating proposals and in the context of further consultations and negotiations on tropical products.

Factual background notes

11. Factual background notes on specific issues in various subjects of the negotiations were prepared and made available, on request, to developing country delegations throughout the course of the Uruguay Round. The Technical Co-operation Division also periodically made available to delegations of developing countries progress reports covering all areas of the negotiations.

Assistance to Least Developed Countries

12. The secretariat continued to give special attention to the technical assistance needs of the least developed countries by, inter alia, providing them with data and other information required by them for pursuing their particular interests in various areas of the negotiations, such as tropical products, natural resource-based products, tariffs, non-tariff measures, agriculture, etc.

13. Special briefings were also organized by the Technical Co-operation Division of the secretariat for delegations and visiting officials of least developed countries on issues of particular interest to them in the Uruguay Round negotiations.

14. The Technical Co-operation Division has organized national seminars on the Uruguay Round in some least developed countries since the start of the negotiations. A regional seminar for least developed countries members of the ESCAP was organized by the GATT secretariat in Bangkok in June 1989 with financial support from the Government of Norway.

Briefing sessions for delegations and officials

15. Briefing of delegations and visiting officials of developing countries has been a regular activity of the secretariat. There was an increased interest in this during the last two years of the negotiations. Briefing was either given for individual delegations and officials or it was in the form of briefing sessions for a number of delegations. In the former case, Geneva-based delegations or visiting officials from capitals were briefed, upon request, on the progress of Uruguay Round negotiations in general as well as in special areas of interest to the delegation or the official.

16. A general briefing session has been organized each year by the Technical Co-operation Division, with the help of operational Divisions of the secretariat, to inform delegates, particularly those who were newcomers to Geneva, on an informal basis, about the work and progress in the various

negotiating groups of the Uruguay Round. In addition, special briefing sessions or information meetings were organized on specific subjects of the negotiations for small groups of developing countries. Each special session focused on one or two particular subjects.

17. A high-level briefing session for senior capital-based officials from some developing countries, including least developed, was organized in Geneva in June 1990, with the financial support of the Government of Canada. The one-week session covered developments in Uruguay Round negotiations in key subjects of interest to the participants.

Country missions and seminars

18. The demand from developing countries for secretariat assistance in organizing seminars and country missions remained strong throughout the Uruguay Round.

19. The Technical Co-operation Division of the secretariat organized some fifty-eight national seminars over the past four years, in developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The national seminars, organized in response to requests from developing countries, were either general or specialized. General seminars covered practically all subjects of the Uruguay Round and were designed to assist the officials of developing countries in understanding the objectives, scope and progress of the Uruguay Round negotiations. Specialized seminars, on the other hand, focused on a few specific subjects of particular interest to the country concerned. There was generally more interest in specialized seminars in 1989 and 1990. The programme of each seminar was prepared in consultation with the representatives of the host country and reflected its interests, requirements and priorities.

20. The secretariat also deputed its officials to visit some developing countries, upon their request, on technical missions with the aim of holding discussions on specific issues with the officials in the capitals.

Regional seminars and workshops

21. During the period under review, the Technical Co-operation Division organized regional and sub-regional seminars and workshops on the Uruguay Round negotiations, financed by voluntary contributions. The objective of these seminars and workshops was to enable developing country officials from a region or sub-region to exchange views on developments in the negotiations. Programmes for these events were drawn up in consultation with the host organizations and with the representatives of developing countries that were invited to participate in the seminars. The representatives of regional economic cooperation organizations also participated in some seminars and workshops.

22. A total of eleven regional and sub-regional seminars and workshops have been organized since the beginning of 1987. Voluntary financial contributions for these were provided by the EEC and by the Governments of Canada, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Netherlands and Norway.

Seminars/workshops of other organizations

23. The secretariat continued to cooperate, as far as possible, with other organizations by making available the services of its officials for participation in seminars/workshops on the Uruguay Round organized by them. Thus, secretariat officials participated in events organized by organizations including UNCTAD, the World Bank, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the ACP Secretariat, ASEAN, CARICOM and the Commonwealth Regional Consultative Group on Trade (CRCGT).

Seminars/workshops on the integrated data base

24. The secretariat also organized, as part of its technical cooperation programme, two seminars/workshops in connection with the integrated data base (IDB) for technical experts from capitals. These were designed to explain to the experts the plans and data requirements for the IDB and to help specialists find solutions to data submission problems.

Special training course on GATT dispute settlement procedures

25. The Technical Co-operation Division, in collaboration with the Legal Affairs Division, organized a special training course in November 1989 for delegations and officials of contracting parties on GATT's dispute settlement procedures. The course was organized in pursuance of the Decision on Improvements to the GATT Dispute Settlement Rules and Procedures adopted by CONTRACTING PARTIES on 12 April 1989 (L/6489).

Workshop on anti-dumping practices and procedures

26. Upon request of some delegations from developing countries, a workshop on anti-dumping practices and procedures was organized by the Technical Co-operation Division in June 1990. The objective of the workshop, which was open to delegations from all countries participating in the Uruguay Round, was to assist participants in having a better understanding of the procedures and practices relating to the application and assessment of anti-dumping duties in some of the major countries. Four independent experts made presentations and comments and answered questions.