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TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO DEVELOPING COUNTRIES  
IN THE CONTEXT OF THE URUGUAY ROUND

Communication from UNCTAD

The following communication, dated 11 November 1993, has been received from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, with the request that it be circulated to delegations for their information.

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UNCTAD Technical Assistance Activities in Relation to  
the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations

The following communication outlines the technical assistance activities of UNCTAD in relation to work in the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations and related developments over the period since UNCTAD's last submission under this agenda item of the Committee on Trade and Development.

Notwithstanding difficulties arising from the transition period between the United Nations Development Programme programming cycles, efforts by UNDP and UNCTAD succeeded in maintaining continued activities of the UNDP financed Projects described in the previous submission, i.e., an interregional project, three regional projects, for Africa, Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean, and one sub-regional project (for Central American countries) through 1992-93.

In general, this assistance involved analysis of the Draft Final Act and its implications for developing countries as a whole, as well as individual and groups of developing countries, and more recently assistance with respect to the market-access negotiations on both goods and services. This assistance took the form of technical inputs for the preparation of requests and offers by the governments concerned and for their assessment of the requests and offers tabled by other participants. This work has also included appraisals of the overall impact of the Uruguay Round potential results, as they stand at present, on the trade of individual countries and groups of countries. Technical advisory missions were carried out in response to requests from governments and sub-regional and regional secretariats. Workshops were also organized over this period.

The year 1992 was the beginning of the Fifth programming cycle of the UNDP. In this context, two of the regional projects, those for the Asia and the Pacific Region and for the Latin America and the Caribbean Region, have been succeeded by new comprehensive programmes of technical cooperation, with somewhat different structures and covering a considerably wider range of issues. UNDP has

been able to devote relatively modest resources to these projects and additional contributions are being sought from other potential donors.

For Asia and the Pacific, a new Project on "Institutional Capacities for Multilateral Trade" (RAS/92/034) has been established. This Project has been providing technical support to developing countries from the region in the latter phase of the Uruguay Round and will continue to assist countries in the implementation of the results of the Round, which will involve assistance with respect to the adaptation of national laws and regulations and the development and strengthening of necessary human resources. The new project contains also components dealing with trade in services, trade and the environment and competition policies, as well as the identification and analysis of possible issues for future trade negotiations of interest to the Region. The project lays particular emphasis on cooperation with academic and research institutions in the Region, and provides resources for the sub-contracting to such institutions of work related to the above-mentioned issues. ESCAP, ITC, WIPO and the World Bank are also involved in the execution of other components of this Project.

LATINTRADE emerged as an initiative involving the concerted efforts of the UNDP and UNCTAD and the participation of regional and sub-regional institutions, including the Organization of American States (OAS), the Inter-American Development Bank, the Latin American Economic System (SELA) and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), as well as the sub-regional integration secretariats. The overall objective of the programme is to enhance and strengthen the national negotiating capacities of Latin American and Caribbean countries to enable them to pursue their trade and development objectives and achieve a more effective participation in new international trade arrangements. The UNDP/UNCTAD Project (RLA/92/012) includes also components related to the post-Uruguay Round implementation issues, trade and environment, trade in services, the regional trade information infrastructure, and development of human resources.

In Africa, the project RAF/87/157 has been extended to the end of 1993 and continues to provide assistance to African countries in the Uruguay Round. Due to shortage of UNDP resources, a programme comparable to those established in Asia/Pacific and Latin America has not yet been established, although UNCTAD is attempting to obtain resources from various sources so that similar assistance tailored to the African countries' needs can be provided in the post-Uruguay Round period. This would be in keeping with the request for technical assistance addressed to UNCTAD by the Conference of African Ministers of Trade recently held in Tunis under the auspices of ECA, aimed at assisting African countries in the implementation of Uruguay Round results, strengthening African countries trading capacity and competitiveness in order to take advantage of trade opportunities arising from multilateral trade negotiations, and assisting these countries to be better prepared for the future trade negotiations, envisaged in some of the Uruguay Round agreements and in defining a new agenda for trade negotiations.

In Central America, project CAM/90/008, executed in collaboration with ECLAC and in association with SIECA, has been actively assisting Central American countries both in their participation in the Uruguay Round and their accession to GATT, where relevant. Training and development of human resources, modernization of trade legislation to bring it into conformity with multilaterally-agreed rules, as well as detailed and comprehensive cooperation through specific technical inputs, both in capitals and in work with delegations in Geneva, have been the main activities undertaken in the framework of this project.

It is expected that, in addition to the international organizations mentioned above, GATT will continue to collaborate in the activities of these projects.

It should be recalled that the Cartagena Commitment of UNCTAD VIII acknowledges the appreciation expressed by recipient countries for the support provided by UNDP through UNCTAD to facilitate the effective participation of developing countries in the Uruguay Round. The Cartagena Commitment calls upon the UNCTAD secretariat to strengthen its technical cooperation activities, which should encompass, inter alia, trade negotiations, market access, and assessment and implementation of the results of the Uruguay Round.

Pursuant to paragraph 144 of the Cartagena Commitment, the Trade and Development Board will analyse and assess the outcome of the Uruguay Round, in particular in areas of interest or concern to developing countries, and its impact on the international trading system. In this context, the Board is to examine, on the basis of analyses by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, the problems and opportunities faced by developing countries and the economies in transition in Central and Eastern Europe in increasing their participation in trade in goods and services in the 1990s.