

**GENERAL AGREEMENT
ON TARIFFS AND TRADE**

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MANAGEMENT OF ACCESSION NEGOTIATIONS

Communication from Sweden on behalf of the Nordic Countries

The following communication, dated 9 June 1994, has been received from the Permanent Mission of Sweden with the request that the matter be inscribed on the Agenda of the Council meeting on 21 June 1994.

The multilateral trading system is on its way to becoming for the first time truly global in the real meaning of the term. To date, 21 requests for accession have been received and several more are anticipated. The processing of these requests represents a major challenge to contracting parties.

The benefits that can be drawn from these accessions are important and have both an economic and a political dimension. The principles underlying the GATT rules contribute to sound economic policy formulation. Trade policy reform is essential to the general economic transition process taking place in many of the countries concerned. Wider acceptance of the rules of the multilateral trading system can only help to prevent economic conflicts, or to solve them when they occur. The political gains are obvious.

Given the present pace of accession negotiations, it is unlikely that the existing requests, let alone those to come, can be taken care of within an acceptable time-frame. This will become even more so as the scope of the accession negotiations is broadened to include the commitments, in both old and new areas, which result from the Uruguay Round.

The accession process is complex, with many stumbling blocks along the way. The major burden falls, naturally, on the candidate countries, who may need technical advice. Delegations (including the Nordic ones), both in Geneva and in capitals, are faced with severe limitations as to how many accession negotiations they can prepare and participate in concurrently. The Secretariat labours hard and efficiently but is limited by the very small resources available to the area. One conclusion which has been drawn from the above is that, with present capacity, delegations are able to participate in no more than five meeting days per month for the totality of accession working parties.

The Nordic countries believe that the situation alluded to points to the need for focused attention of contracting parties on the accession issue in all its aspects. The aim of this attention should be to ensure the effectiveness of the accession process, so that the political priority of making the multilateral trading system truly global is not hampered. They therefore wish to initiate a discussion of the matter both in the GATT Council and in the Preparatory Committee of the WTO.