GENERAL AGREEMENT

ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

RESTRICTED
C/COM/4
16 November 1994
Limited Distribution

(94-2440)

COUNCIL
10 November 1994
Item No. 15

MANAGEMENT OF ACCESSION NEGOTIATIONS

Statement by the Chairman of the Council

At the November 1994 Council meeting, the Chairman of the Council made the following statement:

"In recent meetings of the Council, a number of delegations have suggested that the unusual increase in the number of requests for accession to the GATT and eventually the WTO calls for an effort to rationalize the management of work on accession negotiations in order to ensure that such negotiations can be successfully concluded in the most effective possible manner.

Such negotiations are carried out according to established procedures both in GATT and in the Preparatory Committee to the WTO. After consultations with delegations, it has nevertheless been possible to identify a certain number of points which may help to guide both the Secretariat and governments in handling the negotiations on accession. These points, which I will now read out to you, are of an indicative nature; their aim is to rationalize the manner of work on accession negotiations when an unusually large number of requests for accession must be dealt with. They are not intended in any way to substitute for the established procedures which are maintained.

The points are as follows:

1. the management of accession negotiations in the GATT should ensure the wider acceptance and effective application of rules and disciplines under the GATT, thus contributing towards the reform processes in the applicant countries or territories, and towards the objective of further strengthening the multilateral trading system;

2. there shall be no lowering of present standards for terms of accession to GATT;

3. accession negotiations should be limited to issues related to GATT rights and obligations including market access to the applicant country or territory;

4. accession negotiations should be approached on a case-by-case basis, while respecting the established procedures for negotiations with all applicants;

5. adequate lead-time should be allowed in the preparatory stage of accession negotiations before meetings of the respective working parties are convened, in order to allow both the applicant government and members of the working party to better prepare themselves;

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6. in line with 5 above, more than one round of questions and answers may be organized if necessary; subsequent rounds will be designed to select and clarify issues before an initial meeting of the working party;

7. adequate lead-time should be allowed for governments to examine documentation;[1] the conformity of such documentation with established procedures should be checked in advance by the Secretariat, which would inform contracting parties and the applicant government of its views;

8. the Secretariat may be invited to examine the technical assistance requirements of the applicant government so as to elaborate its own plans for assistance and further coordinate them with those of individual governments;

9. the applicant government should be encouraged to undertake the necessary in-depth preparation for the accession negotiations before the working party meetings, inter alia, through informal consultations with contracting parties and the Secretariat;

10. applicant governments should also avail themselves, to the extent possible, of the training activities of GATT as part of their preparation for negotiations and to fully use their GATT observer status, in particular, to attend meetings of other accession working parties and of various committees."

At its meeting, the Council took note of this statement.

[1] i.e. three to four weeks.