

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE INFORMAL GROUP OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES HELD ON 3 MARCH 1969

Prepared by the Secretariat

1. A meeting of the Informal Group of developing countries in GATT was held on 3 March 1969 under the chairmanship of H.E. Mr. C.H. Archibald, Ambassador of Trinidad and Tobago. The meeting was attended by the representatives of Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Ghana, India, Israel, Ivory Coast, Jamaica, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, United Arab Republic, Uruguay and Yugoslavia.
2. The Chairman recalled the discussions at the thirteenth session of the Committee on Trade and Development concerning arrangements to be made for the implementation of the Conclusions of the twenty-fifth session of the CONTRACTING PARTIES. He specially drew attention to the decision of the Committee to undertake an examination of the operation of Part IV of the General Agreement. According to the agreement reached at that session, contracting parties should submit by 31 March 1969 statements of the difficulties they had encountered in the implementation of Part IV and suggestions on how to ensure more satisfactory and effective operation of those provisions. The secretariat would collate and circulate all such communications received and provide such supplementary material as it might consider useful. This documentation would serve as a basis for discussion of this subject which would take place in the Committee and if necessary in a working party to be appointed for this purpose. Developing countries had generally agreed that this was a very important task to which the Committee should devote the closest attention. In order that the examination would be meaningful and fruitful it would appear that developing countries ought to give careful thought to the preparation of the statements which they were expected to submit this month. The Informal Group was invited to consider what steps might be taken to impress on the governments of developing countries the importance of this exercise and to ensure that the statements of difficulties that they submitted would be substantive and exhaustive.
3. In the course of discussion members of the Group expressed views on various aspects of the problem. It was pointed out, for example, that the statements to be submitted by developing countries should cover all aspects of the operation of Part IV, that is, not only the difficulties they had encountered in securing the reduction and removal of trade barriers affecting their exports but also any infringements of the standstill provisions of Article XXXVII. The developed countries themselves naturally tended to be reticent on any steps they had taken which were contrary to the standstill provisions and it was up to the developing countries to be vigilant and to report on any action adversely affecting their exports. In the

preparation of such statements governments would be well advised to seek supporting information from the trading communities in their respective countries. As the secretariat paper in COM.TD/W/91 had pointed out the provisions of Article XXXVI went further than the specific commitments provided for in Article XXXVII. The statements should thus cover not only action or lack of action in relation to the provisions of Article XXXVII, but all governmental measures and policies relevant to the principles and objectives set out in Article XXXVI.

4. There was general agreement in the Group that the statements should contain detailed information on concrete cases; they should relate to specific measures taken or maintained by developed countries. These cases might relate to the principle of non-reciprocity in trade negotiations, the standstill provisions, the undertaking to reduce differential tariffs adversely affecting processed products, etc. A certain amount of general commentary having already been provided by the secretariat in COM.TD/W/91, it would serve little purpose for governments further to enlarge on the well-known grievances in general terms. In other words the governments should endeavour to enumerate the cases in which the provisions of Part IV had been ignored or had proved ineffective in bringing about solutions to problems faced by developing countries in expanding their exports.

5. It was suggested by some members of the Group that the study to be undertaken by the Committee should also cover the general question of the basic relationship between the provisions of Part IV and those of the other parts of the General Agreement. The legal binding force of the Part IV provisions in supersession of such more general provisions as those of Article I should be confirmed and consolidated.

6. The Group agreed that every effort should be made to impress on the governments of developing countries the importance of the task under reference and to urge that the closest attention be given to the preparation of the statements which they had been requested to submit by 31 March. Members of the Group were urged to communicate with their governments on this subject as soon as possible. It was also agreed that members of the Group who were in a position to do so should contact each other with a view to drawing up a paper containing guidelines which might be useful to governments in the drawing up of their statements. It was agreed that the Chairman of the Group should organize such consultations with a view to presenting a draft paper for consideration at the next meeting of the Group.