

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

RESTRICTED

MTN/W/16
16 July 1975

Special Distribution

Multilateral Trade Negotiations

Trade Negotiations Committee

MEETING OF JULY 1975

Statement by Chairman of Group "Tropical Products"

1. Since its establishment by the Trade Negotiations Committee in February of this year to organize and conduct negotiations on tropical products, the Group "Tropical Products" has held two meetings in April and June respectively. The results of these meetings are summarized in documents MTN/TP/1 and MTN/TP/3.
2. As indicated in MTN/TP/1, the Group drew up guidelines for the organization of negotiations on tropical products which basically provide for a request and offer procedure and for the consideration of matters relating to trade in tropical products which may require multilateral action. In terms of this procedure, developing country participants were invited to submit lists of initial requests for concessions to other participants in whose markets they have an interest as exporters of tropical products. The Group also agreed that it would keep under review the progress made in the negotiations on tropical products, that it would review and examine questions relating, inter alia, to non-tariff measures which are not found to lend themselves to solutions on a product-by-product basis and that the interconnexion between negotiations on tropical products and those on other products would be borne in mind with the Trade Negotiations Committee exercising the necessary co-ordination, keeping in view the special and priority treatment to be given to tropical products.
3. At its second meeting held in June the Group noted that a number of developing country participants had submitted their initial request lists for concessions to other participants and urged other developing country participants who were interested in tropical products to present their lists at the earliest possible date. The secretariat informs me that until now twenty five developing countries have submitted initial request lists covering a wide range of products in their raw, semi-processed and processed forms, and relating to the reduction or elimination of tariffs on both a most-favoured-nation and a preferential basis as well as to proposals for action on various non-tariff measures.

./.

4. The Group also agreed that intensive consultations should proceed as rapidly as possible between the countries concerned. These consultations would cover inter alia clarification and discussion of the requests as well as preliminary substantive reactions to the requests with a view to the early tabling of offers. It is understood that a number of contacts have taken place between delegations in recent weeks basically for the purpose of clarification. Nevertheless, neither the Chairman nor probably the GATT secretariat has sufficient information concerning the number of these consultations and their results. I would therefore merely request participating delegations to furnish adequate information as soon as possible after consultations are held.

5. The Group is scheduled to meet again during the week commencing 20 October 1975 to review the progress made in the consultations and to examine arrangements and proceed to establish a time-table for the presentation and possible circulation of initial offers. The Group is also expected to take up questions relevant to the negotiations on tropical products which may require multilateral action and consider how special and priority treatment may be ensured in this area.

6. It is to be hoped, Mr. Chairman, that between now and the next meeting of the Group maximum progress will be made in the consultations envisaged under the procedures. In this connexion, I may mention that the Group requested its Chairman to convene a meeting earlier than scheduled in the event that consultations did not take place or did not progress satisfactorily. I have also no doubt that, as again provided in the procedures, the secretariat would stand ready to give the fullest assistance to delegations in making the necessary arrangements for these consultations.

7. The Tokyo Declaration provides that tropical products will be treated as a special and priority sector. The discussions within the Group have reflected a widespread preoccupation with the practical application that may be given to the concept of special and priority treatment, in terms of both depth and timing. In this connexion, I wish to draw attention to Section 3 of the Chairman's summing up of the discussions of the initial meeting of the Group which suggests that this Committee in its consideration of action in this area may wish to take into account developments in the negotiations as a whole and the desirability of having concrete results in as broad an area as possible with respect to tropical products at the earliest possible date bearing in mind that the Ministers stated in the Tokyo Declaration their intention that the trade negotiations be concluded in 1975.