

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

RESTRICTED

MTN/W/24

11 December 1975

Special Distribution

Multilateral Trade Negotiations

MEETING OF DECEMBER 1975

Suggestion by the Chairman

1. As a result of the discussions that have been going on, my reading of the present situation is that there still exists a rather serious difference of opinion between several delegations about the way agricultural products should be treated in the negotiations. In spite of all the efforts undertaken and the many bilateral contacts, it has not been possible to solve these difficulties and come to a common position. The procedural consequences of this have been that the Group "Agriculture" has been unable to complete its work programme and move forward to consider substantive issues.
2. The question that we now face is whether this procedural block in the work of Group "Agriculture" should be accepted until such time as we have completely settled the fundamental difference of view. I do not think it should.
3. If I am right the practical problems which remain outstanding are the following:
 - the possibility to provide for bilateral consultations
 - the possibility of all groups working in concert
 - the need to provide appropriate procedures to take into account the particular problems of developing countries.
4. So far as the first problem is concerned, namely the provision of procedures for bilateral consultations, I think there is no government which would be opposed to the proposition that both multilateral and bilateral consultations can take place within the framework of the agricultural group with a view to facilitating the carrying out of its task. It seems to me that both multilateral and bilateral consultations are really essential to ultimate success of the negotiations. I think that what is important is not that consultations take place under the auspices of one Group or another but that information regarding consultations is immediately communicated to all Groups.

./.

5. So far as the second problem is concerned, it is a necessity of a general order that all groups work in concert. I think that everyone is convinced about the necessity to consider the negotiations as an indivisible unity. The Tokyo Declaration states in paragraph 3(e): "The negotiations should aim, inter alia, to ... include, as regards agriculture, an approach to negotiations which, while in line with the general objectives of the negotiations, should take account of the special characteristics and problems in this sector; ...". It states in paragraph 4: "The negotiations shall cover tariffs, non-tariff barriers and other measures which impede or distort international trade in both industrial and agricultural products, including tropical products and raw materials, whether in primary form or at any stage of processing including, in particular, products of export interest to developing countries and measures affecting their exports." It states in paragraph 8: "The negotiations shall be considered as one undertaking, the various elements of which shall move forward together." This leads to the conclusion that there shall be liaison between the various negotiating groups to ensure the harmonious and balanced development of all elements subject to negotiation.
6. In this regard, a decision was taken by Group "Agriculture" at its meeting of 8 May of this year which noted that "matters of a global nature, including tariff and non-tariff measures affecting agriculture would be taken up in a number of contexts within the overall context of these negotiations. In such cases, the Group and its Sub-Groups will concern themselves with the agricultural aspects of these matters and will treat them in conjunction with the work of the Tariffs and Non-Tariff Measures Groups and the results of this work will be communicated to other Groups concerned with a view to arriving at the harmonious and balanced development of all the elements subject to negotiation in the furtherance of paragraph 8 of the Tokyo Declaration."
7. As regards the particular interests of the developing countries, I believe that bilateral and multilateral consultations can contribute effectively to identification of the agricultural products of export interest to them, and of the measures affecting their exports and, in this way, facilitate full implementation of what was agreed in the Tokyo Declaration with respect to those countries, in particular in paragraphs 2, 5, 6 and 10 thereof.
8. I really do not believe that it is necessary to go into further detail at this stage. It would seem to me, however, that the members of each Group and heads of delegations can only be fully aware of what is happening in the various Groups if information is communicated promptly at the conclusion of each meeting.
9. I believe, therefore, that procedurally the work could now go ahead on the basis of the approach I have outlined and I hope that agreement can be reached on an additional work programme carried out in this way.
10. I should make clear that what I have said now relates specifically to procedure and does not prejudice in any way certain differences between delegations to which I referred at the beginning of my statement.