

# GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

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## Multilateral Trade Negotiations

### Group "Tropical Products"

#### CHAIRMAN'S SUMMING-UP AND RECORD OF DECISIONS AT MEETING OF 20-23 OCTOBER 1975

1. The Group "Tropical Products" held its third meeting during the period 20-23 October 1975, to carry forward the negotiations on tropical products in accordance with the guidelines agreed at its initial meeting (MTN/TP/1) and the decisions taken at the second meeting (MTN/TP/3). The Group agreed to invite the Secretary-General of UNCTAD or his representative to attend this meeting as an observer.
2. The Group heard statements from many delegations in connexion with the review of progress made in the consultations on the request lists for concessions on tropical products submitted by developing countries. All who spoke referred to the usefulness of these consultations in clarifying, examining and discussing the nature and detail of individual request lists for concessions. It was mentioned by some delegations that they saw this as a necessary stage of the negotiations on tropical products which would help their authorities in the formulation of initial offers on tropical products at an early date.
3. Some delegations indicated that in the light of a preliminary assessment their authorities were considering the possibility of reducing tariffs on tropical products generally by including them in their respective GSP schemes although some of these authorities may also make offers on an MFN basis. Some other delegations, while not excluding the possibility that certain items may be covered by their generalized schemes of preferences stated that, in the context of the multilateral trade negotiations, the offers by their governments would be in the form of MFN concessions.
4. A number of delegations indicated some concern, on the basis of the discussions with the countries to which their request lists had been addressed, that initial offers may cover only a limited range of products. They hoped that this would not prove to be the case when initial offers were actually tabled. These delegations stressed the need for comprehensive offers covering tariff and non-tariff measures with substantial product coverage.

5. It was suggested that developing countries which have not so far submitted their initial requests, those who wished to revise their initial requests, or requesting countries not having provided the clarifications sought, should do so at the earliest possible date. It was noted that it remained open for requesting countries to submit additional request lists on tropical products.

6. The Group examined arrangements including the question of establishing a time-table for the presentation and circulation of initial offers, having regard to the desirability of achieving concrete results at the earliest possible date in accordance with Section 3 of the Guidelines for the Organization of Negotiations on Tropical Products (MTN/TP/1).

7. Having regard to the importance attached by all delegations to securing substantial offers on tropical products and in view of the fact that it is a special and priority sector, the Group agreed that initial offers should be tabled by all participants to which requests had been addressed, by 1 March 1976. One delegation indicated that his country would do its utmost to complete its domestic legal procedures so as to be in a position to present its offers by this date. The Group stressed the importance of this date being respected by all participants.

8. In the context of the agreement regarding the time-table for the presentation of initial offers, the Group agreed that the consultations on the request lists should continue with a view to completing the clarification and examination of these lists and in particular providing substantive preliminary reactions on the requests.

9. It was also noted in this connexion that plurilateral consultations between exporting developing countries and the country or countries to which request lists have been addressed, could be arranged where considered useful in accordance with the procedures agreed at the June 1975 meeting of the Group (MTN/TP/3, (MTN/TP/3, paragraph 4(iii)).

10. The Group considered the question of the circulation of initial offer lists. It was unable to reach agreement on this matter and decided to take it up for decision at its next meeting.

11. It was proposed in the light of the procedures generally followed in past negotiations and the guidelines laid down in MTN/TP/1, that the offers on tropical products could be expected to provide, inter alia, the following details in an appropriate format: tariff item number, description of product, rate of duty as at ... (MFN, GSP), countries requesting tariff concessions, requested rate of duty (MFN, GSP, other) and tariff concessions offered; with respect to non-tariff measures, the details could cover countries requesting concessions, non-tariff concessions requested and non-tariff concessions offered. It was agreed that the details of the procedure and format would be decided at the next meeting of the Group.

12. The Group would at its next meeting beginning 10 February 1976:

- (a) review the progress made in the consultations;
- (b) take a decision on the questions of the circulation of offers and the format;
- (c) address itself to questions covered by sections 1(v), 1(ix) and 2(iii) of the Guidelines;
- (d) discuss and decide on any other matters for carrying forward the negotiations on tropical products with the objective of securing the earliest possible implementation of concessions on tropical products.