

# GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

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## REVIEW OF THE GATT TRAINING PROGRAMME

### BACKGROUND NOTE

#### I. INTRODUCTION

1. Various questions relating to the GATT Training Programme were discussed during the October 1984 Meeting of the Committee on Budget, Finance and Administration (L/5699, paragraphs 44-51), and in the Council Meeting of November 1984 (C/M/183, paragraphs 82-89). Reference was also made in the Council's report to the 40th Session of the Contracting Parties in November 1984 (L/5734, pages 80, 81).

2. During the Council Meeting in November 1984 (C/M/183, pages 84-89), a number of representatives, noting that it was the Budget Committee's intention to further discuss the GATT training courses, stressed that questions concerning matters such as the content, length of the courses and number of participants, were directly related to the policy and objectives of the Training Programme and should be discussed at the level of trade policy experts. Further, they indicated that the Budget Committee would not be the proper forum to discuss such issues. They proposed that a review of the Training Programme should be carried out to see whether any basic modification of the content and policy of the courses was necessary taking into account the past objectives and experience gained in the operation of the courses and changes in international trade relations over the years.

3. At their 40th Session in November 1984 the Contracting Parties, in adopting the report of the Council, approved the Director-General's intention to consult with delegations on the future of the GATT Commercial Policy Courses (L/5734, page 80). In order to facilitate consultations on the courses, the secretariat has prepared the present note.

## II. THE CURRENT TRAINING PROGRAMME

4. The GATT Training Programme began in 1955. As from 1960 a system of two regular courses each year in English and French respectively was introduced. The 1982 Ministerial Meeting agreed that a regular course in the Spanish language should also be offered. The first Spanish-speaking course took place in 1984. A rotation system for the three languages is applied whereby the two-courses-a-year system is retained with an English-speaking course held every year, the second course alternating between French and Spanish. All courses, however, are open to qualified candidates whatever their mother tongue, and a number of countries have sent participants to courses held in languages other than their own.

5. The number of participants per course was increased from 20 to 24 in 1983. The length of the courses at present is of  $16\frac{1}{2}$  weeks duration. The programme of the courses covers topical questions in the field of international economic relations. It includes lectures and discussions on the principles and the structure of international trade, the elaboration and implementation of trade policy, the principal problems and sectors of international trade, the expansion of trade and promotion of exports of the developing countries, the provisions of the General Agreement, the work of the Contracting Parties and the various GATT bodies, the relationship between international trade and monetary problems, the agreements negotiated during the Tokyo Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations, and the Action Programme resulting from the 1982 Ministerial Meeting. Particular emphasis is laid on practical work which involves the organization of seminars, group discussions and the preparation of studies on subjects of particular interest to the participants. In addition to GATT secretariat officials, a number of outside guest lecturers are invited to contribute to the courses. In 1980, a trade negotiation simulation exercise was added. The participants also attend GATT meetings. Towards the end of the course, a fortnight's study tour abroad has taken place. Around the middle of the course a one-week study tour in Switzerland has also been undertaken.

### III. OBJECTIVES OF THE TRAINING PROGRAMME AND ITS REALIZATION IN THE 1980's

6. From the outset the principal aim of the GATT Commercial Policy Courses has been to help participants "achieve a deeper understanding of trade policy matters, a full and up-to-date knowledge of the General Agreement and its related instruments, and of the work undertaken by GATT and other international bodies in the field of trade policy which will be helpful to them in work in their own administrations and promote a more effective participation of their countries in GATT activities" (L/5701).

7. Another concern has been that the courses should have a practical aspect and not depend only on lectures. It has also been the view that the courses should have an international character so as to enable officials from different regions and countries to exchange views on matters of common concern and to understand their respective problems.

8. In 1960, when the system of two regular courses in English and French each year was introduced, there were 43 contracting parties of which 22 were developing countries. From 1961 to 1985, some 44 additional developing countries have acceded to the GATT. During the same period the overall demand has increased steadily from a ratio of 1:1 (1 candidature for 1 fellowship) to a ratio of approximately 4:1. The largest increase has taken place in the group of English-speaking countries (4.8:1). At the same time, except for the increase from 20 to 24 in 1983, the number of fellowships has remained stable. Pressures on the secretariat and competition among countries to obtain fellowships is now considerable.

9. Over the years it has been generally assumed that the lack of greater participation of the developing countries in the GATT system was due to shortage of the necessary knowledge and administrative expertise. The view is being increasingly expressed that developing countries should be encouraged to integrate themselves more fully into the trading system. Despite the technical assistance extended to them by the GATT secretariat during the Tokyo Round, a number of developing countries were unable to fully exploit the information given because they lacked the trained personnel in headquarters who were familiar with GATT questions. Each succeeding round of trade negotiations has

witnessed a growth in the complexity of problems and in the mechanisms which operate in the world trading system. Quite apart from the immediate short-term problems facing the GATT Training Programme owing inter alia to the increase in the demand for its training services, if developing countries are to participate more actively and integrate themselves more fully in the trading system in the 1980's, the question of training can no longer be looked at in the context of a marginal technical assistance activity, but as an important element for facilitating the proper functioning of the GATT trading system as a whole. It is presumably this concern which motivated the recent independent group set up by the Director-General to state in its report that "to help developing and smaller countries to play a fuller part in the GATT, the GATT secretariat should be given the mandate and resources to provide additional training and advice to government officials dealing with trade policy" (page 42, paragraph 8).

10. It must be made clear that no increase in the yearly number of 48 participants can be envisaged under the present administrative, lecturing and financial resources. In other words, leaving aside such practical questions as housing, per diem and financing of study tours, the fundamental question that has to be addressed is how far contracting parties are prepared to envisage substantial increase in the capacity of the secretariat in the field of training. Such an increase, leading for example to a doubling of the number of trainees coming to Geneva, would entail action in two directions: first, providing for a second team of lecturers and reinforcing the present administrative staff, and second, providing the necessary office and living accommodation.

11. As already noted the requests for training have quadrupled since the courses were established but there has been no comparable increase in the training that is offered. In any expansion of the programme account might also be taken of the wish expressed by several developed countries to be associated with the Commercial Policy Courses.

12. The expansion of the Training Programme that is suggested by increased training needs would entail significant budgetary costs. In meeting such additional costs, governments might envisage financial contributions out of development assistance funds rather than solely from trade policy funds as at present.