

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

RESTRICTED

CPC/61
1 December 1981

Special Distribution

Preferential Arrangements
Among Developing Countries
Negotiated in GATT

COMMITTEE OF PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES

Summary of Discussions at the Thirty-First Meeting
Held on 2 November 1981

Prepared by the Secretariat

1. The Committee of Participating Countries which administers the Protocol Relating to Trade Negotiations Among Developing Countries held its thirty-first meeting on 2 November 1981 under the Chairmanship of Mr. L. Paunescu (Romania).

2. The draft agenda circulated as document CPC/W/89 was adopted.

Accession of Argentina

3. The Committee reviewed developments since its previous meeting relating to the application of Argentina for accession to the Protocol.

4. In this connexion, the representative of Argentina stated that since this matter was taken up within the framework of the Protocol there had been a series of contacts and consultations as well as an exchange of offers and requests for concessions with interested participating countries. At the time Argentina had applied for accession there were indications that negotiations would take place among developing countries with a view to establishing a broadly-based system of trade preferences among such countries. In the light of developments since then and the various factors involved, Argentina was giving consideration to two possible approaches to its application for accession. The first approach, which could presumably be achieved at a relatively early date, would have as its objective a contribution by Argentina consistent with the benefits likely to be achieved from concessions presently embodied in the schedules of concessions annexed to the Protocol. The second approach which would require more time, could involve in addition to an entrance fee by Argentina having regard to concessions of interest presently available, an exchange of additional concessions between Argentina and participating countries taking into account the relevant provisions of the Protocol regarding reciprocity, etc.

5. By way of explanation, the representative of the secretariat indicated that the procedures relating to Argentina's application for accession to the Protocol which had been agreed to by the Committee, provided sufficient flexibility for either of the two approaches mentioned by the representative of Argentina to be pursued. It was up to delegations, in consultation with Argentina, to decide which approach was most appropriate in the circumstances. The representative of the secretariat also recalled that the technical assistance services of the secretariat continued to be available to assist interested delegations in connexion with any technical support that might be required in relation to Argentina's application for accession.

6. Some members of the Committee, in referring to the importance their authorities attached to Argentina's application for accession, stated they would reflect on the statement made by the representative of Argentina, taking into account their interest in concluding the negotiations for Argentina's accession to the Protocol at the earliest practicable date.

7. The Committee took note of the current situation with respect to Argentina's application for accession to the Protocol and urged interested participating countries to make every effort to bring the negotiations to a mutually satisfactory conclusion.

Expansion of trade among developing countries

8. As indicated by the Chairman, this item had been maintained on the Committee's agenda with a view to providing members with an opportunity to offer comments and suggestions on the manner in which trade among developing countries could be expanded within the framework of the Protocol. He noted in this respect that, at an earlier meeting of the Committee, it had been suggested that interested participating countries might utilize a process of informal contacts with a view to exchanging information on products and trade measures of interest and examining how work in this area could best be carried forward.

9. Members of the Committee who spoke on this agenda item, reiterated the importance their authorities placed on the application of the Protocol and the possibilities for its enlargement in terms of membership, scope and coverage. In the view of some of these members, work in this direction should not be seen as inconsistent with other activities taking place in connexion with the expansion of trade among developing countries. Some members suggested that it might be useful to convene, with the assistance of the secretariat, informal consultations to assess the present situation and to examine the prospects for enlargement of the Protocol in line with the provisions of the Protocol itself. One of these members informed the Committee that his authorities had been examining the scope for the expansion of trade in products of interest to his country within the framework of the Protocol and were in the process of drawing up a list of items on which it would be interested in exchanging information with other participating countries. At the same time, his authorities would be ready to examine the scope for action with respect to products which other members of the Committee might wish to put forward.

10. In summing up the discussion, the Chairman welcomed the interest which had been shown in exchanging views on the possibilities under the Protocol for the expansion of trade among developing countries. The Committee took note of the observations and suggestions which had been made in this respect, including the willingness of some members to enter into informal consultations with a view to seeing how a serious effort could be made to enlarge the scope and coverage of the Protocol. The Committee agreed to retain this item on its agenda for future meetings.

Annual Report

11. The Chairman recalled that, at the last meeting, the Committee had taken note of the information requirements for the annual report to the CONTRACTING PARTIES. A draft report, bearing in mind the provisions of the Enabling Clause Decision concerning preferential trading arrangements among developing countries, had been circulated as CPC/W/87 and Addenda on the basis of material provided to the secretariat by members of the Committee. This report after it had been finalized by the Committee, would be forwarded to the Committee on Trade and Development for consideration at its meeting on 12 November.

12. The draft report with amendments proposed by some members of the Committee was adopted and the secretariat invited to circulate it for consideration at the forthcoming meeting of the Committee on Trade and Development.

Derestriction of documents

13. The Chairman recalled that at its twenty-first meeting on 25 July 1978 (CPC/46), the Committee of Participating Countries had adopted guidelines for the derestriction of documents. These guidelines were contained in document CPC/W/60, Annex II, paragraph 3, and indicated that derestrictions would be considered annually, having as background a list of documents to be considered for this purpose. Accordingly, a list of CPC/ and CPC/W/ documents which appeared to be eligible for derestriction had been circulated as CPC/W/88 for consideration by the Committee. The Committee agreed that the documents listed in CPC/W/88 be derestricted.

Next meeting

14. The Chairman indicated that the date for the next quarterly meeting of the Committee would be fixed by the Chairman in consultation with members of the Committee and the secretariat, in accordance with the usual procedures.