

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

Preferential Arrangements
Among Developing Countries
Negotiated in GATT

COMMITTEE OF PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES

Summary of Discussions at Forty-Seventh Meeting
held on 11 February 1987

1. The Committee of Participating Countries provided for in the Protocol Relating to Trade Negotiations Among Developing Countries held its forty-seventh meeting on 11 February 1987 under the Chairmanship of Mr. A. de la Peña (Mexico).

2. The draft agenda circulated in document CPC/W/123 was adopted.

Expansion of trade among developing countries

3. The Chairman said that as indicated in paragraphs 3-6 of the Summary of Discussions at the last meeting (CPC/86), the Committee had taken note of the exchange of views concerning the proposal to liberalize the conditions of access for some additional items of interest to participating countries. The Committee had also taken note that some members had expressed the desire that the indicative time limit for the submission of lists of items or statements of intention be extended and had agreed to revert to this matter at its next meeting. Up to now, four members had submitted the lists of additional items for which they intend to liberalize conditions of access in the framework of the Protocol. No statements of intention had been submitted so far. A member had recently submitted request lists addressed to a number of participating countries.

4. In drawing attention to the fact that the Protocol was the only fully operational legal instrument for the expansion of trade among developing countries on a global basis, some members reiterated their commitment to pursuing the objectives embodied in the Protocol and referred to the need to strengthen the activities of the Committee. Recalling the uncertainties which characterized the current economic climate, the development needs of developing countries and the delays and frustrations inherent to achieving progress in the recently initiated round of multilateral trade negotiations, these members felt that it would be detrimental to their present and future trade interests to let the Protocol dormant. In their view, the arrangements under the Protocol should be strengthened and improved without detracting from other efforts to liberalize trade among developing countries in a broader context. These members requested, therefore, that the issue of the present and future activities of the Committee be addressed at a forthcoming meeting. A member said that he could not share the perception that the implementation of the existing commitments under the Protocol had not received adequate attention. Even though his authorities were at present concentrating on the establishment of a global system of trade preferences among developing countries, the Protocol was considered an effective instrument for the expansion of trade among developing countries, whose future was dependent upon the collective abilities of the participating countries. Another member reiterated that in the context of the liberalization effort underway in the Committee, her delegation would not pursue the proposal to withdraw certain concessions for which trade exchanges had been nil.

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5. Some members said that the request lists recently submitted by Bangladesh to a number of participating countries were under consideration in capitals. Some members suggested that the Bangladesh initiative might help to spur interest in the implementation of the proposal to liberalize the conditions of access for some additional items of interest to participating countries and noted that their response would take into account the readiness of the other participating countries to make tangible progress in improving the scope of the Protocol. In this context, reference was made to the need for transparency in the activities of the Committee and to the provisions of the Protocol concerning the application of concessions.

6. A member said that her country's trade regime for imports originating in the least developed countries was very favourable. She hoped to be able to provide an answer to the requests submitted by Bangladesh by the time of the next meeting of the Committee. Another member said that he was of the opinion that the requests submitted by Bangladesh need not be linked to the broader exercise aimed at the expansion of trade among participating countries in the framework of the Protocol. In his view, the principle of transparency would be observed if concessions agreed upon with Bangladesh were notified to the Committee. Other members considered that the issue of the application of such concessions would have to be clarified through consultations which might be held in the near future with the assistance of the secretariat.

7. The Committee took note of the comments and suggestions made by members and agreed that informal consultations would be held with regard to the present and future activities of the Committee. The Committee also agreed to hold informal consultations with regard to the follow-up to the requests submitted by Bangladesh to a number of participating countries and the legal implications thereof. The Committee agreed to revert to the question of the expansion of trade among developing countries at its next meeting.

Accession of Argentina

8. The Committee took note that a member intended to refer to this matter at the next meeting.

Certification of origin

9. The Chairman referred to the additional information concerning the certification of origin provided by Israel which had been circulated in documents CPC/10/Addendum 24 and 25. The Committee took note of the information provided.

Next meeting

10. The Chairman said that the date for the next meeting of the Committee would be fixed in consultations with delegations and the secretariat in accordance with usual practice.