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NOTE ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE GATT INTERNATIONAL TRADE CENTRE

1. Since its establishment in 1947, the GATT has been engaged in the practical promotion of arrangements for the reduction of tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade. In recent years the GATT has also increasingly focused its efforts on facilitating access to markets for products of developing countries and on promoting appropriate joint action for increasing the export earnings of these countries. It is in the context of these activities that proposals for assisting developing countries through the provision of market information and counselling on trade promotion, including training of personnel, were presented in GATT in 1963. The GATT International Trade Centre started operations in May 1964 and has, in two and a half years, been utilized by sixty-two developing countries.
2. The Trade Centre has thus served to implement Article XXXVIII of Part IV of the General Agreement which outlines the joint action to be taken by CONTRACTING PARTIES to expand the export earnings of developing countries. All assistance offered by the GATT Trade Centre has been free of charge to all developing countries irrespective of whether they are GATT Members; eighteen non-member countries are among those that have taken advantage of its services.
3. The Centre's activities are divided into four main services: Market Information Service; Publications Programme; Training Programme; and Trade Promotion Advisory Service.
4. These services are based on recommendations drawn up by a group of experts that has met in Geneva annually. They are, however, closely related to functions already performed by the GATT secretariat by virtue of their continuing responsibilities in connexion with the administration of the General Agreement. Thus the GATT secretariat has always been concerned with maintaining information on tariff and non-tariff regulations applying to international trade and with reviewing developments affecting international trading patterns. Another aspect of the secretariat activities is related to the analysis of export plans and prospects of individual developing countries in the context of their overall development plans and their balance-of-payments situation. In the course of these

activities the GATT has also built up a large network of sources of information extending not only to government ministries and departments but also to trading associations and other institutions and enterprises in both developed and developing countries.

5. These factors have greatly contributed to the rapid development of the Centre's activities in the different sectors mentioned above by enabling it to take advantage of existing GATT services and to develop and expand expertise and contacts established by virtue of GATT's specific competence and responsibilities in the field of international trade.

6. A short account of each of the Centre's four main services and of the directions in which they are developing is given below, so that the Committee may see the orientation of the Centre's efforts in relation to resources.

7. By the end of 1966, twenty-five developing countries had utilized the MARKET INFORMATION SERVICE. Some fifty ad hoc market reports have been provided on request: on items ranging from primary commodities to processed products and manufactured goods. Among bigger projects three extensive market surveys on products of export interest to a large number of developing countries were published: on citrus juices, at the request of three North African countries; plywood and veneer, for a Latin American and an African country; and on oil-cakes, of interest to countries in all three developing continents; and an assessment of markets in forty-four African and Asian countries has been carried out for Uruguay, covering twenty-seven of their products. Information has also been furnished to various enquiring countries on subjects related to trade such as: free ports, freight insurance, shipping conferences, design and packaging, etc.

8. The programme for the carrying out of major product market surveys, each of value to large numbers of developing countries, will be given even higher priority in 1967, so that within the year the following products will be covered: leather, machine tools, processed foods, and pulp and paper. If additional research resources are meanwhile made available to the Centre, e.g. by donations of research personnel, it will be possible to produce a larger number of such useful surveys.

9. Broad individual country export potential surveys of the type represented by the Uruguayan study will, however, normally be undertaken in future only if the interested country can secure technical assistance funds to cover the substantial additional costs for personnel and field research, as is the normal international practice. In such cases the Trade Centre would undertake to recruit suitable experts for the job and provide other necessary guidance and support. The Centre's own staff will, however, continue to be used to serve individual countries where the request for assistance relates to marketing or promotional problems regarding specific individual products in exportable surplus.

10. The Centre's PUBLICATIONS PROGRAMME includes the three language editions of the quarterly International Trade FORUM, with its intermediate quarterly Supplement, circulated to 16,000 organizations involved in trade in all five continents; and a number of pamphlets on export promotion services. The FORUM aims to publicize the export potential of developing countries; analyze import opportunities in developed countries; discuss infra-structural export services and export marketing and promotion techniques; publicize trade promotion training opportunities; and list changes in countries' commercial policies.

11. In the PAMPHLETS PROGRAMME there have so far been produced: a "Manual of Export Promotion Techniques", a directory of "Manufacturing and Trading Associations in Twenty-eight Countries", a "Select Bibliography for Export Promotion Centre Libraries in Less-Developed Countries", and two "Compendia of Sources: International Trade Statistics" and "Basic Commodity Statistics (Prices and Trends)". Two more pamphlets will be published early in 1967: a "Bibliography of Market and Marketing Reports by Products and Countries", and "Export Marketing Research for Developing Countries". Later in 1967 it is intended to produce pamphlets on the following topics: Export Promotion Techniques and Organizations for Developing Countries; Trade Fairs Programmes for Developing Countries; Trade Missions Programmes for Developing Countries; and Product Promotion in the Exporting Process.

12. To carry out its TRAINING PROGRAMME the Centre has had the active co-operation of its Liaison agencies in the developed countries: usually the foreign trade departments of governments. Many of these have provided in-service training opportunities and formal courses; and others have received group trade study tours. By December 1966 forty-four trainees from twenty-three developing countries had been placed in courses offered by Belgium, France, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. Arrangements for group study tours were made for thirteen trade promotion officials from seven Latin American countries. The host countries were Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland; and the cost of international travel was borne by the Organization of American States.

13. Under existing arrangements the Centre is likely to place some sixty trainees in co-operative courses in 1967. However, in view of the Centre's wide and practical expertise in export promotion, it would be desirable if there were additional, central courses conducted under its direct supervision. There have been growing demands from developing countries for the organization of such courses. These courses could mean making available training for a further forty trade promotion officials per year. Accordingly plans are being made for two Centre-supervised, three-month courses in 1967. Each session would consist, first, of six weeks basic and theoretical training in a higher business institute;

followed by four weeks in-service training and/or trade promotion observation tours in governmental and private export promotion organizations, brought to fruition by two weeks intensive project work on the trade promotion problems of the countries from which the trainees come, at the Trade Centre itself. The Centre would furnish supervisory instructors for the period at the business institute, and make all the necessary logistic arrangements for the external in-service training; as well as mobilizing its staff to supervise the in-Centre assignments.

14. This training scheme would, however, only be operative if it could be assured that the costs, including stipends of candidates, would be covered by international technical assistance or unilateral country donations. Given this co-operation and the experience of Centre-supervised courses in 1967, the pattern for Centre courses in 1968 would then be established.

15. The fourth major activity, the TRADE PROMOTION ADVISORY SERVICE, was launched early in 1966 and has already undertaken four missions: to Algeria, Brazil, Indonesia and Uganda. These on-the-spot missions vary in scope from assisting to establish or improve a country's export promotion services, to setting up export marketing boards. They have been accomplished partly by the Centre's own staff; and partly by experts furnished by the Centre's national liaison agencies in Australia, France, and the Netherlands, at their own expense, with the Centre occasionally covering the cost of inter-continental transport; and, finally, by paid experts recruited, briefed and supervised by the Centre.

16. Five further missions have already been requested for 1967, and it is anticipated that a total of twenty requests for missions will be received during the course of the year. With its present personnel and financial resources, the Centre can cover a total of only five missions. It would be helpful if at least another five missions could be covered through donations of experts and of the travel costs involved so that half at least of the anticipated requests could be met.

17. It is important to emphasize that from the beginning the Centre's task has been greatly facilitated and it has been able to achieve very much more through the generous collaboration of its national LIAISON AGENCIES in both developed and developing countries, who have co-operated in all aspects of its work, inter alia, serving both to gather market and marketing data for the Centre, and to diffuse the results. Four countries - Austria, Denmark, France and Switzerland have donated officers to serve in the Centre for periods of one year or more. In addition, the Centre itself is working closely on specific marketing research projects in collaboration with a number of international organizations, in particular the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the Food and Agriculture Organization.