

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

Committee on Trade and Development
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TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE BY THE SECRETARIAT TO DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Note by the Secretariat

1. The Committee on Trade and Development has reviewed from time to time the question of technical assistance by the secretariat to developing countries as a contribution to the effective participation of developing countries in the Multilateral Trade Negotiations. The Committee had before it at its thirty-second session, document COM.TD/W/249, describing the main areas of the secretariats' technical assistance activities. The present note supplements and up-dates the information contained in that note.
2. Reference was made in paragraph 2 of COM.TD/W/249 to the country study programme under which developing countries participating in the negotiations were provided with trade and tariff and non-tariff measure data in respect of items of particular export and negotiating interest to them. This programme of studies was completed at the end of 1976, at which time all interested developing countries participating in the negotiations had received the information requested.
3. At the last meeting of the Committee, delegations from several developing countries indicated that for their effective participation in the negotiations they would require technical assistance from the secretariat in obtaining up-to-date information on various non-tariff measures affecting their exports. The secretariat has provided relevant details in this regard in response to various ad hoc requests addressed to it by a number of delegations. A secretariat note listing products identified by developing countries as of export interest to them and subject to import restrictions in a number of import markets, together with an indication of the tariff treatment applied, has recently been updated and issued as document COM.TD/W/203/Rev.2.
4. The secretariat has also been providing technical assistance to individual delegations of developing countries in identifying non-tariff measures not being dealt with multilaterally in the context of notifications which might be made under the procedures agreed by the Group "Non-Tariff Measures".

5. In connexion with negotiations in the Group "Tariffs", the secretariat is continuing to provide interested developing countries with tabulations of tariff and trade data for the rapid evaluation of the implications, in terms of resulting duty rates for their major export items, of the application of one or the other of the tariff-cutting formulae proposed so far. The secretariat has also been preparing for interested developing countries on request, certain additional tabulations of tariff and trade data, which delegations might find helpful when identifying tariff positions they feel may be appropriate for special and more favourable treatment in the light of the provisions of the Tokyo Declaration.

6. With regard to the negotiations on tropical products, the secretariat has prepared a revised listing of requests and offers as well as of concessions and contributions implemented by a number of offer-making countries. This information has recently been circulated to participants in the negotiations. More generally in the field of tropical products, the secretariat is, on request, assisting developing countries in the identification of certain tariff positions covering products incorporating tropical products, or products directly derived therefrom, which have not so far been covered in requests for concessions made in the Group "Tropical Products".

7. In connexion with agreed procedures of the Group "Agriculture" the secretariat was, inter alia, requested to prepare documentation for the developing countries concerning tariff and non-tariff barriers affecting trade in products of particular interest for these countries. On the basis of these procedures, a number of developing countries have received or are receiving technical assistance from the secretariat to facilitate possible trade barrier notifications in the Group "Agriculture".

8. As agreed in the Group "Sector Approach", the secretariat has recently circulated information on handicraft products regarding their identification, tariff treatment, and non-tariff measures applied in the main import markets. At the request of jute exporting countries, the earlier technical assistance note, concerning barriers to trade in jute and jute products, has been updated to take account of more recent developments.

9. In pursuit of the work initiated earlier for the least developed countries participating in the negotiations referred to in paragraph 6 of COM.TD/W/249, the secretariat has extended the scope of products surveyed which could be of interest to the least developed countries in the negotiations, and has updated the relevant data on tariffs and non-tariff measures applied to items of interest to them in the main import markets.

10. To assist delegations of developing countries to follow developments in the negotiations, and to provide a guide to MTN documents of particular relevance and interest to developing countries, the secretariat has recently made available under its technical assistance programme two documents, one of which lists and describes documents as being of particular interest to developing countries in the MTN's and the other which contains a selection of MTN and other GATT material providing factual information on certain products and areas of interest to developing countries. The Special Assistance Unit is also in the process of establishing, for the use of developing country participants, a comprehensive and systematic register which identifies, CCCN - by - CCCN heading, all notifications or requests by developing countries made in any of the MTN Groups or Sub-Groups in relation to a given tariff position or sub-position in the different developed countries' import markets.

11. Technical assistance activities are increasingly being geared to meet the day-to-day needs of developing countries for technical assistance on matters related directly to their preparation for and participation in consultations and negotiations. In this connexion, the secretariat is frequently called upon to make available, at short notice, data compilations or studies of relevance to different areas being covered by the negotiations. The secretariat also continues to provide such technical facilities as may be required by delegations for informal exchanges of views. In addition, the secretariat endeavours to keep delegations which are new to the MTN's, and those which do not have resident missions in Geneva, informed on developments of interest to them.