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GENERAL AGREEMENT ON
TARIFFS AND TRADE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE INFORMAL GROUP OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES HELD ON 18 NOVEMBER 1971

Prepared by the Secretariat

1. A meeting of the Informal Group of Developing Countries in GATT was held on 18 November 1971 under the chairmanship of H.E. Mr. C.H. Archibald, Ambassador of Trinidad and Tobago. The meeting was attended by the representatives of Algeria, Argentina, Barbados, Bolivia, Brazil, Ceylon, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Egypt, Fiji, Gabon, Ghana, Greece, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Iran, Israel, Ivory Coast, Jamaica, Kenya, Korea, Kuwait, Lebanon, Madagascar, Malawi, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, the Philippines, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Uruguay, Yugoslavia and Zaïre.

2. The purpose of the meeting was to exchange views on the comments made by delegations on the trade negotiations among developing countries in the discussion of this item at the current GATT session.

3. A number of developing countries who had not participated in the negotiations explained that their interventions at the plenary session were aimed at seeking clarification of certain elements which in their view were not fully reflected in the draft Protocol, inter alia how the least developed among developing countries would be treated under these arrangements and the question of non-reciprocity. In order to have these matters clarified they had supported the setting up of a working party.

4. Several members participating in the negotiations recalled that invitations had been issued to all developing countries to participate in the negotiations but for various reasons a large number of developing countries had not yet found it possible to join in. These members drew attention of the non-participants to paragraph 14 of the draft Protocol which stated that this Protocol would be open for accession by all developing countries, on receipt of an application from a developing country wishing to accede to the Protocol, the Committee would take the necessary steps to facilitate the accession on terms consistent with the applicant's present and future development, financial and trade needs as well as past trade developments. The Committee could also agree that an applicant country might accede to the Protocol without any negotiations. In order to further clarify the provisions of paragraph 14 of the Protocol, the participating countries would propose that the following text of a paragraph be inserted in the summary records of the session or in the summing up of the proceedings of the session by the Chairman of the CONTRACTING PARTIES.

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"On behalf of the participating countries it was explained that according to paragraph 14, the Protocol shall be open for accession to all developing countries. It also provided that in any negotiations for accession, present and future development, financial and trade needs as well as past trade developments of the applicant developing country will be taken into account. The Committee could also agree to accession taking place without negotiations. According to the participating countries, paragraph 14 would enable them to give on a case-by-case basis sympathetic consideration to a request from a least developed among developing countries to accede to the Protocol without negotiations."

5. After a short discussion on the proposed text, there emerged a consensus that if this text were to be put on record in the way suggested, this would meet the concerns of developing countries who had not participated in the negotiations generally. In this context it was also suggested that the text could be annexed to the Protocol in the form of a declaration.

6. In response to a question as to how dependent territories would be treated under the draft Protocol, it was explained that this matter had not been discussed by the participating countries as no dependent territories or metropolitan countries on their behalf had responded to the invitations to participate in the negotiations. It was, however, not the intention of the participating countries to discriminate against such territories because of their status. The Committee would no doubt consider the question of accession of dependent territories on a case-by-case basis. In response to a further question whether mention of dependent territories could be made in the Protocol, it was explained that at this stage it did not appear feasible to do so.

7. In response to a question whether certain commodities were excluded from the scope of the negotiations, it was explained that the rules of the negotiations covered all commodities traded internationally.

8. In concluding the meeting, the Chairman said that it was a matter of satisfaction that an understanding had been reached on the interpretation of paragraph 14 of the Protocol, and that this would facilitate discussion of the matter in the Contact Group as well as at the twenty-seventh session.