

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

RESTRICTED

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Special Distribution

Multilateral Trade Negotiations

Trade Negotiations Committee

MEETING OF DECEMBER 1975

Conclusions by the Chairman

1. The Trade Negotiations Committee has met to review the progress made in the various negotiating groups and to chart the course for the coming months. Many delegations recognized that the current economic difficulties provide special challenges for the progress of the negotiations but that they make such progress more essential than ever. It was clearly the consensus that countries must demonstrate the political will to move forward toward achievement of the goals in the Tokyo Declaration and that this would make it easier to deal with the forces of protectionism. It is clear that a major effort has still to be accomplished in order to accelerate the negotiations.
2. Many delegations have highlighted areas in which progress had been made since the last meeting of the Committee. Tropical products, standards, subsidies and countervailing duties, meat and dairy products were among those mentioned in this context.
3. However, many delegations have also said that, while useful work has been done, progress has been too slow and undramatic in other areas, such as tariffs, quantitative restrictions, safeguards and sectors.
4. Many delegations from developing countries stressed that progress had been inadequate on the establishment of special procedures to ensure that their specific interests were safeguarded in the negotiations and additional benefits secured for their trade in terms of the Tokyo Declaration and that a comprehensive and renewed effort was required in this regard.
5. Representatives of many developing countries expressed concern and suggested that some emergency measures should be adopted to aid them in their present difficulties. The Committee agreed that the negotiations shall cover all products of particular export interest to developing countries.

6. It was clear that differences of opinion between certain delegations on the way in which agricultural products should be treated in the negotiations have meant that work on agricultural products other than cereals, meat and dairy products had been at a standstill since the last meeting of the Committee and that these differences had also affected the work of some other Groups.

7. The Committee, therefore, welcomed the suggestion by the Chairman (MTN/W/24) which indicated that some progress had been made on procedures which would permit work to move forward on substantive issues, although a few delegations wished to consider the implications of this suggestion. The Committee urged that a way should be found to continue with the work in the most expeditious manner and welcomed the fact that the Group "Agriculture" would be meeting very soon to this end (the Group "Agriculture" will be meeting on 16 December).

8. The Committee noted a number of suggestions and proposals that negotiations should be initiated at an appropriate time on a number of matters not now dealt with in the existing Groups and Sub-Groups, including a proposal that work should be initiated in terms of paragraphs 9 and 5 of the Tokyo Declaration on improvements in the international framework for the conduct of world trade particularly in relation to the trade of developing countries. This proposal was, specifically, that a Group be established with the following mandate:

"To improve the international framework for the conduct of world trade, particularly with respect to trade between developed and developing countries and differentiated and more favourable measures to be adopted in such trade."

I assume that the Committee agrees that this proposal would be the subject of informal consultations and would be on its agenda for its next meeting.

9. There was general support for the aim that an agreement on tropical products should be reached in 1976.

10. It was also reasonable to expect solid and substantial negotiating progress in 1976, in the other existing Groups and Sub-Groups:

Tariffs

- Agreement on the major elements of a tariff negotiating plan.

Non-tariff measures

- An agreed approach to negotiations on subsidies and countervailing duties.
- A substantially agreed draft standards code.
- An agreed procedure for achieving a meaningful liberalization of quantitative restrictions.
- An agreed basis for the negotiations in the area of customs matters.

Agriculture

- Progress in the Sub-Groups on Cereals, Meat and Dairy Products and, as I have just noted, on other agricultural products.

Safeguards

- An agreement on the basic concepts that should be negotiated on in the area of safeguards.

Sector approach

- Substantial agreement on the rôle and use of the sector approach.

Specific problems of developing countries

- Progress in achieving special and differential treatment for the developing countries in the various areas of the negotiations.

11. As regards the duration of the negotiations, many delegations have proposed 1977 as the goal for completing the negotiations. It seems to me a good thing, and even necessary, that the Committee should set itself such a goal, so that, and on condition that, a major and continuing effort can be undertaken from now on in order to achieve solid progress in the negotiations and achieve the results proposed for 1976, so that the negotiations can be speeded up in those areas where progress has been too slow, so that the negotiations can be resolutely pursued in those areas where progress has been satisfactory till now, and lastly, so that the agricultural negotiation can get under way.

12. The programme of meetings of the Groups and Sub-Groups has already been fixed to a great extent up to next April. It now behoves all participants to do their utmost to ensure that these meetings yield the results that are essential for progress in the negotiations so that the 1977 goal may be attained.

13. The Trade Negotiations Committee is a standing body which can meet at any time when it is useful to do so. The date of its next meeting should therefore be left open for the moment and fixed later in consultation with delegations.