

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

Multilateral Trade Negotiations

Original: English

Group "Non-Tariff Measures"

STATEMENT BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF AUSTRALIA
ON 21 JULY 1977 RELATING TO NON-TARIFF
TAXES OR CHARGES

Delegations will be aware that, from the outset of these negotiations, Australia has favoured a multilateral approach to the search for solutions to problems in the area of non-tariff taxes or charges.

We had originally proposed the creation of a separate Non-Tariff Measures Sub-Group to carry out this task. Subsequently we put forward some suggestions in Group "Agriculture". We had intended to present to the Agriculture Group - and had in fact prepared - an in-depth proposal on how we thought that Group might proceed to discuss the broad problems facing trade in farm products, how multilateral solutions might be developed and the ways in which they might be implemented.

However, as delegations will be aware, two of the major participants in these negotiations have recently reached agreement on the future course and structure of the negotiations as a whole.

What is now in prospect for non-tariff taxes and charges is a request and offer procedure. It is not the one we had envisaged as offering the chance of best results. But others take a different view and are not prepared to subject the measures which they maintain as an important instrument to restrict imports to a multilateral solution.

We are prepared to work with them towards a practical, realistic and balanced result on an item-by-item basis, although we firmly believe that a multilateral solution would have provided a basis for a most equitable result. It follows, therefore, that we do not intend to press forward at this time our proposal for a Sub-Group.

Whatever the approach, however, our prime objective in the negotiations continues to be to reduce the trade restrictive and distorting effects of non-tariff taxes and charges in the interests of genuine trade liberalization. We accordingly reserve the right to pursue in appropriate areas of these negotiations arrangements to this end.