

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE INFORMAL GROUP OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES HELD ON 12 MAY 1969

Prepared by the Secretariat

1. The Informal Group of Developing Countries in GATT met on 12 May 1969. In the absence of the Chairman of the Group, the meeting was presided over by Mr. C. Besa (Chile). It was attended by the representatives of Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Gabon, Ghana, India, Israel, Ivory Coast, Korea, Kuwait, Pakistan, Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Arab Republic and Yugoslavia.

2. The Group addressed itself to several matters of interest to developing countries in relation to the programme of forthcoming meetings. The discussions are summarized below:

Committee on Trade in Industrial Products

3. It was recalled that at the recent meeting of the Committee on Trade in Industrial Products a suggestion had been put forward that at its next meeting in June, the Committee might set aside two or three days for the discussion of non-tariff barriers affecting the export trade of developing countries. Delegations were invited to comment on this proposal. Members of the Group generally welcomed this opportunity for a special discussion of problems of particular interest to developing countries, it being generally understood that the purpose of this arrangement would be to focus attention on problems of this nature and to enable developing countries, many of whom might not be in a position to provide expert representation on a prolonged basis, effectively to present their case and to raise questions in relation to the wide range of problems under discussion. There should be no implication that the rights of developing countries to take part at any stage of the Committee's work would in any way be abridged. Some delegations expressed concern, however, that inadequate preparation or insufficient representation on the part of developing countries during the three-day discussion might have unfavourable repercussions on their further effective participation in the Committee's work. After careful consideration of the matter, it was agreed that developing countries should welcome the opportunity for a discussion of their specific problems and should make every endeavour to participate effectively in the discussion which might last two to three days. The secretariat was requested to up-date its documentation on non-tariff barriers affecting the trade of developing countries and, upon request, to assist developing countries in the preparation of notifications for use in that Committee.

Examination of the operation of Part IV

4. The Group discussed arrangements to be made, at the next meeting of the Committee on Trade and Development, for the examination of the implementation of Part IV. It was recalled that governments were requested to submit statements of difficulties they had

encountered in the implementation of Part IV and suggestions on how to ensure more satisfactory and effective operation. So far notifications had been received from four industrial countries and four developing countries. It was suggested that delegations of developing countries urge their governments to expedite the sending in of submissions. The representative of India said that notification by India would be sent within a few days. It was agreed that the Committee should proceed with the examination at its next meeting on the basis of the submissions already received; it was to be hoped that other submissions would be made available in time to be taken into account.

Adjustment assistance measures

5. In response to a question, Mr. M.G. Mathur, Assistant Director-General, recalled the background of this subject and informed the Group of the situation as regards the supply by developed countries of relevant material for examination in the Expert Group. The material now available seemed to be comprehensive and sufficient to enable the Expert Group to examine and evaluate the measures applied in developed countries in relation to the objective of providing greater scope for imports from developing countries. The pressure for reviewing action by governments in this field at this time in part related to the discussion in the Group on Residual Restrictions, where references had been made to social and economic difficulties and structural problems which impeded the removal of barriers on certain products of interest to developing countries. One of the points that had been made time and again was that these particular problems should be dealt with through measures of domestic policy rather than the continuation of restrictions on trade. Apart from the interest in reviewing the situation in this particular field it might also be related to the possibility of fresh initiatives to remove tariff barriers to the trade of developing countries, a question which was being dealt with in GATT as well as UNCTAD.

Trade in tropical products

6. Speaking at the request of the Chairman, Mr. Mathur drew attention to the background papers put out by the secretariat in preparation for the meeting of the Special Group to be held on 27 May (SGTP/11 and 12). These papers covered developments in exports of oilseeds and vegetable oils from developing countries, the relevance to the trade in these oils and oilseeds of policies followed in the importing countries and the examination of these matters in other bodies, including the Agriculture Committee. The documentation would facilitate the task of the Special Group in considering any proposals or recommendations aimed at priority action in respect of barriers affecting this category of products.