

PREPARATIONS FOR THE 1999 MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

Negotiations on Agriculture

*Communication from Cuba, Dominican Republic, El Salvador,
Honduras, Nicaragua and Pakistan*

The following communication, dated 25 March 1999, has been received from the Permanent Mission of Cuba.

1. Introduction

After accepting the WTO Agreements, developing countries have not obtained better access to markets for their agricultural exports in the developed countries' markets. The following are among the causes whereby better market access opportunities have not been achieved: continuing tariff peaks, selective tariff-cutting, tariff escalation, shortcomings of the minimum access arrangements, and sanitary and phytosanitary requirements.

2. Proposal

In order to remedy the above-mentioned imbalances and ensure real and effective market access for developing countries, the following elements will have to be taken into account in the future negotiations:

(a) Market access

Achieving considerable improvement in market access for the main export products of developing countries, through: a real reduction in tariff peaks, progressively increasing the volume of tariff quotas, reducing tariffs within tariff quotas, increasing transparency in the administration of tariff quotas and eliminating non-tariff barriers. In addition, the special safeguard provisions should not be applied to products of interest to developing countries.

(b) Domestic support

Granting developing countries flexibility and facilities in the use of domestic support in the agricultural sector if it is aimed at improving marketing, transport and diversification of agricultural production as well as for complying with sanitary and phytosanitary standards.

(c) Special attention for net food-importing countries

Improving market access for products from net food-importing countries in order to enable them to raise their export earnings and so be able to cope with the increases in their food import bill.

Financial and technical assistance commitments by developed countries to enable developing countries to diversify and increase agricultural productivity and cope with increases in their food import bill.

- (d) Non-trade concerns of developing countries, in particular those with small and vulnerable economies

Drawing up of a package of measures aimed at improving the national food security situation, maintaining the living standards of the rural population and preserving the environment; such measures should be exempted from the reduction commitment.

Granting flexibility in fulfilling the provisions in agriculture for countries that are victims of natural disasters and allowing the temporary application of domestic support measures aimed at reviving domestic production.
