

EXPERT MEETING ON DEFINITIONS AND DIMENSIONS OF ENVIRONMENTAL GOODS AND SERVICES IN TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

Statement by UNCTAD at the Regular Session of the
Committee on Trade and Environment of 29-30 April 2003

Paragraph 51

1. UNCTAD would like to draw the attention of members of the Committee to an upcoming UNCTAD Expert Meeting on Definitions and Dimensions of Environmental Goods and Services in Trade and Development. To facilitate participation by national experts, the Expert Meeting will be held back-to-back with the next Special and Regular Sessions of the CTE. The Expert Meeting dates are 9 to 11 July 2003. The WTO Secretariat has kindly included this meeting in the schedule of events posted on the WTO website¹. The meeting is being organized in cooperation with the WTO, OECD, ITC, UNEP and other relevant organizations.

2. Trade liberalization in environmental goods and services has potential economic, environmental and developmental benefits for developing countries, resulting from easier access to environmentally sound technology, more efficient resource management and improved environmental conditions. Trade liberalization may also create new export opportunities for developing countries in some goods and services sectors. The extent to which potential benefits will translate into real sustainable development gains will depend on the scope of the negotiations, national policies, regulatory frameworks, the transfer of technology and know-how, different forms of international cooperation and some other factors. In this regard, the discussions and recommendations of an UNCTAD Expert Meeting on Strengthening Developing Countries' Capacities to Develop Their Environmental Services Sector², held in July 1998 are also relevant.

3. The Expert Meeting will provide an opportunity to discuss, from a development perspective, a number of specific questions. They include: (i) issues of classification, in particular of environmental goods; (ii) the link between negotiations and national policies; (iii) linkages between environmental goods and environmental services; and (iv) specific capacity building requirements. Furthermore, the meeting will provide ample opportunity to exchange national experience, including on a sector-specific basis.

4. To support the Meeting, the UNCTAD Secretariat is currently preparing a background note on key issues and a conference room paper on selected questions and trends of current international trade in environmental goods.

5. Through a UK-DFID-funded project on Building Capacity for Improved Policy Making and Negotiations on Key Trade and Environment Issues³, UNCTAD has been assisting some countries in

¹ The WTO Events calendar is available at http://www.wto.org/english/news_e/events_e/events_e.htm

² The annotated agenda, background note, conclusions and recommendations, and final report for the 1998 meeting are available at: www.unctad.org/en/special/clem7ou.htm. The final report was circulated in TD/B/COM.1/18 - TD/B/COM.1/EM.7/3.

³ Information on this program, and the geographical programs subsequently referred to are available at www.unctad.org/trade_env/test1/openF1.htm.

Central America and the Caribbean in addressing issues related to environmental goods and services, particularly through the promotion of national studies. The preliminary results of studies on Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Honduras and Nicaragua were discussed at a sub-regional workshop on environmental goods and services, organized jointly by the secretariats of UNCTAD and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean in Havana, Cuba, in March 2003. Further national workshops are scheduled to take place in India in May 2003 and in Nicaragua in June 2003. The UNCTAD Secretariat has also addressed issues relating to environmental goods and services at WTO regional seminars in Singapore, May 2002, Latvia, September 2002, and Bolivia, February 2003 and through events held in conjunction with these seminars that were organized by the UNEP-UNCTAD Capacity Building Task Force on Trade, Environment and Development (CBTF).⁴

6. In conclusion, UNCTAD would like to express the hope that many delegates for the next CTE session will seize the opportunity to attend the UNCTAD Expert Meeting on 9 to 11 July. The notification by the UNCTAD Secretariat is currently being issued.

⁴ Information on the Task Force is available at www.unep-unctad.org/cbtf/cbtf2/F1.htm.