

**General Council
Special Session on Implementation**

**ACTIONS TO INCREASE THE PARTICIPATION OF DEVELOPING
COUNTRY MEMBERS IN THE WORK OF RELEVANT INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD-SETTING ORGANIZATIONS**

Report by the Director-General

1. You will recall that at its Special Session on 18 October 2000 the General Council agreed to the proposal by the Chairman with respect to the SPS Agreement, to:

- First, encourage international standard setting organizations to ensure the participation of Members at different levels of development and from all geographic regions, throughout all phases of standard development;
- Second, request that I explore with the relevant international standard-setting organizations and relevant intergovernmental organizations financial and technical mechanisms to assist the participation of developing countries in standard-setting activities;
- Third, request that I coordinate efforts with the relevant international standard-setting organizations to identify SPS-related technical assistance needs and how best to address these, taking into consideration the importance of bilateral and regional technical assistance in this regard; and
- Fourth, request that I make a progress report on my initiatives regarding elements two and three above to the General Council at its Special Session in December.

At the same session, the General Council also agreed to address concerns relating to the TBT Agreement on a similar basis.

2. The SPS Agreement itself identifies as the relevant international standard-setting organizations the FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission, the Office international des épizooties (OIE) and the FAO International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC). There is no such explicit identification of relevant standard-setting organizations in the TBT Agreement.

3. Last month, I sent letters to the Directors-General of the FAO, WHO, OIE, the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and to the five standard-setting organizations which have observer status in the TBT Committee (International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), International Organization for Standardization (ISO), International Organization of Legal Metrology (OIML), United Nations/Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE), and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)). I have informed these organizations of the decisions taken by the General Council and invited them to participate at informal meetings, at the level of Deputy Directors-General, to identify ways of facilitating developing country participation in standard-setting activities and addressing their technical assistance needs. Separate meetings will be

held, back-to-back, with respect to the SPS Agreement and the TBT Agreement. Several of the invited organizations have already responded to welcome this initiative and to confirm their participation in the meetings.

4. With regard to the second tirt of the General Council's decision, I have also written to the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the Islamic Development Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank and the UN Development Programme. I have drawn their attention to the fact that one of the principal provisions of both the TBT and SPS Agreements is to encourage governments to harmonize their national requirements with international standards in order to facilitate trade. I have informed them that many developing countries are concerned that their difficulties in effectively participating in the work of international standardizing bodies limits their ability to influence international standards on products of interest to them. Constraints to their participation include lack of technical expertise to participate effectively in the different stages of standard-setting and of financial resources to attend meetings of these bodies.

5. I have requested each of these organizations to provide information regarding the kind of technical and financial assistance that they may already be providing to developing countries to facilitate their participation in the work of international standardizing bodies, and of any planned activities in this regard. I have also asked whether these organizations have scope to expand their assistance to developing countries. My goal is to gain a better understanding of the assistance already being provided, as well as to draw the attention of various agencies to this problem, so that greater resources can be devoted to addressing it in future. I expect to have received the requested information before the end of January 2001.

6. Following our meetings with the international standard-setting organizations and examination of the information provided by the relevant financial institutions, I will report to you further on the actions being taken to increase the participation of developing country Members in the work of relevant international standard-setting organizations.
