



**Committee on Trade and Development  
Fifty-Third Special Session**

**NOTE ON THE MEETING OF 3 APRIL 2019**

*Chairperson: Ambassador Francois Xavier Ngarambe (Rwanda)*

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**A. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

1. The agenda as contained in Airgram WTO/AIR/TN/CTD/5 of 20 March 2019 was adopted.

**B. ELECTION OF THE CHAIRPERSON**

2. Consequent to the consensus reached in the consultations held by the Chairperson of the General Council to elect the Chair of the Special Session of the Committee on Trade and Development (CTD SS), Members formally agreed to appoint Ambassador Dr Francois Xavier Ngarambe of Rwanda as the new Chairperson.

**C. STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRPERSON**

3. Taking up agenda item C, the incoming Chairperson made a brief statement. He said that, despite all the hard work in the past years, the negotiations in the Special Session were at an impasse. Positions had remained entrenched and efforts to find common ground had failed. There had been no deliverables on Special and Differential Treatment (S&D) for a long time. He added that Members needed to do some soul-searching and introspection on ways to extricate themselves from an exercise where time and resources were being spent.

4. The Chairperson stated that at the Buenos Aires Ministerial Conference, Ministers had engaged in a broad debate on trade and development and pointed towards exploring other options that could potentially facilitate results in this work. Since then, his predecessor had been working with Members to build on where the Ministers left in Buenos Aires. Unfortunately, no headway had been made. His predecessor had informed that, in her report to the TNC in December 2018, the G90 was actively looking at ways to restart discussions and take forward the work in the CTD SS. The Chair's understanding was that the G90 was in the process of reviewing its proposals with a view to tabling a revised submission in the Special Session in the near future. Once the G90 did this, he was confident that Members would engage constructively and work towards identifying deliverables for the forthcoming Ministerial.

5. Underlying the importance and urgency of timely submission of the revised proposals as a prerequisite for the resumption of work in the Special Session, he urged the proponents to do the needful as soon as possible, if they aspired to achieve results in this area by the next Ministerial.

He acknowledged that translating these thoughts into reality might seem challenging, but it was certainly not impossible. He assured Members that, in accepting the Chairmanship of the CTD SS, he was committed to doing everything in his capacity to make the task less daunting. However, he added that in his search for a possible way forward, he would need Members' guidance. What he needed was to listen to them so as to better understand their perspectives, and to elicit suggestions on how the work in the Committee should proceed, in order to make some tangible progress for the forthcoming Ministerial in June next year.

6. The Chair announced that in the following weeks, he would begin a process of informal consultations with Members in different formats. He indicated his preference to begin with bilateral meetings and encouraged delegations to contact him directly or through the Secretariat to share their perspective. The Chair added that he held the principles of transparency and inclusiveness in the highest regard and his way of working would always be open to all.

7. The Chair said that after addressing the last agenda item, "Other Business", he would switch to informal mode to allow Members to express their views on the way forward.

8. The representative of South Africa said that her delegation was proud to see the Ambassador of Rwanda Chair take up this important role. Historically, Africa has been a key player in the establishment of the CTD SS and paragraph 44 of the Doha Ministerial Declaration. The African Union's Agenda 2063 - "*The Africa We Want*" also recognized development as a core objective of the multilateral trading system and it remained as the number one priority for this constituency.

9. The representative reaffirmed her country's position that the provisions for S&D remained an integral part of existing and future WTO Agreements. She also stated that South Africa remained committed to work with Members to advance the work in the CTD SS, in accordance with paragraph 44 of the Doha Ministerial Declaration and the Decision adopted by the General Council on 1 August 2004. Her country was looking forward to working with the Chair and all Members.

10. Speaking on behalf of the LDCs, the representative of Chad stated, that his country attached great importance to S&D as part of the formulation and implementation of WTO international trade rules. His constituency had peculiar deficiencies in terms of implementation capacities, the level of economic, institutional, social, financial and technological development and hence, needed special flexibilities to better integrate into the Multilateral Trading System (MTS). He also stated that the pursuit of S&D for LDCs as part of the formulation and implementation of WTO rules was not an end in itself. It was meant to enable these countries to achieve a real positive dynamic of integration into world trade, and to allow them to benefit from a greater share of international trade growth. This was a reality WTO Members had recognized and agreed upon at the creation of the WTO and the establishment of the Marrakesh Agreement. This principle of making positive efforts to integrate developing countries, in particular, the least developed among them into world trade was the very foundation of the WTO.

11. This principle was subsequently enshrined in the Doha Declaration, in paragraph 44, which stated that the S&D provisions were an integral part of the WTO Agreements, that Members would take into account the concerns expressed regarding their implementation, and that they should be reviewed with a view to strengthening them and making them precise, effective and operational. The LDCs attached great importance to these principles and advocated for S&D in the WTO that promoted their structural transformation, industrialization, diversification, economic development and implementation of rules based on their capacities.

12. The representative of Jamaica, on behalf of the ACP Group (African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States), said that the CTD SS had an essential role to play for developing countries and LDCs in the WTO. She assured the Chair of the ACP's confidence in his abilities to take on this very difficult task and stated that he could count on the Group's support.

13. The representative of China stated that his country sincerely hoped that under the Chair's leadership the CTD SS could have a shift in gear, so that something tenable could be achieved at the next Ministerial Conference. Assuring the Chair of China's support, he recalled that the Special Session had an explicit mandate which must be respected by Members.

China firmly believed that S&D was an integral part of the WTO rules - a general principle applying to all developing countries and LDCs in particular.

14. Making an intervention on behalf of the African Group, the representative of Cameroon said that the Chair could count on the support of the African Group in advancing the work in the CTD SS. Paragraph 44 of the Doha Declaration provided a clear mandate to find an effective and operational solution to the concerns raised on the effectiveness of S&D provisions, in order to allow beneficiary countries to integrate effectively in the global economy and to mitigate the difficulties they faced.

15. He recalled that the African Group, along with the G90, had tabled ten S&D proposals to facilitate and promote the objectives set forth for industrialization, diversification and structural adjustment in their economies. These proposals included, *inter alia*, among others, the TRIMS Agreement, GATT Articles XVIII (a) and (c), the SPS and TBT Agreements, and the Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures. To date, it has not been possible to make effective progress and develop consensus on any one of these proposals. The African Group believed that it was in the general interest of this institution to develop a consensus in finding concrete solutions to the trade difficulties that its weaker Members faced. The representative said that the African Group was open to working with all Members, and particularly with the G90, to table concrete proposals very soon. The African Group reaffirmed its commitment to listen to the inputs and comments from Members to find effective, operational and pragmatic solutions to the proposals.

16. The representative of Norway said that the previous round of negotiations had been difficult, but there had been some hope at the end of Ambassador Tan's period as Chair, particularly in the meetings in small groups, where Members seemed to have interacted more genuinely and positively.

17. The representative of Japan stated that development and S&D is one of the most important issues and also one of the biggest challenges that Members faced today at the WTO. Japan had been engaged in the discussions in a constructive manner in the past and looked forward to working positively with the Chair.

18. The representative of the Russian Federation stated that the meetings in small groups had been useful because Members had been able to express themselves more freely, but at the same time, since the groups were separated, there had been a lack of information and access to what had happened in the other groups. Therefore, his delegation welcomed the Chair's words on transparency and inclusiveness. Development had a pivotal place in the WTO rules. No doubt, the Membership was faced with challenging times, as wide differences remained in perceptions about the concept of development and how to achieve it. The representative assured the Chair that the Russian Federation was ready to work closely with Members to advance the work in the Special Session.

19. The representative of Trinidad and Tobago stated that development, especially the S&D, continued to be important to Trinidad and Tobago as a developing country.

#### **D. OTHER BUSINESS**

20. No Member had raised any issue under this item.

21. The Chair thanked Members for attending today's meeting. He hoped that over the coming weeks Members would work constructively in advancing the work in the CTD SS.

22. The meeting was closed.

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