



Committee on Trade and Development
Fifty-Fourth Special Session

NOTE ON THE MEETING OF 25 OCTOBER 2019

Chairperson: Ambassador Kadra Ahmed Hassan (Djibouti)

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A. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1. The incoming Chairperson, Ambassador Kadra Ahmed Hassan of Djibouti, welcomed delegations to the 54th Special Session of the Committee on Trade and Development (CTD). She recalled that Members had been informed by the Chair of the General Council in a communication dated 1 October 2019 of the consensus on her appointment as the new Chairperson of the CTD in Special Session (CTD SS). She explained that she was opening the 54th Special Session because the outgoing Chair of the CTD SS was unable to be present at the meeting. In this particular case, the former Chairman – Ambassador François Xavier Ngarambe of Rwanda – had announced his departure from Geneva before the summer break.

2. The draft agenda as contained in document WTO/AIR/TN/CTD/6 of 11 October 2019 was adopted.

B. ELECTION OF THE CHAIRPERSON

3. The incoming Chairperson said that, under the present agenda item, the Special Session would formally elect her as Chairperson. She recalled once again that the Chair of the General Council had informed Members in a communication dated 1 October 2019 of the consensus on her appointment as the new Chairperson of the CTD SS. The CTD SS had been invited to proceed with her formal appointment at the earliest opportunity.

4. The Special Session elected Ambassador Kadra Ahmed Hassan of Djibouti as the new Chairperson of the CTD SS.

5. The Chairperson thanked Members for the confidence they had placed in her by electing her Chairperson of the CTD SS. She also expressed appreciation to her predecessor in the Chair for his efforts to try to move the process forward. She went on to say that the negotiations on special and differential treatment (S&D) in the CTD SS had a long history, and that she was aware of the difficulties that Members had faced in these negotiations. In recent years, she recalled that the G90 had submitted proposals for Members' consideration in the run-up to the Tenth WTO Ministerial Conference (MC10) in 2015, and subsequently the Eleventh WTO Ministerial Conference (MC11) in 2017. Unfortunately, it had not been possible to have concrete outcomes on S&D at either of these two Ministerial Conferences. Although informal consultations by the CTD SS Chair had continued after MC11, her predecessor in the Chair had reported to Members in July 2019 that

no significant shifts in Members' positions had been detected. However, taking due note of the history of the negotiations in the CTD SS, she indicated that she wished to approach the work with an open mind. In this regard, she observed that the challenges faced in the past should not prevent Members from continuing to explore possible avenues to make progress. It was perhaps by drawing lessons from the past that Members would be able to collectively determine a way forward.

6. In terms of how she intended to proceed, she said that she would shortly be reaching out to Members for some bilateral one-on-one meetings, in order to hear views and thoughts on the status of work, and how discussions could move forward. She indicated that she would be requesting the Secretariat to assist her in organizing a number of such meetings, and also encouraged any delegation that wished to meet with her to contact her directly, or through the Secretariat. In terms of substance, she indicated that the real discussion would begin once there was a submission on the table. In this regard, she noted that her predecessor had informed Members in July 2019 that the G90 was working on its proposals, with a view to sharing a submission with Members after the summer break. Although a submission had not been circulated yet, she hoped that the G90 would be able to provide an update at the present meeting. Once the submission by the G90 was shared with Members, she would explore the possibility of holding informal meetings in various configurations, so as to allow discussions to take place on the basis of concrete proposals. Finally, she noted that the Twelfth WTO Ministerial Conference (MC12) would be held in June 2020. In this regard, she indicated that she wished to have MC12 as an objective in mind for the work of the CTD SS. In particular, it was her hope that, with a submission put on the table soon by the proponents – and with a proper structure for discussions in place – Members might be able to work towards some concrete deliverables on S&D for MC12. She assured Members of her full commitment to try and make this a reality, despite the challenges that might be faced in the process.

C. UPDATES BY MEMBERS ON THE STATUS OF WORK

7. The Chairperson invited Members to share any information or updates that they wished regarding the work of the CTD SS.

8. The representative of South Africa, on behalf of the G90, welcomed the appointment of the Chairperson, and also expressed appreciation for the efforts of the former Chairman. She said that S&D was one of the cornerstones of the multilateral trading system, and was critical for the integration of developing countries and least developed countries (LDCs) into global trade. Through the Doha Ministerial Declaration, Members had recognized that S&D provisions were an integral part of the WTO Agreements, and had agreed in paragraph 44 that these provisions would be reviewed with a view to strengthening them and making them more precise, effective and operational. Furthermore, the Doha Declaration – together with the Decision on Implementation-Related Issues and Concerns – mandated the CTD to identify which S&D provisions were mandatory, and to consider the legal and practical implications of making mandatory the provisions that were currently non-binding. The Committee was also to consider ways in which developing countries, and in particular LDCs, might be assisted to make the best use of S&D.

9. She referred to the 10 Agreement-specific proposals circulated by the G90 in November 2017 in document JOB/GC/160, and stressed their importance for structural transformation and industrialization. She indicated that the objective of the proposals was to give developing countries and LDCs the potential to increase productive capacity, promote an effective participation in regional and global value chains, and integrate into the multilateral trading system. She also informed that Committee that the G90 had decided to adopt a consultative approach in the development of revised proposals. Some consultations had already been initiated with Members, and the feedback had been positive. The aim of the G90 was to prepare a room document, which would endeavour to take into account the comments made by Members, and which would be circulated before the next meeting of the CTD SS. The G90 would work closely with the Chairperson and the Secretariat to ensure that a meeting of the CTD SS was held before the end of 2019. She emphasized the importance of S&D in promoting an inclusive and development-oriented multilateral trading system, and appealed to Members to engage constructively with the G90 in refining the proposals so as to deliver a meaningful outcome at MC12. The revised S&D proposals needed to contribute towards increasing trading opportunities for developing countries and LDCs, while supporting them to build their productive capacity and

participate meaningfully in global trade. She also highlighted the need to streamline and simplify processes and procedures to be followed in order to invoke S&D provisions in covered agreements, as well as the need to ensure that the multilateral trading system contributed to meeting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In closing, she said that the G90 looked forward to working constructively with the Chairperson and with Members in order to deliver on the mandate. She also expressed support for the way forward outlined by the Chairperson, including with regard to the informal consultations that the Chairperson intended to hold.

10. The representative of the European Union said that development was a central pillar of the WTO, and that particular support for LDCs was needed. Her delegation was open to further work in the CTD SS, but believed that progress could only be possible if new ideas formed the basis of the debate, and if there was an openness to engage constructively in the discussions with a fresh approach. She welcomed the election of the Chairperson, and expressed her delegation's willingness to consider further proposals and work with Members.

11. The representative of Norway noted that discussions in the CTD SS would likely continue to be challenging. He assured the Chairperson that his delegation would remain constructive and supportive, and called on the proponents and other Members to communicate better with each other in both formal and informal settings. His delegation looked forward to seeing the G90 room document as soon as possible.

12. The representative of Chad, on behalf of the LDC Group, expressed support for the work of the Chairperson going forward, and also recognized the efforts of the former Chairman. He emphasized the importance of S&D for developing countries and LDCs, including in terms of development gains and integration into global trade. He went on to say that the S&D proposals by the G90 had been on the table since MC10, but there was still no concrete outcome from these proposals. Accordingly, in the lead-up to MC12, the G90 had chosen to follow a different approach, in order to increase the chances of success. In particular, the G90 believed that more direct informal consultations with partners to discuss the rationale behind the proposals would help Members reach consensus. These informal consultations had recently begun, and it was the hope that all Members would demonstrate a constructive spirit.

13. The representative of Switzerland thanked the Chairperson for outlining the way in which she intended to pursue discussions. His delegation stood ready to engage in informal and interactive settings as needed, in the hope that this would allow a trusting and result-oriented dialogue to take place, and that it would lead to concrete progress. He added that Switzerland had on many occasions expressed its readiness to engage constructively on development issues, in particular on issues concerning LDCs. His delegation did not wish to repeat the past, and in this regard he expressed hope that discussions could be started on new ideas, which would help Members identify common ground. He also indicated that his delegation was looking forward to seeing the G90 room document, so that feedback could be provided.

14. The representative of Rwanda noted that development was an integral part of the WTO, and that S&D was a component of the development dimension of the multilateral trading system. He indicated that the Chairperson's diplomatic experience and open-mindedness would be useful in helping the CTD SS advance in its work, and also recognized the contributions of the former Chairman. He additionally expressed support for the statement by South Africa on behalf of the G90, and noted that he was encouraged by the positive spirit that had prevailed in the recent informal consultations that had been held. His delegation looked forward to engaging constructively with Members on the G90 room document, which was expected to be circulated shortly.

15. The representative of India said that S&D provisions were an integral part of the multilateral trading system. These provisions had the objective of enabling developing countries and LDCs to meaningfully integrate into the multilateral trading system and derive maximum economic benefits. He recalled that, in light of Members' concerns relating to the effectiveness and operation of S&D provisions, Ministers had given a mandate – contained in paragraph 44 of the Doha Ministerial Declaration – to review all S&D provisions, with a view to strengthening them and making them more precise, effective and operational. Although Members had been discussing these issues since 2002, it had not been possible to make tangible progress with regard to the Ministerial mandate. His delegation believed that the G90 proposals provided a useful input, and a basis on which to make progress in this area. In closing, he stressed the importance of achieving

outcomes relating to the development aspects of the Doha Work Programme, and called on Members to intensify their work.

16. The representative of Guyana expressed appreciation to the Chairperson for her willingness to take on the leadership of the CTD SS. He additionally recognized the efforts of the former Chairman, who had previously played a leading role within the ACP Group and the G90 as well. He went to say that S&D was essential to achieving the WTO's objectives, and to integrating developing countries and LDCs into the multilateral trading system. He was encouraged to note the positive signs in the recent informal consultations that had been held, and looked forward to continued constructive engagement. He supported the statement by South Africa on behalf of the G90, and looked forward to the circulation of the G90 room document. In closing, he called on Members to look at the proposals by the G90 in their own right, and to not link them with broader issues relating to development in the WTO.

17. The representative of Jamaica, on behalf of the ACP Group, expressed support for the statement by South Africa on behalf of the G90. He stressed the importance of S&D for the successful integration of developing countries and LDCs into the multilateral trading system. He welcomed the appointment of the Chairperson, and also expressed appreciation for the work of the former Chairman. The ACP Group looked forward to seeing constructive engagement by all Members in the CTD SS, and stood ready to work with the Chairperson so as to have a successful outcome at MC12.

18. The representative of Trinidad and Tobago indicated that her delegation looked forward to working with the Chairperson and discussing the proposals by the G90. She also recognized the contributions of the former Chairman. She stressed the importance of S&D for developing countries – and in particular for small and vulnerable economies – which faced difficulties in actively participating in international trade and fully implementing WTO Agreements.

19. The representative of China said that her delegation was committed to supporting the Chairperson's work. She believed that, under the leadership of the Chairperson, the negotiations could resume soon, and progress could be made. China would continue to engage constructively with Members in the CTD SS. She also thanked the former Chairman for his efforts, and indicated that her delegation would study the G90 room document carefully once it was circulated.

20. The representative of Benin, on behalf of the African Group, said that he wished to reaffirm the importance of S&D for African countries, and in particular for LDCs. He welcomed the election of the Chairperson, and expressed commitment to work with her in an inclusive and constructive manner in order to achieve a concrete and satisfactory outcome on S&D. He also expressed appreciation for the work of the former Chairman, and indicated support for the statement by South Africa on behalf of the G90.

21. The representative of Nigeria assured the Chairperson of his delegation's support in fulfilling the mandate of the CTD SS. He associated his delegation with the statements by South Africa on behalf of the G90, Jamaica on behalf of the ACP Group, and Benin on behalf of the African Group. He additionally emphasized the importance of S&D in helping developing countries benefit from the multilateral trading system, and called on Members to take this into account in their discussions.

22. The representative of Zimbabwe expressed her delegation's confidence in the Chairperson's leadership, and pledged support to move the process forward. She also thanked the former Chairman for his efforts. She said that S&D was an integral part of the Marrakesh Agreement, and was an important instrument to integrate developing countries and LDCs into the global economy. She called on Members to engage constructively to fulfil the mandate in paragraph 44 of the Doha Declaration, and expressed support for the statements made by South Africa on behalf of the G90, Chad on behalf of the LDC Group, Jamaica on behalf of the ACP Group, and Benin on behalf of the African Group.

23. The Special Session took note of all interventions.

D. OTHER BUSINESS

24. No matter was raised under "Other Business".

25. In closing the meeting, the Chairperson reiterated her commitment to engage with Members. While recognizing the difficulties that would be faced in the work of the CTD SS going forward, she also observed that this was work that needed to be done. She additionally noted that the difficulties should not be overestimated, as she was convinced that Members had the ability to find solutions.

26. The meeting was adjourned.
