GATT SETS A SPECIAL TRAINING COURSE TO GUIDE REFORMING ECONOMIES

The wide-ranging economic reforms and trade liberalization in many of the former Soviet Republics and countries of Central and Eastern Europe have increasingly led them to seek greater integration into the world economy. To assist their transition to market-oriented economies and fuller participation in the multilateral trading system, the GATT Secretariat has organized its second Special Trade Policy Course, following on from the success of its first held in 1991, designed specifically for senior trade officials from these countries.

Organized once again with financial support from the Swiss Federal Government, this nine-week course, which begins today (25 May 1992), will receive 25 officials, nominated by their respective governments, from Albania, Belarus, Bulgaria, the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

Some of these countries are long-standing members of the GATT but have only recently embarked upon ambitious programmes of reassessment and realignment of economic policies. The Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, a member since 1948, eliminated the state monopoly of foreign trade in 1991. Poland, a member since 1967, abandoned central planning and launched a programme of economic and trade policy reform in 1989 and, in order to establish its participation in the GATT as a market economy, has been renegotiating its terms of accession. Romania, a member since 1971, has also been renegotiating its terms of accession, having abandoned central planning and state monopoly of foreign trade in 1990 with a programme of reforms for transition to a market economy. Hungary, a member since 1973, has also been renegotiating its terms of accession, having implemented trade policy changes in 1991.

Bulgaria's foreign trade régime, meanwhile, has been the subject of examination by a GATT Working Party which was established in 1986 to consider Bulgaria's request for accession.
Besides the Russian Federation, which assumed the Soviet Union's observer seat in the GATT at the beginning of 1992, several of the states which comprised the former Soviet Union have indicated an interest in GATT membership. In addition, the three Baltic States have expressed interest in observer-status as a step to full GATT membership, and have asked the Secretariat to provide technical assistance. In the case of the states of the Commonwealth of Independent States, most have adopted GATT-based guidelines for their evolving trade régimes.

This Special Trade Policy Course, therefore, has been designed to place specific emphasis on the discussion of issues and problems of particular significance to all these countries. The course, which will be held in English, also covers the theory of trade and trade policy instruments, major trade policy issues, GATT law and the functioning of the multilateral trading system, and problems and issues dealt with in the Uruguay Round multilateral trade negotiations.

The Course includes lectures and presentations by senior officials of the GATT secretariat, representatives of other international organizations concerned with trade policy questions, and members of the permanent missions of some of the contracting parties. It also includes seminars, round tables and group discussions, and a workshop on negotiating techniques. The programme also includes attendance at certain meetings of the Contracting Parties or their subsidiary bodies.

As part of the Course programme, the participants will undertake a study tour in Switzerland, designed to acquaint them with the economic and trade policies of Switzerland, and with some of Switzerland's leading industrial and commercial enterprises and institutions.

Apart from the Special Courses for the Eastern and Central European countries, the GATT secretariat organizes trade policy courses for officials from developing countries, in English, French and Spanish.
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Albania  Mrs. Antoneta CELA, Economist, Ministry of Trade and Foreign Co-operation, Tirana.

Belarus  Mr. Alexander A. MARDOVICH, Deputy Director, Information Centre, State Committee for Foreign Economic Relations, Minsk.

Mr. Valery A. ZAROVSKY, Head, Information and Marketing Department, State Committee for Foreign Economic Relations, Minsk.

Bulgaria  Miss Maya N. DOBREVA, Counsellor, Deputy-Head of Foreign Economic Policy Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sofia.

Mr. Petre V. STEFANOV, Head of Section, Ministry of Industry and Trade, Sofia.

Czechoslovakia  Miss Ivona KLABOUCHOVA, Customs Clerk, Federal Central Customs Administration, Federal Ministry of Foreign Trade, Prague.

Mr. Peter LOSONSKY, Manager, Department for Foreign Trade Affairs, Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic, Bratislava.

Estonia  Mr. Lembit VIILUP, Head, Economic Policy Department, Ministry of Trade, Tallinn.

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