Throughout its life, GATT has encouraged developing countries to join and to play a full role in its work. Nearly half the original 23 contracting parties were developing countries and over 70 per cent are now.

Parts of the General Agreement are specially tailored to assist developing countries - both in terms of the extent of their commitments as GATT members and of the more favourable treatment which they should expect from developed country members.

Part IV of the GATT was added in 1965. It committed developed countries to assisting developing members "as a matter of conscious and purposeful effort". It laid down the principle that developing countries would not be expected, during the course of trade negotiations, to make concessions inconsistent with their individual development, financial and trade needs.

At the same time, developed countries also agreed that, except when compelling reasons made it impossible, they would not increase barriers to exports of primary and other products of special interest to developing countries, and would make the reduction of existing barriers a priority. During the Tokyo Round, an "enabling clause" was negotiated which provides a permanent and legal basis in GATT for trade preference arrangements benefitting developing countries.

Being in a position to negotiate effectively in GATT and to reap the maximum benefit from membership can be beyond the capacities of some developing countries. So considerable effort is made by the GATT
secretariat to assist these countries when they negotiate their way into GATT and to operate competently once they are members.

Access to current information is crucial in any trade negotiation. The GATT Technical Co-operation Division supplies information on tariff and non-tariff measures facing products of developing countries in developed-country markets. It provides data, information and background documentation on a wide range of issues, in particular those that are being discussed in the Uruguay Round. It also organizes visits by GATT officials to developing countries to give seminars and briefings. Special attention is paid to the requirements of the least-developed countries.

Since 1955 and up to mid-1987, the GATT had provided special trade policy training courses for some 1,025 officials from 113 developing countries and ten regional organizations. The courses give participants greater understanding of trade policy matters and a full knowledge of the work being done in the GATT. Twenty-four fellowships are granted for each course which are held twice a year in Geneva, in English, French or Spanish.

GATT helps developing countries promote their exports through the International Trade Centre which it established in 1964. Since 1968, the Centre has been jointly operated by GATT and the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). It assists developing countries in formulating and implementing export promotion programmes. It also provides information and advice on export markets and marketing techniques.

In recent years, the developing countries have been active and influential in the setting of the agenda, the launching, and the early stages of negotiation of the Uruguay Round. "In involving themselves fully in the launching and implementation of the Uruguay Round", says GATT Director-General Arthur Dunkel, the developing countries "have demonstrated their deep concern that the trading system as a whole be improved and strengthened as the basic prerequisite for the success of any efforts to meet their special needs". He notes that during the initial phase of the Round "many of the specific negotiating proposals have been from the developing countries, and reflect a positive and long-term view of the role which they can play in shaping the future of the trading system".

END