1. Ad hoc consultations took place on 25–26 October 1979 among a large number of countries which are members of the Group of 77 and thus participants in the programme of Economic Co-operation Among Developing Countries (ECDC) and others aimed at exploring how progress might be made with respect to the expansion of trade among developing countries on a global basis through a new round of trade negotiations. Countries and organizations invited and present at the consultations are listed in the Annex.

Opening of the Consultations

2. Delegations agreed that a representative of the secretariat chair the consultations.

Agenda

3. The agenda for the ad hoc consultations has been circulated in document Spec(79)19/Rev.1.

I. REPORT BY THE SECRETARIAT

4. The Chairman speaking on behalf of the secretariat recalled the series of discussions and consultations among developing countries carried out over the last two years concerning a possible new round of trade negotiations covering tariffs and other trade measures, which would have as their objective the expansion of the mutual trade of developing countries. These discussions were held against the background of a technical work programme conducted by the secretariat at the request of developing country delegations. This programme, which has involved the participation and support of nearly sixty developing countries, was designed to identify the scope and feasibility of such negotiations, the specific trading interests of participating countries which these negotiations could encompass, and various other considerations that would need to be taken into account.

5. The Chairman noted that while there were several examples of economic and trade co-operation among developing countries on a regional or sub-regional basis, experience with inter-regional schemes for trade policy co-operation among developing countries was relatively limited. However, it was noteworthy that work in this area had been proceeding within the GATT framework since 1963. A Working Party set up at that time to examine this question came to the conclusion in 1966 that trade preferences among
developing countries properly conceived and properly administered could be an important factor in the expansion of the mutual trade of developing countries. Subsequently, work carried out in a Trade Negotiations Committee of developing countries which had been established to supervise the conduct of a round of negotiations at the global level had resulted in the entry into force in 1973 of the Protocol Relating to Trade Negotiations Among Developing Countries.

6. In recent years, developing countries have become increasingly aware of the need to strengthen their mutual economic and trade relations and to further their collective self-reliance on the basis of increased economic and trade co-operation. This awareness had found expression at various meetings and conferences, in particular, the Mexico City Conference on Economic Co-operation Among Developing Countries and subsequently in Arusha and Manila. The earlier efforts in the GATT could be said to have contributed in a concrete way to this development, not least by demonstrating that an exchange of concessions among developing countries on a global basis was complementary to, and not in conflict with, efforts to promote economic co-operation among developing countries on a regional or sub-regional basis.

7. The Chairman stated that the convening of this meeting reflected the conviction of many developing countries that the time had now come to move further towards increasing trade co-operation among developing countries on a global basis. In this connexion, he drew attention to the documentation listed in Spec(79)22. A preliminary examination of the material by interested delegations, taking into account broader considerations of international economic relations, had led to the conclusion that there was considerable scope for the expansion of trade among developing countries. A number of these delegations had suggested that an appropriate institutional framework and mechanism should be established for the purpose of pursuing a new initiative towards the broadest possible arrangement among developing countries covering tariffs and trade concessions on a preferential basis. Participation would, as in any negotiation, be without commitment on the part of governments and would need to have full regard to the development, financial and trade needs of each country including, in particular, the least-developed countries.

8. The Chairman noted that trade co-operation among developing countries was not only a matter of action on tariffs and non-tariff measures. As the secretariat documentation had indicated, there were a number of "trade-related" measures, for example, in the fields of finance, credit, transport, etc. which also played an important rôle in determining trade flows among developing countries. On many of these, the UNCTAD Secretariat had pursued an important programme of activities. Having regard to the vastness of the task ahead and the importance of keeping all relevant factors in mind, it was evident that close co-operation would be required between the organizations primarily involved. It was against this background that the GATT secretariat looked forward to co-operating with such organizations including in particular UNCTAD.

9. In concluding his opening remarks, the Chairman said that both in the preparatory stages and in the actual process of negotiation, technical assistance from the secretariat would be forthcoming in areas in which countries found themselves in need of such assistance.

10. Following consultations among countries members of the Group of 77 it was noted by the Chairman that the proceedings would be described as ad hoc consultations among countries members of the Group of 77 and others.
II. GENERAL STATEMENTS

11. Many of the delegations who spoke welcomed the calling of the ad hoc consultations and stated their belief that they represented a concrete step in an ambitious programme aimed at promoting economic co-operation and achieving collective self-reliance among developing countries on a global basis. It was their view that economic interdependence and integration among developing countries should be reinforced as soon as practicable in order to support mutual development objectives. A large number of these delegations noted the substantial progress made in the preparatory technical work carried out by the secretariat and stated that the time was now ripe for moving towards the launching in the near future of a global round of trade negotiations among developing countries, both members and non-members of GATT.

12. Some delegations referred to the current global economic situation involving monetary instability, inflation and recession which had led to the adoption, or threat, of protectionist measures in the developed countries; this has had the effect of transferring the burden of adjustment to the developing world. These delegations saw a new round of trade negotiations as an opportunity to strengthen the economies of developing countries, foster their political unity, and as a contribution to the restructuring of the world economy.

13. Many delegations shared the view that considerable scope existed for further co-operation among developing countries on trade matters at the global level and that such co-operation would lead to the expansion and diversification of their production and foreign trade. Some delegations stated that the successful utilization of complementarities in production and trade and the possibilities for specialization and economies of scale that appeared to exist for developing countries would contribute not only to an expansion of their mutual trade but, by increasing the competitiveness of their industries, also stimulate trade with other countries.

14. Many delegations stated that they saw greater economic self-reliance among developing countries as one of the main pillars of the New International Economic Order (NIEO) that they were collectively seeking to achieve. The difficulties in making progress on other aspects of the NIEO underlined, in their view, the importance of pursuing vigorously economic co-operation among developing countries. The view was also expressed that increased self-reliance on the part of developing countries would reduce their vulnerability to adverse economic conditions and policies in the developed countries and strengthen their position in the negotiations on other aspects of international economic relations with these countries.

15. It was stated by many delegations that trade negotiations among developing countries should be seen as part of the Programme of Economic Co-operation Among Developing Countries. Reference was made to the support that efforts in this connexion had received from the international community, notably at the last session of the United Nations General Assembly and at UNCTAD V (Resolution 127(V)). The view was also expressed by some delegations that a new round of trade negotiations would be fully consistent with Decision 41 taken recently within the framework of the Latin American Economic System.
16. Countries members of the Group of 77 reaffirmed that they regarded negotiations for the expansion of trade among developing countries as constituting a part of the broader programme of ECDC which they considered it their primary responsibility to negotiate and implement and indicated their intention to continue further consultations with respect to these matters.

17. Some delegations recalled that although limited and modest in scope, the Protocol Relating to Trade Negotiations Among Developing Countries, an autonomous instrument negotiated in 1971 under GATT auspices, was the only global scheme of trade co-operation among developing countries and constituted a pioneering exercise in negotiating tariff and non-tariff preferences on a global basis.

18. The representative of the UNCTAD Secretariat recalled that pursuant to decisions adopted at the Mexico City Conference on ECDC and reaffirmed at the Arusha Ministerial Meeting and in Manila Resolution 127(V), the secretariat had carried out certain tasks concerning the promotion of trade among developing countries. This action had led to the establishment of a programme of work which covered various aspects of ECDC including, inter alia, a global system of trade preferences among developing countries (GSTP). In his view, there was a certain convergence between the subject of the current consultations and the Arusha Programme of the Group of 77. He noted that the Secretary-General of UNCTAD had recently reported to the Group of 77 on the programme of regional meetings of developing countries referred to in the Arusha Programme and in Resolution 127(V) which had been scheduled to take place in Montevideo in November, Addis Ababa in December and Manila in January 1980. The Trade and Development Board had agreed that an inter-regional meeting of governmental experts of developing countries be held in Geneva in January/February 1980. It was expected that these meetings would enable interested governments to take decisions with respect to negotiating priorities and sectors. This representative added that co-operation between the various fora involved in the implementation of the Arusha Programme of Action would be required in order to ensure that the GSTP would be a coherent arrangement and provide an adequate balance of benefits and a satisfactory depth of concessions for participating developing countries. Consequently, regional economic groupings of developing countries should be closely involved in the efforts to promote trade through action in the tariff and non-tariff barriers fields. UNCTAD had set up co-operation agreements with UNIDO and FAO and co-operated closely with all integration and cooperation groupings of developing countries. He noted that the ITC also had a role to play in the negotiations among developing countries. In referring to co-operation between the secretariats of GATT and UNCTAD, he believed that these links should be strengthened in the interests of developing countries. He stated that co-operation between and the support of all organizations concerned with the Arusha Programme was necessary to bring about positive results in the vast area of ECDC.

19. The representative of the International Trade Centre expressed the readiness of ITC to work in partnership with its parent bodies, GATT and UNCTAD. Trade among developing countries, particularly on a regional basis, had been an important concern of ITC which had undertaken supply and demand surveys in selected countries in Asia and in the ECOWAS region. Further trade expansion studies would be undertaken provided that the required financial resources could be mobilized. Such activities could be seen as providing technical support for trade negotiations among developing countries. From its computerized information system, ITC could provide certain inputs at SITC four or five digit levels on actual and potential trade flows and in this...
respect could supplement the studies being carried out by GATT for the selection of products suitable for negotiation. He stated that the ITC would do its utmost to provide technical assistance to developing countries participating in the new round of trade negotiations envisaged. The Centre would be assisted in its work in this regard if it were to be invited to meetings of the proposed Trade Negotiations Committee of Developing Countries.

III. OBJECTIVES, SCOPE AND COVERAGE OF THE NEGOTIATIONS

20. In their statements, a number of delegations made suggestions and proposals with regard to the objectives, scope and coverage of the negotiations as well as on possible negotiating techniques and the mechanisms that might need to be established. Some delegations also referred to questions relating to negotiating procedures, the rôle of regional institutions and the need for inter-secretariat co-operation. A summary of the points made in the course of the ad hoc consultations with respect to these and other matters is contained in the following paragraphs.

Review of the technical work

21. Delegations which had undertaken a preliminary examination of the technical work carried out by the secretariat stated that the material provided supported the view that there was scope for a substantial increase in trade among developing countries. In noting that new trading opportunities should be based, inter alia, on the development of production, the diversification of markets and the promotion of non-traditional exports, some delegations urged that the technical work be continued. In this regard, some delegations suggested that the regional and sub-regional aspects of trade expansion should continue to receive particular attention. It was also suggested that further studies could look into the trade problems of the least-developed countries and the contribution that negotiations among developing countries could make towards resolving them, especially in providing market access for their primary products at various stages of processing.

Objectives of trade negotiations among developing countries

22. Many delegations noted that the basic objectives of a new round of trade negotiations among developing countries would be to expand and diversify their mutual trade flows, improve their economic links and contribute to the establishment of the New International Economic Order (NIEO). An exchange of tariff and trade concessions among interested developing countries would, in due course, need to be embodied in an appropriate legal framework providing for security of market access having regard to the national and collective interests of all participants. Some delegations referred to the need to provide for ways of modifying concessions if vital national interests so required, and to ensure that concessions once made on particular measures or products would not be impaired or nullified by other measures.
23. In proposing that a new round of trade negotiations should be launched at an early date, a number of delegations stated that the initial objectives should be realistic and adapted to the negotiating resources of the participants. A flexible negotiating structure which would provide a basis for the gradual, progressive and balanced liberalization of trade among developing countries should be devised in such a way that would enable more ambitious goals to be adopted progressively as the way forward became clearer. One delegation said that, in the long-term, an objective might be the creation of a free-trade area among developing countries which could cover a substantial part of their mutual trade. The view was also expressed that it might be useful to establish certain quantitative targets for trade among developing countries, for example, the share of such trade at the regional and global levels in world trade. Such targets would not only serve as a guide to the negotiations and facilitate participation in the negotiations by countries at an early stage of development, but in practical terms could also lend encouragement to the devising of appropriate measures to facilitate the expansion of trade among developing countries.

24. Many delegations emphasized the need for the widest possible coverage of the negotiations with respect to both agricultural and industrial products of actual or potential export interest to developing countries.

25. Some delegations referred to the inter-relation they saw between the negotiations on trade, and co-operation among developing countries with respect to other areas that affected the ability of countries to benefit adequately from trade concessions. In this context, a number of delegations recalled the priority that had been assigned in the Programme on ECDC to a global system of trade preferences, co-operation among State-trading organizations and the establishment of multinational marketing enterprises. Some delegations described specific difficulties that their countries faced in trade-related areas. In this respect, reference was made to the need to examine in the appropriate fora impediments that existed in the fields of finance, export credits, marketing structures, the rôle of commodity markets, transport, production, joint industrial investments etc., with a view to identifying how such problems might be dealt with in parallel with and in a mutually reinforcing manner to the trade negotiations.

Negotiating principles

26. Many delegations stated that the negotiations should be conducted on the basis of the principles of mutual advantage and fair balance and sharing of benefits among participants taking into account their levels of development as well as their financial and trade needs, and the relevant provisions in the programme on ECDC. It was also stated by some delegations that the results of the negotiations should be applied among participants on a multilateral basis and in accordance with the most-favoured-nation principle.

27. Many delegations stressed the need to maximize the benefits from the negotiations. It was suggested that this would require a broad and flexible approach through opening up possibilities in relation to a wide spectrum of products and types of measures, in order to enable the varying needs and characteristics of developing countries to be responded to.
Least-developed countries

28. Reference was made to the need to extend special treatment to the least-developed countries. In this respect, it was suggested that products of actual or potential export interest to them should be the subject of concessions wherever possible. One delegation, in recalling that atUNCTAD V his country had announced the establishment of a system of preferences for the least-developed countries, indicated that it was ready to co-ordinate implementation of these preferences with the results of a new round of trade negotiations among developing countries. Representatives of some least-developed countries suggested the setting up of a standing committee to follow up points of interest to the least-developed countries with a view to achieving the maximum possible results for the trade of these countries.

Negotiating techniques and procedures

29. Many delegations stated that the question of negotiating techniques and procedures should be examined in detail in the institutional machinery to be established for the purpose of supervising the conduct of the negotiations. A number of delegations stressed the importance they attached to the formulation of negotiating techniques and procedures that were innovative, pragmatic and effective and covered both tariff and non-tariff measures.

30. There was general agreement that further consultations would be required on the type of tariff-cutting techniques and non-tariff measure approaches that should be employed in the negotiations. A number of delegations, in stating that they had an open mind on the subject, expressed the view that it might be appropriate because of the diversity of the trade régimes existing in developing countries, to initiate negotiations on the basis of a product-by-product exchange of tariff and non-tariff measure concessions. Subsequently, more complex tariff reduction and trade liberalization strategies such as a sector or formulae based tariff-cutting approach might be adopted. One delegation hoped that, if a product-by-product negotiating technique was employed in certain areas, it would not lead to the exclusion of small exporters from the negotiating process.

31. Some delegations suggested that there might be scope in a new round of trade negotiations among developing countries for utilization of the sector approach whereby tariffs and non-tariff measures affecting particular sectors of trade could be dealt with together. In this respect, it was proposed that a linear tariff-cutting approach might be applied to specific sectors such as, for example, non-traditional export items and that appropriate action would need to be taken with respect to non-tariff measures affecting such sectors.

32. One delegation stated that bindings of tariff concessions offered in the negotiations should be at rates lower than existing m.f.n. rates and that the possibility of binding fixed preferential tariff margins should also be borne in mind. One representative recalled the statement made by his government in Manila to the effect that it would be prepared to consider tariff cuts of up to 50 per cent on products of substantial interest to other developing countries through an exchange of concessions on the basis of mutual advantage.
33. Some delegations stressed the importance of working out negotiating procedures that would facilitate the full participation of all interested developing countries in the negotiations and ensure transparency in the conduct of the negotiations and in the decision-making process.

Regional and sub-regional economic co-operation and integration

34. A number of delegations, referring to the efforts aimed at regional or sub-regional economic integration in which their countries were engaged, stressed the importance they attached to a consolidation of these arrangements and of ensuring that the global negotiations among developing countries were both compatible with and supportive of them.

35. Some delegations expressed the view that, in carrying out the negotiations, full regard should be had to the experience that had been gained in preferential arrangements among developing countries at the sub-regional and regional levels, as well as in the context of the Protocol Relating to Trade Negotiations Among Developing Countries. Some delegations suggested that a new round of negotiations should be conducted within its own institutional framework having regard to Part IV of the General Agreement and taking fully into account the relevant points in the ECDC Programme.

IV. INSTITUTIONAL MATTERS

36. Many delegations supported the establishment of a Trade Negotiations Committee as soon as possible to prepare the guidelines, ground rules and procedures and to supervise the conduct of the negotiations.

37. Some delegations suggested that the first meeting of the Trade Negotiations Committee should be convened early in 1980 and that the Director-General of GATT, in consultation with delegations, be asked to make arrangements for the meeting.

38. Some delegations suggested that the Trade Negotiations Committee be entrusted with the preparation of a statement or declaration outlining the objectives of the negotiations. One delegation said that arrangements might be made for the timely flow of information between the TNC and other relevant bodies.

39. A number of delegations stated that membership of the TNC should be open to developing countries whether or not GATT contracting parties and whether or not they attended the ad hoc consultations. In this context it was proposed that participation in the negotiations should be confined to participants in the Programme on ECDC. Representatives of countries members of one sub-regional economic grouping indicated that they were considering joint participation in the negotiations. Some delegations stated that participation in the TNC should not entail commitment on the part of any country, the whole negotiating process remaining open until the results were embodied in a legal instrument. A number of delegations stated that the question of the nature of the legal instrument that would finally be adopted should be taken up at a later stage, in the light of developments in the negotiations themselves.
40. A number of delegations stated that it would be desirable to reach agreement on a time frame for the negotiations. The establishment of specific goals and the use in the negotiations of a stage-by-stage approach covering, for example, agriculture, manufactures, capital goods etc., was also suggested.

41. Representatives of a number of countries stated that adequate machinery and procedures should be established in the TNC to ensure that the objectives of the negotiations in respect of the least-developed, land-locked and island developing countries were fully taken into account.

42. Some delegations also stated that when a Trade Negotiations Committee had been established, they would be ready to start discussions and consultations with other participants with respect to tariffs and non-tariff measures applied to individual products.

Inter-secretariat co-operation

43. In noting that ECDC covered various aspects of international economic relations among developing countries, many delegations urged effective co-operation among the secretariats of international organizations concerned with ECDC, including in particular the secretariats of GATT, UNCTAD, ITC, and UNIDO where appropriate, as well as the regional economic commissions. The view was expressed by some delegations that work on the different aspects of the ECDC Programme would fall naturally to different fora, the prime consideration being technical competence. A number of delegations were of the view that the necessary co-ordination should be assured by regular meetings of developing countries, but as in the case of the Protocol Relating to Trade Negotiations Among Developing Countries the autonomy of the negotiating machinery should be maintained. It was also suggested that in the trade negotiations, full account would need to be taken of recommendations and conclusions emerging from sub-regional, regional and inter-regional meetings on ECDC.

V. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

44. The importance of the adequate provisions of technical assistance to countries participating in the negotiations, which took full account of the specific needs of those countries both in Geneva and in capitals, was stressed by many delegations. Some delegations expected that GATT, UNCTAD, UNIDO, ITC, and other agencies would contribute towards the provision of such technical assistance. A number of delegations suggested that the UNDP should be requested to provide operational support with respect to work connected with the negotiations. It was also noted that the GATT secretariat's system of information would cover developing countries not members of the General Agreement which decided to participate in the negotiations among developing countries.

VI. CLOSING STATEMENT

45. The Chairman's statement at the end of the consultations which was circulated as document Spec(79)28 is attached.
ANNEX/ANNEXE/ANEXO

LIST OF REPRESENTATIVES/LISTE DES REPRESENTANTS/
LISTA DE REPRESENTANTES

Chairman: Mr. M.G. Mathur
Président: Mme Chafika Sellami-Meslem
Présidente: M. Mohed. Abdelaziz Bendjenna

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Chargé d'Affaires,
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Embajador ante los organismos internacionales en Ginebra,
Representante Especial para las negociaciones comerciales multilaterales

Sr. Antonio Seward
Director Nacional de Negociaciones Económicas multilaterales,
Ministerio de Economía

Sr. Julio C. Raimondi
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Leader of Delegation

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Permanent Mission to the Office
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Mr. Nazimullah Chowdhury
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Mr. Carlos-Augustos Santos-Neves
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