MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE INFORMAL GROUP OF LESS-DEVELOPED COUNTRIES ON 11 JULY 1966

Prepared by the Secretariat

1. The forty-fourth in a series of regular weekly meetings of the informal group of less-developed countries was held on 11 July 1966, under the Chairmanship of H.E. Dr. José Antonio Encinas del Pando, Ambassador of Peru. The meeting was attended by the representatives of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, India, Indonesia, Israel, Jamaica, Peru, Spain, Uruguay and Yugoslavia.

2. In addition, the group was informed that the delegation of the Republic of Korea, which was seeking accession to the General Agreement through the Kennedy Round, wished to participate in the work of the informal group. Representatives of the Republic were immediately invited to attend the meeting and were welcomed by members.

3. The Chairman informed the members of the group that, in accordance with the decision taken at the group's earlier meeting, he had called on the Director-General and the Deputy Director-General with a view to impressing upon them the serious concern of less-developed countries over the state of the negotiations between the less-developed countries and the industrial countries and to requesting the Director-General, in his statement to the Trade Negotiations Committee, to draw attention to the urgent problems confronting less-developed countries in this regard, (see sub-paragraph 4(a) of LDC/M/43). The Director-General assured him that he was fully conscious of these matters and had already in mind to bring them to the notice of the Trade Negotiations Committee with the specific purpose of provoking reaction from industrial countries as to how they visualized solving them.

4. The Chairman further informed the group that informal meetings with three of the main industrial negotiating partners, namely the European Economic Community, Japan and the United States, had already taken place in accordance with the wishes of the group, (see sub-paragraph 4(b) of LDC/M/43). The informal meeting of the group with the delegation of the United Kingdom was scheduled to take place on Tuesday (12 July) morning.
5. The group took up the examination of the suggested procedures for negotiations between less-developed countries (INT(66)485). While several members of the group stated that their respective governments had already examined the document and were willing, in principle, to negotiate on the basis of these procedures, subject to any subsequent comments or suggestions considered necessary, others indicated that instructions from their respective governments were still awaited. Personally, however, they were of the opinion that the suggested procedures were adequate and appropriate for the conduct of such negotiations between less-developed countries. The representative of Indonesia stated that, as already indicated in another context, his Government would take part in the discussion among less-developed countries to expand their trade as its contribution in the Kennedy Round but that, due to technical difficulties, it was not possible for his Government at the present stage to submit request for concessions to the other participating less-developed countries. However, his Government would always be ready to give sympathetic consideration to requests for concessions submitted to it by them.

6. Concern was expressed that, if these negotiations were conducted between a small number of less-developed countries or only countries belonging to the same geographic region, then the situation would lead one to believe that less-developed countries had no material possibility of expanding their mutual trade and the so well argued case of less-developed countries for having a more generalized system of preferences would be frustrated. It was, therefore, important that all the less-developed countries in GATT should be invited to participate in the negotiations with a view to exchanging concessions on as broad a basis as possible.

7. The group discussed certain problems, such as the determination of beneficiaries of the concessions to be negotiated, etc. and agreed that these matters should be dealt with in the process of the negotiations, rather than decided upon in advance.

8. With respect to paragraph 4 of the suggested procedures, some members of the group noted that non-tariff barriers at times exerted a similar inhibitive effect as that of tariffs, and suggested that the paragraph should be re-worded so as to bring out clearly that these negotiations would relate to tariff and non-tariff barriers alike.

9. In view of the time needed for governments to examine the text, it was proposed that the dates specified in paragraph 5 should be extended by a fortnight or so. The dates indicated in the subsequent paragraphs should be extended correspondingly.
10. Some members of the group stated that, owing to technical difficulties, it would not be possible for their governments to transmit two copies of the latest edition of their respective customs tariffs and trade statistics for two recent years as envisaged in paragraph 7 of the suggested procedures. It was suggested that where such submission should be found difficult, the government concerned might merely supply such relevant tariff and statistical data as were available and as would be needed by the negotiating partners in determining the possibility of drawing up their lists of requests.

11. In the light of the foregoing, it was agreed:

(a) that the suggested procedures for negotiation between less-developed countries should be revised in the light of the discussion at the current meeting of the group;

(b) that the Chairman should address a communication, enclosing a copy of the revised suggested procedures, to each less-developed country in GATT which, for one reason or another, had not been able to participate in the work of the informal group, with the request that it indicates:

- whether the suggested procedures were considered acceptable;

- whether it intended to participate in these negotiations and, if not, the reasons or obstacles in the way of such participation;

- whether it had suggestions or proposals with regard to the suggested procedures which, if incorporated in them, would enable it to participate in these negotiations.