MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE INFORMAL GROUP OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES HELD ON 25 APRIL 1967

Prepared by the Secretariat

1. The sixty-sixth in a series of regular meetings of the informal group of developing countries in GATT was held on 25 April 1967 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, Ceylon, Chile, Dominican Republic, India, Indonesia, Israel, Jamaica, Korea, Nigeria, Peru, Sierra Leone, Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, United Arab Republic, Uruguay and Yugoslavia.

2. The Chairman informed the group that, in accordance with the mandate given to him at the group's meeting on 21 April, he had called on the Director-General to explore the possibility (i) of more time, preferably up to 22 May, being allowed for the conclusion of the Kennedy trade negotiations; and (ii) of holding a ministerial meeting before the termination of the negotiations. Ambassador Encinas said that, on the first point, the Director-General's view was that, although some "slippage" might be inevitable, there had been no decision to change the time-table. Since the intention was still to terminate the negotiations at a date as close as possible to 30 April, it was impossible to make arrangements at this stage which would enable the developing countries to pursue their negotiations until the latter half of May. In the view of the Director-General, developing countries should seek to ascertain the nature and coverage of the developed countries present positive offers in bilateral negotiations and make every effort to secure improvements, without awaiting the presentation of the "package deal". On the second question, the Director-General had indicated that in the view of the developed countries present circumstances did not warrant the convening of a ministerial meeting. Such a meeting could usefully be convened only if the major developed negotiating partners should find themselves confronted with major difficulties which required settlement at that level. In the absence of such a meeting, the Director-General would take it upon himself to discuss with the developed countries any particular difficulties faced by developing countries, on the basis of specific representations made to him.

3. During the discussion disappointment was expressed by various delegations over the lack of information concerning the overall progress of the negotiations, and the lack of access for the developing countries to the key negotiations taking place in restricted gatherings. It was suggested that, whilst bilateral negotiations should be energetically pursued, there must also be multilateral action aimed at bringing collective pressure to bear on the developed countries. In this context, a number of suggestions were made, including the suggestion that...
certain leading personalities in GATT might be entrusted with the task of representing the collective interests of the developing countries at meetings held to review the overall progress and time-table of the negotiations. Another suggestion was that individual developing countries should attempt once again to cut down their list of products to a bare minimum of key items on which they were interested in obtaining concessions from developed countries.

4. On the question of the time schedule, Mr. Mathur, Assistant Director-General, explained that, in the view of the Director-General, it should be possible for the delegations of developing countries to obtain in the course of the next week or so fairly substantial information on the positive offers of individual developed countries on products of interest to them. The major problems remaining to be resolved among the developed countries related to a few categories of products which generally did not involve the interests of developing countries. Consequently, there was no need for them to await the presentation of the final positive offers in the package form before taking action. If this should prove not to be the case, and developing countries were unable to obtain the required information, the Director-General would be glad to be informed so that he could lend his efforts to finding a solution.

5. After an exchange of views, the group generally agreed that:

(i) developing countries should continue individually to pursue and intensify their bilateral negotiations with developed countries and seek information on the positive offers of developed countries through these discussions;

(ii) they should analyze and identify the major difficulties encountered by them in the negotiations. Such specific problems could be tabulated and transmitted to the Director-General. The developing countries might revert to their proposal for the convening of a ministerial meeting if no satisfactory solution were secured through the good offices of the Director-General; and

(iii) the informal group, through its Chairman, should propose that, unless there should be an early opportunity for an effective multilateral confrontation with the developed countries, the Sub-Committee on the Participation of Developing Countries should be convened generally to review the present state of the negotiations and to discuss the various specific subjects of interest to developing countries.

6. The group agreed that it would meet again early next week, at a time to be decided by the Chairman.