GROUP ON ENVIRONMENTAL MEASURES AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Chairman's Concluding Remarks at the Meeting on 9/10 July 1992

I believe that the Group has had a most interesting and stimulating discussion under all the agenda items. The points raised and the views expressed merit very careful examination and reflection. I will not attempt to summarize the points made, for they will be duly reflected in the secretariat note of the meeting.

Under agenda item 1 I would like to take up a point made by the New Zealand delegation, in reference to TRE/W/1, suggesting a need for further information, particularly on the purpose, context and effects of measures, with the added suggestion that this could be done by the secretariat or by delegations, perhaps through the use of non-papers. I would suggest that we ask the secretariat to look into what further work they can undertake in this respect, and I would encourage delegations to utilize the availability of non-papers for this purpose.

On agenda items 2 and 3, I believe the Group will clearly benefit from returning to discuss those agenda items, as well as agenda item 1, in the next meetings in the autumn. To assist us, and on the basis of comments that have been made by many delegations yesterday and today, I would like to make a few suggestions.

First, with reference to the question of transparency. We could ask the secretariat to prepare a paper putting together the main issues that have been raised in the Group's discussion on agenda item 2, with regard to existing transparency provisions in the GATT, as well as those that will result from completion of the Uruguay Round negotiations. If this is acceptable to the Group I would ask that the Secretariat tries to undertake that work.

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Secondly, I would suggest that we ask the secretariat to prepare a paper on what has been termed the generic typology of packaging and labelling requirements, to assist the Group to advance conceptually towards a better understanding of what the possible trade effects of such requirements might be. We might also ask the secretariat to highlight, amongst other things, the types of requirements that are in use and their purposes in the context in which they are applied. The secretariat, I believe, will initially have to rely upon readily available information, and in order that this does not unduly constrain the exercise I would suggest that the Group invite delegations individually and on a good will basis to submit to the secretariat, for its use, information that reflects their own national experiences with packaging and labelling requirements.

We could perhaps leave delegations free to choose in what form they would make their submissions. They might wish to submit representative samples of packaging and labelling requirements, along with a description of the overall structure or context in which they are used. I sense there is an interest in the Group in having the general typology cover measures broadly, taking into account the way in which they are implemented, and including those which are used at the local and State government levels and by the private sector in a voluntary context, in particular those which are sponsored by governments. Our intention, of course, would not be to have a discussion in the Group about specific measures applied in individual countries but rather to ensure that the Group is able to familiarize itself as widely as possible with different kinds of measures.

We might encourage delegations also to share with us in a general fashion the experiences which they encounter as exporters with the packaging and labelling requirements of their trading partners. That could also help us to deepen our understanding of the possible trade effects of such measures.

Some delegations have proposed that the Group engage in a more comprehensive notification exercise. This probably needs further reflection and discussion: we could come back to this once the Group has had a chance to examine the secretariat's paper that they propose to prepare. If this is generally acceptable to the Group I would ask that the secretariat proceed to prepare the suggested papers and I am informed that they will be planning to circulate, at least in the English version, such papers before our next meeting.