Subject: Handbooks for overseas commercial representatives and exporters

At the Advisory Group meeting on GATT’s Trade Information and Trade Promotion Services that took place in Geneva from 13-15 June 1967, the Centre’s work in mobilizing the co-operative activity of its liaison agencies in different countries received favourable comments from both developing and developed countries. All thanks are therefore due to you for the unstinting assistance you have given us over the past three years.

Arising out of the meeting have come a number of suggestions regarding further work that the Centre might undertake. Two of the suggestions concern you very closely, and we are therefore writing to you about them straight away.

I. Handbook or manual for commercial representatives abroad

One of the recommendations of the Group was that we produce a practical handbook for the guidance of developing countries' commercial representatives abroad (commercial attachés and counsellors, and trade commissioners). To produce this we should like to profit from the immense experience that your country already has in this field. It is possible, for example, that you have already produced a manual for the guidance of your own commercial representatives abroad. Would it be possible for you to let us have one or two copies?

If you do not have such a manual, or you cannot release it, possibly you could let us have a full description of:

(a) the duties of your commercial representatives abroad;

(b) how they are expected to carry out these duties (with as many practical tips as possible on how to obtain optimum results);

(c) how they are trained for this work.

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On the basis of the information we receive from you and from other developed countries, we would edit a handbook for the use of developing countries, bearing in mind their more limited resources.

II. Loose-leaf handbook for exporters

We already have cognisance of handbooks that are produced by certain developed countries for the use of their own exporters. They often take a loose-leaf form and are kept up to date by an amendment service. Their contents generally relate to questions of trade documentation, trade regulations and marketing information, with respect to the various countries and trading areas of the world.

If your country produces such a handbook, we are wondering whether it would be possible for you:

(a) to send the Trade Centre a copy and keep it up to date by the amendment service;

(b) to send a copy to each of our developing country liaison agencies (about ninety in all) and also keep it up to date: we would provide you with the addresses.

We realize that point (b) would be a serious undertaking for you. However, the information on the import regulations and requirements of different countries that usually appears in such handbooks would be of considerable value to developing countries. These regulations are not in any way trade secrets: it is simply that the developing countries do not have the resources to collect such information continuously and keep it up to date. They would therefore greatly appreciate any assistance you could render them in the matter.

We look forward to hearing from you about these suggestions.

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Director of the Centre

cc: Missions in Geneva