ESTABLISHMENT OF TRADE INFORMATION AND
TRADE PROMOTION ADVISORY SERVICES IN THE
FRAMEWORK OF GATT

A Summary of Points and Proposals

1. The secretariat note sets out below major points and proposals relating to
the establishment of trade information and trade promotion advisory services which
were taken up during the discussions of the Group. In accordance with the
instructions of the Group, the note also contains some general indications of
procedures and requirements for implementing the proposals.

2. There appeared to be general agreement in the Group that it would be useful
to establish in the framework of GATT trade information services which are of a
nature to be of assistance to exporters in less-developed countries and that a
recommendation to that effect be made to CONTRACTING PARTIES. It was widely felt
in the Group that in order to be really useful, the trade information service
should be supplemented by trade promotion advisory services.

3. More specifically, the Group agreed that it would be desirable to establish
a small service, oriented towards meeting practical requirements which could be
expanded step-by-step, according to necessity. This step-by-step approach would
avoid a misdirection and waste of effort and resources.

At the same time it was stressed by the Brazilian delegation that the final
objective of establishing a "centre" which provides comprehensive trade information
services should not be lost sight of. With this in mind it was agreed that it
would be useful for the Group to reconvene approximately six months after the
services had started to operate and to continue to keep developments under review
thereafter. At its next meeting the Group would also be in a position to consider
in more detail the type and nature of trade promotion schemes which could usefully
be undertaken in the GATT. The fact that this question would only be examined in
detail at the next meeting should not prevent the implementation in the intervening
period of some of the proposals made in this regard.
4. As a practical means for establishing trade information and trade promotion advisory services a number of experts suggested that the GATT could act in the first instance as a clearing house for information of relevance to exporters in less-developed countries. Specific proposals made in this regard envisage (a) the exchange of documentation and possibly market research studies available through national trade promotion services, and (b) the supply on request of information on such subjects as market opportunities and requirements for specific products through the use of research and trade promotion advisory services operated by governments of contracting parties. The service should further be in a position to assist exporters in making the necessary contacts with national trade promotion offices, market research agencies, and importers associations. In this connexion it was suggested that governments would nominate an officer who would keep in contact with the "centre" and who would himself be contacted to provide information on the availability of trade promotion facilities in his country. Furthermore, it might be useful to designate agencies, for example Chambers of Commerce, in the different regions of the world which would act as "local" representatives of the "centre".

5. The Group agreed that the provision of a correspondence answering service would be particularly useful. This approach would ensure that the limited resources of the "centre" would be devoted to meet needs which existed in particular areas. The frequency at which requests for information on different subjects would be received would also serve as an indicator of the need for information services on various subjects. While the correspondence answering service would primarily relate to certain areas to be selected, an attempt would have to be made to answer all enquiries relating to matters of relevance to the operation of a trade information and trade promotion advisory service. Where necessary, information on the subjects concerned would be sought from national trade information services. In respect of subjects for which there appeared to be a more general demand for information, provision would be made for supplying the information to all interested parties. In certain instances it would, however, be preferable to include such information in the publication which the "centre" may wish to issue.
6. The expert from Brazil emphasized that, notwithstanding the usefulness of the correspondence answering service, which formed part of his original proposal, it would be necessary for the centre to publish a handbook containing information of a more permanent nature for which there existed particular need. The coverage of the handbook could gradually be expanded but in any event, it was not envisaged to cover every detail. Rather it would be the purpose of this publication to make available in an easily assimilable form data of direct relevance to exporters in less-developed countries, selected from the large amount of material that was being published by various sources. Furthermore, there was need for the dissemination of information relating to particular markets through the publication of supplementary booklets. Finally, matters of current interest would have to be brough to the notice of exporters, for example, by the revival of the International Trade News Bulletin. To be really useful this publication, which might also bring the 'handbook' up to date, would have to be authoritative and should not simply reproduce information published elsewhere. (In this connexion, a more effective implementation and expansion of the present notification requirements in the GATT seems necessary).

7. In the discussion of the possible contribution of the publications referred to above to the objectives of the 'centre' it was inter alia suggested that the centre should publish a selective directory of all relevant sources of trade information. As regards other publications, it was suggested that the centre might prepare and publish a manual setting out efficient means for establishing and operating trade promotion services in less-developed countries.

8. Before deciding on the usefulness of the different types of services, and particularly on the proposed publications, the Group felt that it would be useful to examine on what subjects information could most easily be made available, it being understood that, in order to operate the trade information service effectively, a 'documents centre' would be established in the GATT. In this connexion the secretariat was instructed to indicate those subjects on which information either already available or which could be made available,
given a more effective implementation and expansion of present notification requirements and procedures in the GATT.¹

9. Set out below are subjects on which information is generally available at the secretariat in respect of major markets, customs tariffs, levies, import fees, internal taxes, mixing regulations, State-trading practices, subsidies, anti-dumping duties, minimum import prices, quantitative restrictions, import licensing requirements, consular formalities, treatment of samples for duty purposes, sanitary control requirements. The information is, however, often not up to date as there are considerable lags between the time when changes relating to these measures are made and their notification to the GATT. (In this connexion it should be noted that for many of the measures referred to above, the General Agreement and the procedures adopted by the CONTRACTING PARTIES in this respect, do not set up a legal obligation to notify such changes). Also it should be pointed out that for many of the countries which have recently acceded to the GATT, information on these subjects has not been made available. (Also see Annex 1 to COM.III/126).

10. Apart from the subjects, which may be classified under the heading of 'trade barriers' (paragraph 9 above), which therefore fall under the competence of GATT, information on a number of related subjects referred to in discussing the Brazilian proposal might be made available to the GATT for dissemination by the 'centre': commercial codes; customs and other rules (COM.III/115, paragraph 23) documentation requirements; visas and inoculation requirements for visiting businessmen; government tenders.

11. Information on a further number of subjects suggested for coverage by the centre is available through other international institutions: national income statistics; currency and exchange system; patent regulations; postage rates and postal packing requirements. Information on most of the subjects suggested for coverage by the centre is published in exporters handbooks published by a number of firms and also in various official publications by governments.

¹In this connexion it should be noted that, in accordance with present practices, much of this information is "restricted".
12. The reference to the availability of information on the different subjects from various sources, particularly those available to the GATT does not, of course, indicate that information on all of these subjects could easily be disseminated by the proposed centre, taking account of the generally modest nature of the envisaged unit. In order to meet the needs of exporters in less-developed countries it would be necessary to undertake a considerable amount of processing of these data, which would require staff resources beyond those presently available to the secretariat.

13. In order to permit the coming into operation at an early date of the services suggested by the Group, it will be necessary for the Group to examine, and to report its findings, regarding the procedures to be adopted and the staff provisions which will have to be made. Taking account of the importance attached by the Group to the correspondence answering service the staff requirements set out in paragraph 7(i) of document Spec(64)20 and therefore the likely cost of such a service should be considered a minimum estimate. The cost estimate could be reviewed at the first meeting of the Group of Experts envisaged to take place approximately six months after the coming into operation of the service. Finally, account should be taken of the proposals made relating to the provision of training facilities in the GATT in the field of export promotion.