GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

Group of Experts on Trade Information
Second Meeting

GATT INTERNATIONAL TRADE CENTRE

Draft Report of the Second Meeting of the Group of Experts

I. Introduction

1. The Expert Group on Trade Information and Trade Promotion Advisory Services in the GATT met from 15 to 18 February 1965, in pursuance of a recommendation of the CONTRACTING PARTIES at their twenty-first session. Experts in the field of trade information and trade promotion from the following countries participated as members of the Group: Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, France, Federal Republic of Germany, India, Israel, Italy, Netherlands, Sweden, Turkey, United Arab Republic, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America. A list of the Experts and the Observers who participated in the meeting is contained in Annex A to this document. Mr. Hans Mott, Sweden, continued as Chairman of the Group.

2. The purpose of the meeting was to examine, in the light of experience gained and suggestions made by governments, the type and direction of the International Trade Centre's services that would be most useful to exporters in the less-developed countries, having regard to the resources that would be available to the Centre. Accordingly, the Group reviewed the activities of the Centre since its inception and gave consideration to its future work programme. In accordance with its terms of reference the Group undertook an assessment of the financial implications of the proposed future work programme of the Centre.
3. In addressing itself to these tasks, the Group took note of the recommendations it had made at its first meeting, namely that the services of the Centre should be orientated towards meeting the practical requirements of the less-developed countries to promote their exports, and that the second meeting of the Experts should devote special attention to the role of the Centre in the field of practical export promotion measures which will assist less-developed countries. These criteria have guided the Group in recommending certain new activities as well as some modification in the direction of current work.

4. To assist the work of the Expert Group, the secretariat had prepared a note (document L/2357) setting out in summary form (a) an account of the Trade Centre's current activities together with an indication as to the manner in which current activities might be continued; (b) suggestions by less-developed countries regarding the future work of the Centre; and (c) comments on certain other suggestions for developing the trade promotional activities of the Centre.

II. Findings and Recommendations

5. As regards the future activities to be undertaken by the Centre, the Expert Group recommended unanimously that the activities included in its previous work programme should be continued, and in some cases expanded by the addition of further tasks. Some recommendations were also made as regards the methods of execution. The findings and recommendations of the Group on the different tasks of the Centre were as follows:

(a) Liaison arrangements.

6. There was general agreement on the need for strengthening the Centre's liaison network by an extension of the present network at the official and private trade levels and with various international bodies, and by an intensification of these contacts so as to ensure a wider range of sources.
7. As regards the official liaison agencies, it was recalled that the CONTRACTING PARTIES had already agreed to furnish the Centre with information on market opportunities in their own countries.

8. Particular attention would have to be paid to making the Centre better known in those countries that need its services most. Because many of these countries do not have missions in Geneva, the Centre should strengthen its working relationships with their missions in other parts of Europe and with their capitals through correspondence channels.

(b) Basic documentation and publications

9. The vital need of the Centre for documentary material, whether published or unpublished, was recognized, and it was recommended that the Centre should be given sufficient resources to continue its build-up of this material through the abstracting of current periodicals and the purchase of essential and basic works. Concerning published works, however, it was recommended that the Centre should in the first instance send to national liaison agencies a list of the works required, and that the latter should endeavour to supply them free of charge and keep them up to date from year to year.

(c) Market Information Service

10. In view of the usefulness to the less-developed countries of the Market Information Service, it was expected that the volume of its operations would increase considerably in the future.

11. As regards the operation of the Service, the Expert Group recommended that if the case arose where the work requested became unmanageable, the Centre should give preference to enquiries emanating from national liaison agencies, government departments or other agencies authorized by governments, as well as to questions judged to be of practical utility from the point of view of creating trade opportunities for the less-developed countries in the near future.
12. The Group felt that when information on the market of a given country was collected from national liaison agencies, the Centre should, as a matter of principle, disclose the identity of the enquiring country, since the information needed would normally vary depending on which exporting country was being answered.

13. When collecting information on the market potential in a country it might sometimes be helpful to ask for information not only from the country concerned, but also from other countries that might have carried out market studies on that country. In this connexion, it was recalled that the CONTRACTING PARTIES had already agreed to exchange market studies—either through the Centre or directly between themselves.

14. The Centre could with the assent of the enquiring country, circulate the results of surveys with possible multiple interest to requesting liaison agencies. To this end the Centre would notify liaison agencies of work completed of such a nature. On occasion, publication of results may be indicated.

15. Following a suggestion from the United States, the Expert Group recommended that some of the enquiries received by the Market Information Service, e.g. on export opportunities for a given product or products, might be used as material for case studies in educational institutes dealing with foreign-trade problems such as graduate schools of business administration. The Centre might refer enquiries suitable for this kind of approach to some of the contracting parties, who would transmit them to suitable institutes for examination by their professors and graduate students. The results would be routed back to the Centre for earliest transmittal to the enquirer. It would thus also gradually build up a compendium of information on the subject enquired about that might then be transmitted to other countries expressing an interest in the survey prepared, or used for other trade promotional purposes.
(d) FORUM

16. The Expert Group welcomed the FORUM as a promotional vehicle to focus attention on the problems of the less-developed countries and on the work of the Centre in helping to meet them. With regard to the Trade Opportunities Notes and possibly also the Commercial Policy Notes, the Group recommended that it might be useful at a later stage to publish these in a monthly bulletin. The text of the Commercial Policy Notes might in this connexion be presented in such a way as to facilitate systematic filing.

(e) Other publications by the Centre

17. The Expert Group recommended that the Centre should assist the less-developed countries by publishing information of particular value for the building up of their export promotion services and for their exporters, in the form of short pamphlets.

18. The Group welcomed the pamphlet describing the export promotion techniques of selected countries and invited other countries (including less-developed ones) to supply similar descriptions. The Group also recommended that the Centre should carry out a synthesis of the individual country descriptions with a view to identifying common characteristics, which might be helpful to less-developed countries in organizing their export promotion services.

19. The pamphlet presented to the meeting setting out a list of importers' associations was considered useful; the Group recommended that it should be extended to cover such organizations in the less-developed countries also.

20. The Group recommended that the Centre should give assistance in editing surveys prepared by individual less-developed countries on their export potential, for publication in pamphlet form. The Centre would make available the distribution list of the FORUM (covering 10,000 addresses) for the diffusion of these pamphlets by the countries concerned.
21. The Expert Group recommended that the Centre should continue to encourage the provision by national trade promotion agencies of training facilities in export promotion, the host agencies defraying, to the fullest extent possible, the expenses of personnel from less-developed countries attending these courses.

22. In this connexion, the Centre should assume an important co-ordinating function with respect to these nationally-run courses. It should study:

(a) the training needs of the less-developed countries for trade promotion personnel at the government level and for personnel trained in export marketing techniques at the trade level; (b) the criteria and methods of selecting personnel for training courses; (c) the programme and content of training courses; (d) how trained personnel are utilized on returning to their countries, with a view to ensure that the maximum benefit is derived from them.

23. It was also recommended that the Centre should attempt to co-ordinate the itineraries of trainees travelling to the country giving the course so as to enable them to visit trade promotion centres of various other countries en route.

24. **On-the-spot surveys**

The Group felt that a pragmatic approach should be adopted toward the proposal that the Centre should undertake on-the-spot surveys to assist less-developed countries with their trade promotional problems. While this was a form of assistance that might be more fully developed at a later stage, the Group noted that the CONTRACTING PARTIES, under their Decision of 28 May 1961, had agreed to provide technical assistance while collaborating with other intergovernmental organizations active in that field.

**Joint Promotional Efforts**

25. The Group recommended that the Centre should explore the possibility of active trade promotional measures to be jointly operated by countries who had a substantial export interest in a product. It was felt that areas of possible co-operation would reveal themselves during the course of the Centre's work. Further studies by the Centre could then lead to suggesting to a group of countries that they come together to consider the feasibility of joint promotional action in specific fields.
Co-operative market research

26. The Group felt that there could be instances where exporting countries, individually or jointly, would need more authoritative and detailed market information than the Centre would be able to furnish from its own resources. In such cases, various courses of action might be adopted: for example, a request might be made to liaison agencies to carry out the necessary research at the national level, the Centre synthesizing the national studies; or the work might be entrusted to qualified specialist organs if the cost of this service could be financed from international technical assistance funds.

27. The Group recommended that the Centre should determine what would be the best course of action having regard to the requirements of each case. The Centre itself would act as an agency for organizing the research projects and in this rôle, it would be responsible for the provision of project reports and survey plans.

Trade Fairs

28. The Group recommended that the Centre give close attention to the subject of trade fairs and their relevance to the expansion of exports from less-developed countries. In particular, the Centre should examine the following matters and counsel the less-developed countries on: (a) the types of fairs from which they were likely to derive the greatest trade benefits; (b) availability of financial assistance to less-developed countries e.g. provision of stand space at reduced rates; (c) the manner in which less-developed countries should operate their offices at fairs in order to obtain the best results with modest outlays; (d) assistance that some fair authorities are prepared to give to participants in order to facilitate business transactions. Information about these matters that would be of interest to the less-developed countries might be published in the FORUM.

29. In general, it was felt that the Centre should not be tied down too specifically in its activities with respect to trade fairs, but should be allowed a measure of discretion to pursue any suggestions or ideas that would help the less-developed countries to participate fruitfully in trade fairs.
A MARKET OPPORTUNITIES CLEARING HOUSE

30. The representative of the United Arab Republic suggested that work in connexion with trade opportunities, now published in the form of notes, should be speeded up into a day-by-day clearing house operation in which the Centre would be the medium for establishing contact between less-developed countries' exporters offering specific products and importers elsewhere who require these products; this service being confined to trade in processed and semi-processed products.

31. The Group requested that the proposal be put in writing for circulation to all the contracting parties, and for the Expert Group to consider at the next meeting. By that time, the further experience of the Centre with the trade opportunities' notes would make possible a more realistic assessment of the proposal.