

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

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Special Distribution

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF A GROUP OF LESS-DEVELOPED COUNTRIES ON 2 MARCH 1965

1. The twenty-fourth meeting of representatives of a Group of Less-Developed Countries took place on 2 March 1965 under the Chairmanship of H.E. Mr. E. Letts, Ambassador of Peru.

2. The meeting was attended by representatives of Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, Ceylon, Chile, Cuba, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Israel, Jamaica, Malawi, Malta, Peru, Rhodesia, Spain, United Arab Republic, Uruguay and Yugoslavia. The Group had before it for discussion INT(65)38/Rev.1, a draft outline, prepared by the secretariat, of a Plan for Participation of Less-Developed Countries in the Kennedy Round.

3. While certain representatives indicated that they had to reserve the position of their governments on the text, there was general agreement in the Group that the draft represented a satisfactory basis for discussion within the Sub-Committee on the Participation of the Less-Developed Countries. There was however discussion on a number of topics in respect of which it was considered clarification was needed.

Countries with a predominant interest in exports of agricultural products

4. The Chairman, in reply to a question, suggested that countries could, by availing themselves of the proviso in the second sentence of the first paragraph of the text in terms of the procedure outlined in the third sentence of the first paragraph, indicate that they had such a primary interest in agricultural exports. A representative remarked that a country might experience difficulty, in the absence of any indication of progress in negotiations on agriculture, in deciding, on the date set for the presentation of notifications, whether it wished to act in terms of the proviso in question. In this connexion it was suggested that a country could, at the time of presentation of its notification, invoke the proviso but would be free, in the light of subsequent developments in the negotiations on agriculture, to make offers on the agreed date in the normal way. It could also, to ensure its participation in negotiations on manufactured items, make a partial offer whilst reserving its position as regards the rest of its offer until such time as the negotiations on agriculture had progressed sufficiently. It was suggested that this matter could be raised in the Sub-Committee on Participation.

Contents of partial exceptions lists

5. A representative pointed out that, in terms of paragraph 2(a) of the draft, industrial countries might not indicate items included in their exceptions list which had been identified as of interest to developing countries by Committee III but which had not been included in lists submitted by individual less-developed countries. The representative of the secretariat suggested that in practice most of, if not all, the items identified by Committee III would have been included in the individual country lists.

Conditions governing contributions

6. A representative noted that, whereas the earlier secretariat draft Spec(64)197 had given recognition to the fact that less-developed countries with a predominant interest in agricultural products could make any indication of their contribution conditional on satisfactory arrangements for agriculture, the concept of a conditional contribution had not been taken up in the present draft. The representative suggested that this matter could be clarified by the Sub-Committee on Participation.

The nature of contributions by less-developed countries

7. A representative recalled that in earlier drafts mention had been made of the "contribution" the less-developed countries were willing to make but he noted that, in the present text, there was reference to "offers" by these countries. He suggested that the use of "offers" might give rise to a misunderstanding since it might be construed as meaning that the contribution of less-developed countries in the Kennedy Round would be qualitatively, and perhaps even quantitatively, similar to those of developed countries.

Reasons for the inclusion of items on exceptions lists

8. There was some discussion as to whether less-developed countries receiving partial exceptions lists would also be notified of the reasons why items had been excepted. In this connexion it was pointed out that, in terms of the draft, the less-developed countries would be receiving the report of the Chairman of the Trade Negotiations Committee; they would also, in taking part in trade negotiations, in terms of paragraph 4 of the draft, be entitled to receive all documentation arising from the trade negotiations; and could, in the course of the examination mentioned in paragraph 2(c), enquire of the reasons for the inclusion of items on exceptions lists.

Non-tariff barriers

9. A representative observed that no mention was made in the draft of non-tariff barriers, a subject to which a number of developing countries attached much importance. Less-developed countries would, under the procedures proposed,

present their notifications and perhaps even their "offers" prior to their knowing the outcome of negotiations on non-tariff barriers and the intentions of the developed countries in this respect. The representative of the secretariat pointed out that the examination mentioned in paragraph 2(c) would afford developing countries an opportunity of obtaining information on these points in so far as they related to the items under discussion. It was agreed that clarification on this matter should be sought in the Sub-Committee.

The position of less-developed countries as regards the receipt of "offers" other than those of the linear-cut countries

10. A representative remarked that, whereas in Spec(64)197 mention had been made of "lists of exceptions/offers", the new text referred only to "exceptions". It would seem that developing countries would not be entitled to receive details of the offers of developed countries not participating on the basis of a linear cut.

Timing

11. It was suggested that a period of three weeks should elapse between the date of the final acceptance of the Plan for the Participation of Less-Developed Countries and the presentation of notifications.

Further action

12. It was proposed that, in order to facilitate work in the Sub-Committee itself, it would be desirable for certain of the points raised during the meeting to be put to the industrialized countries in order that they should be acquainted with the views of the developing countries and have the opportunity of formulating their own attitudes on these matters. It was agreed that the Chairman should report to the Deputy Executive Secretary on the points raised during the discussion.