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GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF A GROUP OF LESS-DEVELOPED COUNTRIES IN GATT ON 24 AND 31 MAY 1965

Prepared by the Secretariat

1. The twenty-fifth in a series of regular meetings of a Group of Less-Developed Countries within GATT, took place on 24 and 31 May 1965, under the Chairmanship of H.E. Mr. E. Letts, Ambassador of Peru.

2. The meeting was attended by representatives of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Ghana, Indonesia, Israel, Jamaica, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, the United Arab Republic and Yugoslavia.

3. In opening the meeting on 24 May, the Chairman suggested that it would be profitable if the Group were to devote its deliberations to the following matters:

the revision of the time-table for examination of exceptions on items of interest to less-developed countries and for presentation of offers by these countries in view of the delay in receiving exceptions lists from industrialized countries;

the draft conclusions emerging from the discussions at the the meetings of the Ad Hoc Group for Examination of Products of Export Interest to Less-Developed Countries; and

the time-table of meetings of the sub-groups established by the Committee on Trade and Development.

4. In the discussion on the question of participation of less-developed countries in the Kennedy Round, concern was expressed at the delay in receiving exceptions lists from industrialized countries. It was the general feeling of the Group that if the less-developed countries were to prepare adequately for the discussions on exceptions from the tariff cuts in respect of items of interest to them and, also to have time to fully consider the offers which they themselves could make by way of contribution to the objectives of the negotiations, the date both for these discussions and for the submission of offers would need to be put back.

5. Speaking at the request of the Chairman, the secretariat informed the Group that the last exceptions list had been received by the secretariat at the end of the previous week. The delay was due to some technical difficulties. Necessary

arrangements were being made to see that exceptions lists of products of interest to less-developed countries in the respective languages of the industrialized countries concerned, were received by less-developed countries without further delay.

6. Members of the Group expressed concern at the fact that the exceptions lists were being transmitted to less-developed countries only in the original English or French texts. It was the opinion of the Group that it would involve further delay if individual delegations had to get the exceptions lists translated before they could transmit them to their respective headquarters. It was suggested that while the secretariat might without delay, send to delegations the lists in the languages in which they had been received, arrangements should also be taken in hand to furnish authentic translations to each delegation in the appropriate working language as early as possible. The secretariat explained that the normal procedure was to send such documents to delegations in the language in which they were received, but that consideration would be given to implementing the Group's suggestion.

7. After considerable discussion, it was agreed that the Chairman, accompanied by the delegates of Chile and Jamaica, should get in touch with the Chairman of the Trade Negotiations Committee with a view to ascertaining the feasibility of deferring the justification and fact-finding proceedings, to the first part of July, and postponing the date for tabling concession offers by less-developed countries to September 1965.

8. At the meeting on 31 May, the Chairman advised the Group that as a result of his discussion with the Chairman of the Sub-Committee on the Participation of Less-Developed Countries on this subject, two possibilities had emerged - one, to commence the examination of exceptions lists on 12 July and to postpone the submission of offers by less-developed countries to 1 September, and the other, to schedule the examination of the exceptions lists for 1 September, and to postpone the date for tabling of offers by less-developed countries to 1 October.

9. After a brief discussion, the Group agreed that the examination of exceptions lists should start on 12 July, and that the date for the submission of statements of offers by less-developed countries should be put back to 1 September 1965. The Chairman was requested to inform the secretariat accordingly.

10. The Chairman also informed the Group that while the secretariat had not made any translations of the exceptions lists in the past, as lists submitted by delegations in the course of tariff negotiations were normally transmitted to delegations concerned in the language in which they were received, consideration would be given by the secretariat to having the texts translated for the convenience of less-developed countries' delegations. Further, the secretariat, in accordance with the wishes expressed on the subject, had agreed to supply an additional set of the exceptions lists to each delegation.

11. In discussing the draft report of the Ad Hoc Group for Examination of Products of Export Interest to Less-Developed Countries, the Group noted that Committee III had succeeded in elaborating lists of items of export interest to less-developed countries to which the Action Programme was subsequently applied. In respect of the present list of products, however, industrialized countries had taken the position that the list could serve an illustrative purpose only and should not have any juridical implications for the purpose of Part IV of the General Agreement. Some members of the Group considered that in the circumstances, it would be desirable not to establish any lists as they thought that the existence of such lists might tend to weaken rather than facilitate the effective implementation of Part IV, and in their judgment the obligations of developed countries could be implemented without reference to such lists. Some other members of the Group emphasized that procedures should be evolved for reviewing progress made in securing implementation of the commitments assumed by industrialized countries under Part IV of the General Agreement, and that this could be done by referring to the lists of products in which less-developed countries had indicated interest.

12. The Group did not reach any agreement on this matter.

13. The Group took note of the programme of meetings for the coming months. In this connexion the secretariat indicated that to meet the wishes of certain delegations, the meeting of the Group on Residual Restrictions was now being postponed to 28 June-30 June. It was further stated that to date, among less-developed countries only Chile, India, Pakistan and Yugoslavia had informed the secretariat, of their desire to be represented at the meeting of the Group. It was urged that any other country wishing to be represented at the meeting should inform the secretariat of its intention to participate as early as possible.

14. As for the meeting of the Group on Commodity Problems, which was scheduled for 21-24 June, it was pointed out that in accordance with its terms of reference, the Group was expected to examine concrete proposals submitted by contracting parties in this regard. If no such proposals were received, the meeting may need to be postponed indefinitely.

15. The Chairman indicated that the meeting of the Working Group on Preferences (by industrialized countries) which was scheduled to take place from 8-11 June had been postponed to 21-24 June. The reason for this postponement was to allow sufficient time to delegations to study the results achieved in the United Nations Committee on Preferences, and to seek instructions from their governments.

16. In connexion with the meeting of the Special Group on Trade in Tropical Products, the Chairman suggested that less-developed countries should try to get a decision to the effect that the work of the Group on Tropical Products should be given the same recognition and prestige as that of the Committee on Agriculture in relation to the Kennedy Round. Any other points that less-developed countries might like to make in the context of the Kennedy Round should also be put forth as early as possible.