

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

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MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE INFORMAL GROUP OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES HELD ON 8 AND 14 JANUARY 1969

Prepared by the Secretariat

1. A meeting of the Informal Group of Developing Countries in GATT was held on 8 January 1969 under the Chairmanship of H.E. Mr. H.C. Archibald, Ambassador of Trinidad and Tobago. The meeting was attended by the representatives of Algeria, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Ghana, Greece, India, Indonesia, Israel, Ivory Coast, the Republic of Korea, Kuwait, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Arab Republic and Yugoslavia.
2. The Chairman, referring to the fact that he had been appointed Chairman of the Group on an interim basis and recalling the suggestion that the post should, in future, be held in rotation, invited the Group to consider the question of the election of a new Chairman. Members paid tribute to the qualities of Mr. Archibald and the Group unanimously elected him Chairman of the Group for 1969.
3. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. M.G. Mathur, Assistant Director-General, informed the Group of the work being done in the secretariat relating to non-tariff barriers affecting the exports of developing countries. Apart from assisting developing countries in the preparation of notifications of such barriers, the secretariat was in the process of examining the inventory already compiled with a view to identifying those barriers which, prima facie, appeared to affect the trade of developing countries. The secretariat intended to circulate shortly an indicative list of such barriers. The notifications on the basis of which the inventory had been compiled were, however, not always precise and there could be no assurance that the indicative list would cover all barriers affecting exports of developing countries, or that all entries in it in fact affected their exports. It would, therefore, be necessary to seek clarification from developed countries as to the exact product coverage of some of the barriers and to invite developing countries to indicate any barriers which, to their knowledge, existed but which were not included in the list. One of the immediate objectives of the developing countries' participation in the discussion might be to compile a list of such trade barriers to which priority attention would be requested of the Committee on Industrial Products.

4. The Group had before it document COM.TD/W/83 containing the provisional agenda for the meeting of the Committee on Trade and Development. Members of the Group expressed the view that the work of the Committee should be so organized as to adequately reflect the sense of urgency expressed in paragraph 3 of the twenty-fifth session Conclusions (L/3155). Given the new authority which the CONTRACTING PARTIES had vested in the Committee on Trade and Development, the Committee should adopt a more effective approach to the problems of developing countries and should closely follow the activities of other organs of GATT in relation to matters of particular importance to developing countries and make appropriate suggestions to them in order to ensure that throughout the whole programme of work of GATT the problems of developing countries received prompt and adequate attention. To this end the Group should draw up a set of proposals for submission to the Committee on effective and expeditious ways of dealing with problems affecting the trade interests of developing countries. After further discussion the Group agreed to entrust the preparation of the proposals to a working group comprising all members of the Informal Group wishing to take part in this work. The draft would be examined in the Informal Group on 14 January.

5. Mr. Mathur explained that the January meeting of the Committee had been convened to permit consideration of points which required immediate action or early attention so as to enable governments to submit concrete proposals. Outstanding questions of this nature included the proposed working party to carry out a detailed examination of the difficulties encountered in the implementation of Part IV of the General Agreement and the proposed meeting of the Group on Residual Restrictions, to resume discussions in the light of developments at the twenty-fifth session of the CONTRACTING PARTIES, and to take up restrictions so far not dealt with in the Group. Discussion under item 3 of the provisional agenda should provide an opportunity to delegations to present any specific proposals and to have a preliminary discussion in regard to procedures for their treatment.

6. In response to a question, Mr. Mathur said that the question of implementing immediately Kennedy Round tariff concessions on additional products of interest to developing countries was not included on the proposed agenda because it was believed that delegations would not yet be in a position to put forward specific proposals at this time. This did not mean however that members of the Committee would not be free to raise this matter at the meeting if they so desired.

7. It was agreed that future meetings of the Informal Group would normally be held in the morning inasmuch as the 77 in UNCTAD usually met in the afternoon.

8. The Informal Group reconvened on 14 January 1969. Present were the representatives of Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Ghana, Greece, India, Indonesia, Israel, Jamaica, the Republic of Korea, Kuwait, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Arab Republic, Uruguay and Yugoslavia. The Chairman informed the Group that the delegation of Colombia, which was seeking accession to the General Agreement, had expressed the wish to participate in the work of the Informal Group. Representatives of Colombia were immediately invited to attend the meeting and were welcomed by members of the Group.

9. The Group was advised that a revised provisional agenda for the January meeting of the Committee on Trade and Development had been submitted by a number of developing countries (COM.TD/W/84). The Group took note of the revised agenda and discussed a paper prepared by the working group on a common position to be taken by developing countries at the Committee meeting (INT(69)15). The paper was adopted by the Informal Group with minor modifications, it being understood that developing countries would express themselves at the Committee's session on the lines indicated but might take up such other matters as they deemed appropriate. It was further agreed that the proposals in INT(69)15 would not be submitted to the Committee but would remain a confidential paper for the use of the delegations of developing countries only.