

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Note by the Secretariat

At the close of the first three-year review of the operation and implementation of the Agreement, the Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade agreed to keep the subject of technical assistance on its agenda for subsequent meetings and to revert to it as needed in the light of any relevant developments (TBT/M/12, para. 35).

This item had been placed on the agenda of the Committee at a previous meeting (TBT/M/7) and reports on technical assistance activities have been included in the background documentation for annual reviews of the operation and implementation of the Agreement (TBT/6 and Suppl. 1 and 2, TBT/10 and Suppl. 1 and 2, TBT/17 and Suppl.1). The secretariat has also circulated an information paper describing technical assistance activities by Parties or by international organizations of which they are members (TBT/W/28 and Suppl.1).

A letter was sent by the secretariat to signatories in August 1983 inviting delegations to focus on the ways in which provisions of Article 11 on technical assistance could be given concrete operational significance. In the light of consultations held on the matter, it is suggested that the Committee might play a rôle in channelling information on requests and offers of technical assistance, it being understood that this rôle should not be construed as a form of monitoring of such assistance.

Accordingly, the following procedures for exchange of information are suggested. Any formulation of specific needs by requesting countries and information provided by donor countries on the programmes available would be circulated by the secretariat as addenda to the present document. Whilst the information would be multilateralized in this manner, technical assistance would continue to be provided on a bilateral basis. Participation in the information exchange would be voluntary. Information on the secretariat's rôle in technical assistance would also be given as appropriate.

All information on requests for assistance channelled through the Committee would be made available to signatories in the context of the annual reviews of the implementation and operation of the Agreement. It is understood that this procedure would make it unnecessary to keep the item "technical assistance" on the agenda of future meetings of the Committee, unless a specific need arises.