

PRESS RELEASE

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FRANCE DONATES 1 MILLION EUROS TO THE WTO TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FUND

Today, 2 October 2000, the French Government made a contribution of 1 million euros to the Global Trust Fund for WTO Technical Cooperation. The French Minister of State for Foreign Trade, Mr. François Huwart, signed in Geneva a memorandum of understanding with the WTO Director-General, Mr. Mike Moore. This voluntary contribution by France in the form of a special fund from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of 1million euros over the period 2000-2003 (i.e. approximately 1.6 million francs per year) will benefit first and foremost the least-developed countries and the African countries.

According to Mr. Huwart, "the French Government wanted to make an added effort to contribute to the financing of technical assistance activities organized by the WTO on behalf of the developing countries to help them play their full role in the multilateral trading system. By doing so, France hopes to ensure enhanced integration of the developing countries, in particular the poorest among them, in the work of the World Trade Organization with a view, *inter alia*, to the launching of a global round of negotiations. In the same spirit, France will be contributing to the financing of the Conference of African Trade Ministers to be held in Libreville from 13 to 15 November 2000."

"I am most grateful to France for its contribution to the Technical Assistance Fund", said Mike Moore. "It is only thanks to such generous contributions that WTO can meet the increasing requests for technical assistance from the least-developed countries, the developing countries and the economies in transition. Unfortunately, the ordinary WTO budget for technical assistance, which amounts to only 741,000 Swiss francs, is insufficient."

The Director-General urged all Member Governments of the WTO to increase their contributions to the ordinary budget for technical assistance. France expressed its support for such an increase.