

# **WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION**

RESTRICTED

**WT/COMTD/W/68**

23 February 2000

(00-0666)

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## **Committee on Trade and Development Twenty-eighth Session**

### **REPORT ON TRAINING - TRADE POLICY COURSES 1999**

#### Note by the Secretariat

WTO's technical cooperation activities are geared towards enhancing human capacity building, largely through training. The regular Trade Policy Courses (TPCs) are considered effective tools in assisting developing countries as well as countries in accession, be they least-developed countries or economies in transition, integrate in or familiarize themselves with the multilateral trading system. The training courses address all aspects of the trading system and through their practical orientation prepare officials in implementing the WTO Agreements in their national administrations and participate more actively and effectively in the multilateral trading system. Working relations between the participants and the WTO Secretariat in many cases continue after the incumbents have taken up duties in their national administration, particularly when the officials have responsibilities in the area of trade policy or even more so when they are posted to Geneva and/or to the WTO. Given the Members' oft-reaffirmed usefulness of the training courses, several WTO Members are financing specific training programmes undertaken by the WTO Secretariat. Recipients also insist on their importance as a training tool.

#### **Objectives**

The overall objective of the regular Trade Policy Courses is to widen the participating officials' understanding of trade policy matters, the multilateral trading system, international trade law and the functioning of the WTO. The knowledge acquired is expected to allow participating officials to improve the effectiveness of their work in their own administrations and to promote a more active participation of their countries in the work of the WTO.

Specific objectives correspond to the main course components, e.g., presentations and discussions on WTO agreements to acquaint participants with their content and legal/trade policy implications; negotiation simulations to help participants understand the psychology, process and substance of trade negotiations; dispute settlement exercises to facilitate practical understanding of how cases are prepared and disputes resolved; visits to other international organizations located in Geneva to understand policy linkages between the work conducted at the WTO and other international institutions; and study tours abroad and in Switzerland to understand other governments' trade policy formulation and implementation practices and their implications on private firms.

#### **Content of Courses**

The Trade Policy Courses are designed to meet both the overall and specific objectives. The programme of the regular TPCs is comprehensive and consists of various theoretical and practical components designed to explain the trade policy context of the WTO as well as its key functions: facilitating the implementation and operation of the Multilateral Trade Agreements; providing a forum for negotiations; administering the understanding on dispute settlement and the TPR mechanism; and cooperating with the World Bank and the IMF to achieve greater coherence in global economic policy-making. Given its role and expertise, the WTO Secretariat, in close cooperation with other relevant organizations (UNCTAD, ITC, WIPO, ITU, WCO, ICC and ISO), is

well placed to plan and deliver this kind of specialized training service to officials from eligible Members and observer countries.

The programme for economies in transition elaborated in coordination with the trust fund donors was more specific as it was tailored to understanding accession-related issues. (A full description of WTO Trade Policy Courses is available on the WTO home page: [www.wto.org](http://www.wto.org) under the heading Trade Policy Courses).

## **Overall assessment of the regular Trade Policy Courses**

### Selection of participants

Current practice: WTO Trade Policy Courses are open to government officials from developing and least-developed countries and economies in transition. Officials most likely to benefit from the training are currently working in the field of foreign trade policy who need to obtain a wider knowledge of the WTO and the multilateral trading system before assuming further responsibilities in this field.

Emphasis is laid on getting clear information from governments on the following questions regarding their nominees for the courses: relevance of the course to the current or immediately prospective duties of a nominee; use by the nominee of knowledge and skills gained on the course upon returning to work; expectations regarding the nominees' future positions and ability to make significant impact in the relevant ministry; assessment of the nominee's language (WTO working languages) skills including ability to grasp technical/legal/economic vocabulary. The above criteria are spelled out in the invitation sent to governments for nomination of candidates and in the application form for candidatures. On the basis of the information received, the Secretariat selects the most suitable candidates.

Given the large number of applicants (over 300) and applying countries (more than 150), a serious effort is made to offer at least one fellowship per WTO Member or Observer country over a cycle of two years.

### Course delivery and programme assessment

Throughout the TPCs, all participants are asked to prepare several evaluation reports. The method is based on weekly questionnaires covering each course component together with an end-of-course comprehensive questionnaire. Discussion sessions are held at the middle and the end of the courses on the programme of the course. This form of evaluation gives the Training Division feedback on the value of the information and knowledge received by the participants and on whether the specific objectives of that component were met. Conclusions are then drawn with a view to making concrete improvements to the next course, i.e., discarding course elements perceived to be redundant and adapting existing components or developing new ones.

Detailed reports are available from the Secretariat regarding previous courses, and the general trend seems to be that participants highly value the TPCs, although useful and constructive criticism is always received (i.e. more emphasis has been requested on more participatory and practical exercises). The Training Division, in close cooperation with operational divisions of the Secretariat, has therefore developed, as part of its continuous adaptation, a course curriculum and training material containing more practical exercises in which participants perform individually or in teams.

This type of internal evaluation, based on the participant's perceptions and the Training Division's insights and experience, relates to the quality of course components and their specific training objectives and how to make continuous improvements to them.

### Course follow-up

More active interaction between training (capacity building) and country-based technical assistance is currently being introduced in cooperation with other organizations which provide technical cooperation. The Training Division is progressively moving in the direction of seeking more inputs on the impact of its activities with the assistance of the recipient governments.

In this regard, an important measure of how well the trade policy courses meet the overall training objective would lie on identifiable improvements back on the job. This aspect of evaluation is currently under consideration in the Training Division. To this end, The Training Division is currently developing a post-course evaluation system (for the post-course phase) with a view to measuring the effectiveness of the training provided and received. The foundation of this is the establishment of a data base through which the Training Division will try to follow, for a reasonable period of time, the careers of the course participants. This database has been completed and a certification process was initiated in October 1999 which is still going on. Once completed, the information gathered will help provide answers to, *inter alia*, the following questions: Do participants stay in their jobs when they have completed the course? To what extent are they engaged directly in WTO work? What percentage of participants are promoted after having applied the knowledge they acquired during the course in day-to-day work? How many participants return to Geneva as delegates? How do participants further their knowledge of the WTO having completed the trade policy courses?

The Training Division is contemplating involving Geneva-based ex-participants in the evaluation process through possibly reviving the Alumni Association. The Division is also experimenting with online fora for ex-participants, thus making use of Internet, e-mail and other means to keep the contact live on a continuous basis. Practical use is being made of the recently-established "WTO Reference Centers" in many developing countries for this purpose. The first such trials have yielded encouraging results and one should not be surprised to witness various activities taking place in that direction. In a more distant future, the Training Division hopes to associate itself with other Divisions' concrete projects in the area of distance learning, for which the World Bank has kindly offered its technical infrastructure and expertise.

The Training Division has also recently started developing a Press and Media network of contacts within the participating countries with a view to sensitising domestic audiences to the work of the WTO, as it relates to the Trade Policy Courses (training activities thereof).

### **Participation in the regular Trade Policy Courses**

#### Developing countries

The WTO finances and organizes three regular TPCs per year for trade officials from developing and least-developed countries which are Members or Observers of the WTO<sup>1</sup>. The participation is also extended to non-Member/Observer Least-Developed Countries in accordance with the Decision taken by WTO Members at the High Level Meeting on the Integrated Framework for LDCs. The Courses, held in English and alternately in French and Spanish, take place in Geneva and last for twelve weeks each. From 1955 when the first such courses were held, to April 2000, 1702 officials, including 83 in the capacity of 'free' auditors, participated in these courses. Over this period, the courses were shortened from six months each at the beginning to four from the late '60s, and to

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<sup>1</sup> As of January 2000 and as a result of the fact that 6-week long Special Courses on Accession to WTO for Eastern and Central European and Central Asian Countries are no longer being held. They have been replaced by three shorter duration courses financed by the Swiss Authorities and conducted jointly by the latter and the Technical Cooperation Division. The Training Division has, therefore, resumed inviting these same economies in transition to the regular TPCs.

three as of 1998, when a third regular course was added to the annual programme, thus allowing 24 more fellowships being offered per year.

In 1999, three courses were held, two in English (10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> TPCs), from 13 January to 1 April<sup>2</sup>, and 20 September to 10 December<sup>3</sup>, respectively, and one in French (12<sup>th</sup> TPC) from 3 May to 23 July<sup>4</sup>. A course in Spanish is due to start in mid-April 2000 and will last until mid-July.

### Economies in Transition

As mentioned in Footnote 1, the WTO Secretariat also organized in 1999 a shorter six-week course, the 9<sup>th</sup> of the series, for officials from economies in transition for Eastern and Central European and Central Asian Countries which are in the process of accession to the WTO. Since 1991, 329 officials from the economies in transition have been trained in trade, WTO and particularly accession issues through special courses financed by Switzerland (231) and the United States (98) and organized by or with the help of the Training Division of the WTO Secretariat. The 9<sup>th</sup> Course was financed by the Swiss authorities and was held from 6 to 30 April, comprising 21 participants from 12 countries.<sup>5</sup>

### **Resource Allocation**

WTO Budget: for each regular TPC, 24 participants are financed by WTO fellowship awards which cover travel expenses to and from Geneva, hotel accommodation, sickness and accident insurance; and a per diem to meet daily living expenses in Geneva and on study tours (there are no tuition fees for participants). Each participant costs approximately SFr 20,000, meaning that 24 fellowship awards per course amounts to approximately SFr 500,000. The WTO training budget covers the costs of three courses per year. In 1999, the budget amounted to close to SFr 1.5 million.

Trust funds: the special trade policy courses for the economies in transition were financed by the Swiss and United States Governments. The financing was the same as for the regular courses in that the budget was dedicated mainly to the travel and subsistence costs of the officials invited. It also included provision for a 13% overhead cost. The Secretariat and the Swiss authorities have since agreed on an alternative for providing technical assistance to this group of countries, which consists of three one-week special courses to be spread out through 2000 and organized in cooperation with the Technical Cooperation Division (see also footnote 1).

The presentations and exercises of the courses are carried out to a large extent by WTO secretariat officials dealing directly with the respective subjects, and also by some outside experts and consultants, although very few of these can be paid. Emphasis is laid on developing synergies with organizations such as the World Bank, which is in charge, at no expenses, of part of the introduction to the TPCs in the context of its cooperation with the WTO. The expertise of other international organizations (UNCTAD, ITC, WIPO, WCO, ITU, ICC and ISO) is also used as a complement to the courses at no extra costs to the WTO.

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<sup>2</sup> Angola, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brazil, Chinese Taipei, El Salvador, Ghana, Indonesia, Jordan, Korea, Mauritius, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Romania, Bhutan, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Thailand, Turkey and Uganda.

<sup>3</sup> Bangladesh, Botswana, Cambodia, Chile, Cuba, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guyana, Hong Kong, China, India, Jordan, Kenya, Kyrgyz Republic, Lesotho, Malawi, Paraguay, Rwanda, St. Lucia, Suriname, Swaziland, Uganda, Venezuela, World Bank, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

<sup>4</sup> Algeria, Argentine, Benin, Bolivia, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Haiti, Laos, Madagascar, Mali, Morocco, Maurice, Mauritania, Niger, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Senegal, Chad, Togo, Tunisia and Turkey.

<sup>5</sup> Albania, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.