
Committee on Customs Valuation

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES

Note by the Secretariat

This document presents a stocktaking of the Committee's work on technical assistance since the Committee received a proposal for an increased role in such activities in May 1997. Relevant documents which have been prepared by the Secretariat and circulated by Members are in bold.

1. In May 1997, a proposal by the United States was circulated (**G/VAL/W/18**) on an increased role for the Committee in technical assistance activities. This prompted three informal meetings of the Committee, held on 4 June, 11 July and 26 September 1997. These meetings focused on improving awareness and understanding of the activities already carried out or being carried out by international organizations and Members either bilaterally or regionally. They additionally allowed an airing of views regarding related structural, procedural and substantive issues. Subsequently, it was agreed at the October 1997 meeting that the Committee would discuss, in a systematic and formal manner, technical assistance with a view to contributing towards streamlining and tailoring technical assistance to the particular needs of each developing country. Such discussions would ensue in the formal meetings of the Committee as well as in informal meetings held as and when appropriate in the interim. The Committee also agreed at this meeting that the Chairman would circulate a 'request for information', (**G/VAL/11**) to which Members could respond, on a voluntary basis, to any or all of the questions posed on their particular situation regarding implementation of the WTO Agreement on Customs Valuation.

2. At the May 1998 meeting, the Committee reviewed responses to its request for information which were subsequently circulated in **G/VAL/W/24/Rev.1**. In addition, the WTO Secretariat briefed the Committee on its recently established Technical Assistance Programme on Customs Valuation. Subsequent reports from the Secretariat on this programme are contained in the minutes of the Committee's **meetings (G/VAL/M/9, G/VAL/M/10, G/VAL/M/12, G/VAL/M/13, and G/VAL/M/14 (to be issued))**. It was also agreed that Members would continue to respond to the request for information which could help Members to design bilateral and regional technical assistance activities as well as feed into the WTO Secretariat Programme. It was also agreed that the new Chairman would hold informal consultations to review additional responses to the request, to hear progress on the Secretariat Programme, and to discuss any Members' particular situation and/or new proposals on how the Committee could further pursue its mandate under Article 20.3 of the Agreement.

3. At the November 1998 meeting, the Committee took note of an Inventory of Technical Assistance Activities prepared by the Secretariat (**G/VAL/W/25**). It also agreed that the Secretariat would prepare a checklist of the priority activities for technical assistance to assist Members in identifying gaps in activities aimed at implementation of the Agreement (**G/VAL/W/30**). It also held an extensive debate on a proposal for sending a letter to other international organizations working on technical assistance in the customs area informing them of the Committee's work and enclosing copies

of the documents G/VAL/11 and G/VAL/W/24/Rev.1 and G/VAL/W/25. This was ultimately agreed at an informal meeting and reported by the Chairman at the April 1999 meeting. Mr. Hoda, Deputy Director-General of the WTO, had sent a letter to the African Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the European Bank for Construction and Development, the Inter-American Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund, UNCTAD, the World Bank and the World Customs Organization drawing the attention of these organizations to the Committee's activities with regard to technical assistance in customs matters and, in particular, to encourage them to take into account, in their activities, the needs expressed by developing country members in their responses to the Chairman's request for information.

4. During the period between the April and November 1999 meetings, the Chairman held an informal meeting among international organizations working in the customs area to try to identify areas of convergence and explore ways of working together. At the April 2000 meeting, following a presentation from the Inter-American Development Bank on their activities (**G/VAL/W/64**), Members stated that they would like the Committee to learn more about the activities of other organizations and explore ways of further cooperating in technical assistance activities in the customs area.

5. Finally, some Members have submitted communications on their bilateral assistance activities. These are contained in documents **G/VAL/W/36, G/VAL/W/37 and Add.1, G/VAL/W/48 and G/VAL/W/49.**
