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TECHNICAL COOPERATION OF THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION;

RELATIONS WITH OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Note by the Secretariat

1. Introduction

With the successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round negotiations, requests for technical assistance from the WTO by developing countries have increasingly focused on the implementation of the Uruguay Round Agreements. The Agreements, however, not only refer to technical assistance to be provided by the Secretariat, but also by Members and international organisations with which the GATT/WTO has already often cooperated. Relations between organisations are likely to strengthen further with the broadening and deepening of the scope of the WTO Agreements.

While some specialised agencies or international organisations have very specific mandates in their field of competence, others cover a wide range of issues including trade, macro-economic policy, as well as monetary, fiscal and financial matters. It would seem appropriate to assess how synergies can be obtained in implementing technical assistance for developing countries, allowing them to best benefit from available expertise.

This note will briefly highlight the main features of technical assistance as provided by the Secretariat of the World Trade Organization and identify technical assistance activities by other international organisations in relation to the WTO activities. It draws on information provided to the Secretariat by international organizations, where such information was not readily available.

2. Main Features of Technical Cooperation Provided by the WTO

A description of technical cooperation activities of the World Trade Organization (WTO) was circulated to the Committee on Trade and Development in November 1994 [COM.TD/W/511] and in an informal note prepared for the Committee in April 1995. The following paragraphs reiterate the main elements.

Technical cooperation programmes have been designed to provide assistance to governments, in particular those of developing and least-developed countries, to facilitate their insertion into the multilateral trading system and to ensure their effective participation in its operations. On a general level, assistance towards participation in WTO activities takes the form of briefings of and consultations with Geneva-based delegations and visiting officials from developing countries on the main provisions of the Uruguay Round Agreements; telecommunications with capitals and missions to capitals; dispute settlement courses; provision of background papers to assist developing countries meet domestic requirements - e.g. to facilitate their internal ratification processes; helping in the preparations of developing countries' trade policy review by the General Council.

Technical assistance activities of the WTO can be subsumed under four broad headings: (i) provision of specialized data and trade information to developing countries; (ii) organization of technical missions and trade policy seminars (national/regional); (iii) organization of trade policy courses; and (iv) cooperation with other international organizations in technical assistance activities for developing countries.

The provision of data and trade information to developing countries encompasses (i) the supply of appropriate tariff and trade data related to export interests; (ii) assistance to developing countries in the preparation of their schedules of concessions and commitments in goods and services in the course of the negotiations, including tariff negotiations under the General Agreement and negotiations in the context of accessions; (iii) the provision of data, information and background materials tailored to the needs of least-developed countries; (iv) trade, tariff and other information relevant to participation in the work of WTO bodies, or in bilateral negotiations, and (v) the assessment of the impact of specific commitments on services made by developed countries on developing countries' services trade.

Trade policy seminars concentrate on trade policy problems falling within the competence of the WTO and, wherever practicable, providing clarification on the provisions of the General Agreement and the Uruguay Round Agreements as would assist a government to determine its position in the light of its rights and obligations under the WTO. Specific issues such as market access results, anti-dumping and countervailing measures, dispute settlement and institutional issues, services, intellectual property protection, notification requirements, and adaptation or adoption of national legislatures in conformity with the Final Act are dealt with in the seminars.

The programmes followed in the seminars can be of two types, depending on the interests and needs of the recipient countries: one type of programme covers all the areas included in the rules of the GATT and the Uruguay Round Agreements; a second approach focuses on detailed analysis of some specific areas only. The tendency at present is to move towards a type of programme that consists of a combination of the two approaches.

Since the GATT established its trade policy courses in 1955, regular training courses for developing countries, which are financed from the regular budget, are held in English, French and Spanish. Special courses are also held for officials of Central and Eastern European and Central Asian countries, the Russian Federation, Ukraine and Belarus. The latter courses are largely financed by special donor member countries. The courses are aimed at giving participants greater understanding of trade policy matters, the work being done by the WTO, major problems of international trade, and

issues involved in the Uruguay Round. The WTO courses are open to officials from developing countries, including non-WTO members, and economies in transition, who have responsibilities in the field of formulation and conduct of foreign trade policy.

As regards the Trade Policy courses organized by the Secretariat, several international organizations including the IMF, World Bank, UNCTAD and the ITC have, over several decades, made important contributions in providing lecturers. More recently, WIPO has also been invited to lecture. Officials from various international commodity organizations have also occasionally provided an input to the courses.

The WTO Secretariat, in pursuance of its collaboration with other international organizations, makes available the services of its officials for participation in seminars, workshops or courses sponsored by such organizations, notably the International Trade Centre, UNCTAD, the IMF, the World Bank, and United Nations Regional Economic Commissions. Moreover, the WTO has organized regional seminars on the SPS Agreement in which the Secretariats of the FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission, the FAO International Plant Protection Convention, and of the Office International des Epizooties (OIE), also referred to as the World Animal Health Organization, have agreed to participate. In this context and upon specific request, the WTO coordinates participation of its officials in such seminars, workshops or courses for developing countries and economies in transition on issues related to the Uruguay Round Agreements, their implementation and other trade policy matters.

3. Technical Cooperation Activities of Other International Organizations

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

Detailed information on technical assistance provided by the FAO to developing countries in the context of the Uruguay Round was presented to the Committee on Trade and Development in November 1994 and is contained in Doc. COM.TD/W/516. Furthermore, detailed information is contained in G/SPS/W11 (9 May 1995) on FAO technical assistance related to the Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures.

Technical assistance activities currently undertaken by the FAO relate to: (i) providing technical advice; (ii) organizing seminars and workshops, as well as regional training programmes on specific technical aspects of food control; (iii) providing statistical information; and (iv) undertaking studies on topical agricultural issues for developing countries. Technical advice and assistance are provided on food quality and safety, plant protection and quarantine activities and general advice on agricultural production and trade.

Some of the activities of the FAO bear a direct relation with the implementation of the Uruguay Round Agreements, such as the Agreement on Agriculture, the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures and the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade.

Separately from the activities of FAO, but in relation to the SPS Agreement, it should be noted that the SPS Agreement also makes explicit reference to the Office International des Epizooties (OIE). Close cooperation was established with the OIE during the Uruguay Round negotiations, and is also to be continued with respect to the implementation of the SPS Agreement. More information regarding technical assistance provided by the OIE is contained in G/SPS/W/8 (19 April 1995).

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

Institutional relations between the IMF and the GATT/WTO have existed ever since the establishment of GATT. The formal relationship is likely to be strengthened through the WTO Agreement Article III:5, which states: "With a view to achieving greater coherence in global economic policy-making, the WTO shall cooperate, as appropriate, with the International Monetary Fund and with the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and its affiliated agencies."

The Fund has provided its member countries with technical assistance and training in economic and financial matters almost since its inception. Although interlinked, the Fund's technical assistance can be grouped into five broad categories: i) to advise on the design and implementation of policy measures; ii) to support institution building; iii) to improve the quality and timeliness of statistical information; iv) to train officials; and v) to review and help draft legislation. This can take many forms, ranging from yearly Article IV consultations and the design of stabilization, and structural adjustment programmes to setting up of a tax-payer identification system. As technical assistance is an integral part of Fund policy dialogue with its member countries, its scope in the Fund goes far beyond tasks specifically indicated under this heading.

Technical assistance can be provided by Fund staff in missions or by Fund staff and outside experts on specific technical assistance missions in response to specific requests by members, or by courses at the IMF institute. Assistance may relate to a whole range of subjects, including economic policy, balance of payments adjustments programmes, tax, government expenditure and budgetary policies, legal matters, debt management, exchange and trade issues, financial sector topics, accounting statistics and data processing.

International Organization for Standardization (ISO)

The ISO aims to promote the development of standardization and related activities with a view to facilitating international exchange of goods and services and to developing cooperation in the sphere of intellectual, scientific, technological and economic activity. The ISO Information Network (ISONET) coordinates and systematizes the exchange of information on standards and standard-type documents both internationally and nationally, by linking the information centres of most ISO members and the ISO/IEC Information Centre at the Central Secretariat into a coherent information system. A Uruguay Round Decision recommends that the Secretariat of the WTO reach understanding with the ISO to establish an information system, which will enhance the flow of information regarding notifications from ISONET members to the ISO/IEC Information Centre in Geneva.

Within ISO, a special Committee on Developing Country Matters (DEVCO) was established in 1961, and also ISO had been operating since 1980 a Programme for Developing Country Matters (DEVCO), which has proved to be of substantial benefit to developing country Members and economies in transition. The programme consisted of 1) publication of Development Manuals in the area of standardization and related matters; 2) training in standardization and related matters through regional training seminars, training fellowships with established national standards bodies, and training for ISO technical committee secretariat functions; 3) sponsorship of participation in ISO standards committee meetings; 4) assistance and guidance in the establishment of International Standards needed by developing countries; and 5) assistance in documentation, information and promotion of standardization.

In its Resolution 12/1994, DEVCO had called for closer cooperation between the WTO/TBT and ISO/DEVCO as well as between their Secretariats to explore ways for achieving the common goals of the two organizations regarding technical assistance to developing countries.

It would thus seem that ISO can fulfil a useful role in providing technical assistance in implementing aspects of the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade.

International Trade Centre (ITC)

The International Trade Centre UNCTAD/GATT (ITC) is the focal point in the United Nations system for technical cooperation with developing countries in trade promotion. ITC was created by the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1964 and since 1968 has been operated jointly by GATT and the UN, the latter acting through the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). As an executing agency of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), ITC is directly responsible for implementing UNDP - financed projects related to trade promotion in developing countries and economies in transition. Over the years, ITC has coordinated with GATT issues of mutual concern. In addition, concrete cooperation has taken place with regard to the annual GATT Trade Policy Courses in which ITC staff has presented both the technical cooperation programme for the regions/countries concerned by the various courses and specific technical programmes.

A main line of action of the ITC involves advising governments on their national trade promotion strategies, identifying new export opportunities, and helping authorities, producers' organizations or individual producers to adapt their goods and services and their practices and strategies for promotion and sale on world markets. ITC's special services in support of these export marketing efforts include advice on institutional requirements for trade promotion including activities of national chambers of commerce and of business organizations, export packaging, quality control, export financing, costing and pricing, trade information, publicity and trade fairs, commercial representation abroad, legal aspects of foreign trade and joint marketing for small and medium-sized firms. Special trade promotion needs of the least-developed countries are given high priority.

Recently, cooperation with WTO on operational issues has increased. A study on the follow-up action to be taken by ITC to enable developing countries to take full advantage of the Uruguay Round agreement was carried out in 1994. Also, ITC has prepared with the Commonwealth Secretariat a Business Guide to the Uruguay Round, which will be submitted to the WTO endorsement. This guide will be the subject of dissemination seminars in selected countries, and will be used as resource material in all training events. Furthermore, ITC is formulating various specific programmes aimed at helping developing countries and economies in transition to benefit more fully from the Marrakesh agreements.

As explained in its "Agenda for the Future" and Draft Priority Review", ITC's future technical cooperation activities would cover several core services, specifically: (i) needs assessment and programme design; (ii) trade information; (iii) export product and market development; (iv) development of trade support services; (v) international purchasing and supply management.

In view of its mandate, ITC is well placed to sharpen the awareness of the business community of the benefits of Uruguay Round Agreements. More specifically this relates to the new market access results, the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade, the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures, the Agreement on Customs Valuation, the Agreement on Textiles and Clothing, the General Agreement on Trade in Services, the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs), the Agreement on Trade and Environment and the Decision on Measures in Favour of Least-Developed Countries.

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

UNCTAD's technical cooperation activities were initiated as a result of resolution 30 (IV) of the Trade and Development Board, endorsed by the General Assembly, in its resolution 2207(XX) of 17 December 1966. Following UNCTAD II in 1968, the General Assembly, in its resolution 2401 (XXIII) of 13 December 1968, endorsed a recommendation of the TDB that UNCTAD should become a Participating and Executing Agency of UNDP.

The Secretary-General of UNCTAD was requested, in the Final Act of UNCTAD VII (1987): "to provide technical assistance to developing countries, on request, in connection with the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations so as to facilitate their effective participation in these negotiations". In response to this request, UNCTAD with the active support of UNDP launched a technical cooperation programme consisting of three regional projects for Africa, Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean, and an interregional project. From 1990, the Programme was complemented by a sub-regional project for Central America. The programme aimed at establishing, developing and strengthening the national negotiating capabilities of developing countries with regard to the Uruguay Round, assisting developing countries in identifying trade interests with respect to the various issues being negotiated, and in pursuing these issues in the form of concrete proposals and counter-proposals. The GATT Committee on Trade and Development was regularly informed of activities undertaken by the Programme.

The broad objectives of the technical cooperation offered by UNCTAD in the area of international trade have focused on the integration of developing countries in the international trading system through enhancing national policy development, strengthening negotiating capacities, assisting in institution building and improving human resources. The design of specific projects are multi-disciplinary in that they represent a coherent response to a complex set of interrelated issues in the areas of trade, services, technology and investment that *inter alia* highlight the development dimension. In this context, technical cooperation from UNCTAD aims at providing direct support to negotiation, enhances capacity building to increase trading opportunities in goods and services, accelerates the process of accession, analyzes the impact of the Uruguay Round on WTO Members and non-WTO Members, and undertakes policy analysis of new emerging issues. By supporting the effective participation of countries in the international trading system UNCTAD seeks to help them gain economic benefits from the WTO system of multilateral obligations.

UNCTAD VIII in 1992 adopted The Cartagena Commitment, which includes a number of decisions and recommendations regarding the future orientation of UNCTAD's technical cooperation. In particular, it calls upon UNCTAD to: "strengthen its technical cooperation activities in the area of trade with the objective of strengthening national capacities for trade and development, enhancing the participation of developing countries in the international trading system, and promoting the trade of developing countries, taking into account the activities of other international organizations. Such activities should encompass: trade policy reforms, including, on request, assistance to developing countries preparing for their participation in the GATT Trade Policy Review Mechanism; trade negotiations; market access, including the effective use of GSP; trade and sustainable development; trade facilitation and trade efficiency; dissemination of trade information and software packages; training and human resources development in regard to the foregoing; and assessment and implementation of the results of the Uruguay Round".

Also, UNCTAD sets up projects in different regions to provide assistance, *inter alia*, with respect to the adaptation of national laws and regulations, and the development and strengthening of human resources. Such projects contain components dealing with trade in services, trade and the environment, competition policies, as well as the identification and analysis of possible issues of interest

for future trade negotiations. Particular emphasis is laid on cooperation with academic and research institutions in the region concerned.

Pursuant to the provisions of the Cartagena Commitment, the TDB undertook a policy review of UNCTAD's technical cooperation activities in September 1994 and agreed, inter alia, on "...the necessity of making clear the relationship between UNCTAD and GATT/WTO in the area of technical cooperation, there is a need to intensify the cooperation, as regards operational programmes, between UNCTAD and the International Trade Centre UNCTAD/GATT (ITC)...".

Through its technical cooperation programmes, UNCTAD cooperates with relevant UN system organizations, as well as with a wide range of national, regional and global organizations in the public and private sectors. Activities, which are undertaken at the country, regional and interregional level at the request of developing countries and countries with economies in transition, include advisory services, training and the provision of information, data, software and equipment.

Technical assistance provided by UNCTAD under its mandate bears a close relation to the activities undertaken by the WTO. Close cooperation already occurs on a regular basis, notably through the participation of WTO officials in seminars and workshops, but also through information sharing on trade data. In view of the recognised technical assistance needs of developing country Members in implementing the Uruguay Round Agreements and existing complementarities in technical assistance activities provided by the WTO and UNCTAD, further synergies could be obtained through coordination in designing and implementing technical assistance strategies.

United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

The purposes of UNIDO are to encourage and extend assistance to developing countries for the development, expansion and modernization of their industries; to assist such countries in the establishment and operation of industries to achieve full utilization of locally available resources and contribute to self reliance; to provide a forum to serve the developing and industrialized countries in their contacts, consultations and negotiations; and to coordinate all activities of the UN system related to industrial development.

UNIDO envisages to conduct, within the next few months, a series of studies to assess the impact of the Uruguay Round trade agreements on specific industrial sub-sectors, focusing also on practical implications at the enterprise level, in a limited number of developing countries, particularly those whose manufacturing sectors are about to reach a point where they will face international competition. In the formulation and preparation of these studies, UNIDO will seek the cooperation of relevant multilateral organizations and institutions, chiefly WTO, UNCTAD and ITC. The need for and importance of such assessments stems from the realization that if developing countries are to take adequate advantage of the positive effects of the Uruguay Round, fundamental changes are necessary in their patterns of trade. The new trading system will only provide advantages to those developing countries, that are able to improve the quality and productivity of their products to become internationally competitive. This may entail a major reappraisal and reorientation of industrial strategies, policies and programmes at the level of specific sub-sectors of industry. In this regard, attention must also be paid to the technological dimension of manufacturing process and their implications for manufacturing techniques and quality standards.

UNIDO, in cooperation with the government of India, will organize a Global Forum on Industry to be held in New Delhi, later this year. The impact on industry of global trade liberalization following the Uruguay Round Agreements is one of the issues on the agenda.

United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)

As an autonomous body of the UN system, UNITAR's main mandate is to enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations in achieving the major objectives of the Organization, in particular the maintenance of peace and security and the promotion of economic and social development (General Assembly resolution 1934 (XVIII) of 11 December 1963). Its main functions are training and research. Training is, according to UNITAR's statute, provided at various levels to persons, particularly from developing countries, for assignments with the UN or specialised agencies and for assignments in their national services which are connected with the work of the United Nations, the Organizations related to it, or other institutions operating in related fields.

Collaboration has been established in particular with the legal division of the WTO with regard to training of diplomats participating in UNITAR's training programme in multilateral diplomacy in Geneva as well as within the framework of the UN/UNITAR Fellowship Programme in International Law, taking place annually in The Hague (Netherlands) with the participation of lawyers from developing countries.

A jointly developed Workshop on the Procedures for the Settlement of Trade Disputes explains the institutional structure of the WTO and its basic rules and describes the process used by the contracting parties to resolve trade disputes within the WTO system, including conciliation and arbitration. It is geared towards diplomats in charge of WTO affairs within their Permanent Missions.

UNITAR and the ILO Training Centre in Turin jointly developed a proposal for a training programme on the WTO. The proposed project aims at strengthening the capacity of decision makers to make a more efficient use of the new framework and regulatory mechanisms of international trade as emerged from the successful conclusions of the Uruguay Round and thereby increasing the potential effective and beneficial participation of the countries concerned in multilateral trade cooperation¹

World Bank

The World Bank does not have a specific mandate on technical assistance for trade policy. It is charged, however, with promoting "the long-range balanced growth of international trade and the maintenance of equilibrium in balance of payments..." Under this rubric the World Bank can undertake technical assistance programs where they are requested by countries and where they meet the Bank's standard of lending requirements. The Bank has a general policy of cooperating with other international organizations and, under the terms of the WTO Agreement, stands ready to offer financial support to countries undertaking adjustment as a result of the Round, providing, that they do so in the context of a suitable policy stance and adjustment program.

At a less formal level there is widespread recognition within the Bank that countries require assistance in meeting their Uruguay Round obligations and in other cases, preparing for accession to the WTO. While the Bank does not undertake technical assistance specifically and explicitly aimed at these objectives, it offers advice on trade policy, including aspects of its application. The Bank is now completing its Trade Expansion Programme, which offered wide-ranging but fairly practical advice on trade policy and trade regimes.

¹ The WTO has accepted to take part in this programme.

World Customs Organization (WCO)

The World Customs Organization, established in 1950 as the Customs Cooperation Council, develops a number of activities that have a close bearing on the functioning of the WTO Agreements. Some principle aims of the Organisation include encouraging the harmonization and simplification of customs procedures; enhancing cooperation among customs administrations in terms of customs law enforcement; promoting the widest application of the Harmonized System for tariffs by providing technical advice and assistance to members in the application of such systems; promoting the widest implementation of the Uruguay Round Agreement on Customs Valuation by providing technical advice and assistance to members in the application of such Agreement.

The WCO Training Strategy comprises the following key elements:

- Technical assistance and Training: through its Directorates, the WCO designs and delivers technical assistance and training programmes to meet the identified needs of Members and support adoption and implementation of WCO and WTO instruments and conventions. In many cases these programmes are preceded by development of international guidelines, manuals, model legislation and support mechanisms put in place to ensure the success of implementation programmes. This development is often achieved in cooperation with other international organizations, e.g. between WCO and IFPI for intellectual property rights. The areas covered by these programmes include: Valuation, Harmonized System, Origin and Intellectual Property.

- Training Systems Development Programme: A key issue in developing appropriate training and assistance responses is assessing the actual training needs of a country and matching this need with training provided by donors. The WCO exploits its position to provide those administrations and organizations that offer training resources, a means to direct them to the countries, and in the subjects, of greatest need. A database designed for that purpose, known as WIDEBAND, is in the process of development and will be in service in 1996.

Cooperation in technical assistance between the World Trade Organization and the World Customs Organization is being implemented in relation to the Agreement on Customs Valuation and related Decisions, the Agreement on Rules of Origin, and the application of the Harmonised System. The WTO has participated in Harmonized System seminars and provided lecturers to explain to the participants of these seminars the implications of the Harmonized System and its changes on the GATT Schedules of Concessions.

World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)

WIPO is responsible for the promotion of the protection of intellectual property and administers various international treaties, of which the most important are the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property of 1883 and the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works of 1886. Article 3 of the Convention Establishing the World Intellectual Property Organization (signed at Stockholm on July 14, 1967 and amended on October 2, 1979) sets out the key objectives of the Organization, which, *inter alia*, consist of..." to promote the protection of intellectual property throughout the world through cooperation among states and where appropriate, in collaboration with any other international organization." In order to attain these objectives, the Organization, through its appropriate organs, performs some key functions, which are set out in Article 4, including ..." to promote the development of measures designed to facilitate the efficient protection of intellectual property throughout the world and to harmonize national legislation in this field" (Art.4.) and ..."offer its cooperation to States requesting legal-technical assistance in the field of intellectual property" (Art.4.v).

Moreover, the General Assembly of WIPO at its meeting in the Fall of 1994 adopted a Resolution reiterating the desire of establishing a mutually supportive relationship between WIPO and the WTO. It decided to establish an ad hoc working group open to all Member States of WIPO to address related aspects. Also, the Resolution states (par 3) that: " The WIPO General Assembly decides that the International Bureau should be at the disposal of any State that expressly asks for advice on questions of compatibility of its existing or planned national intellectual property legislation not only with treaties administered by WIPO, but also with other international norms and trends, including the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights, and that the International Bureau should prepare studies on the implications of the said Agreement on the treaties administered by WIPO." WIPO thus is particularly well placed to assist developing country Members in their pursuit of establishing a regulatory and an institutional framework for implementing aspects of the TRIPs Agreement.