

PREPARATIONS FOR THE 1999 MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

Trade and Competition Policy

Paragraph 9(b) of the Geneva Ministerial Declaration

Communication from Cuba

The following communication, dated 9 November 1999, has been received from the Permanent Mission of Cuba.

Introduction

1. The adoption of the work programme agreed in Singapore in 1996 was a major challenge to developing countries, as its inclusion added to the tasks under the existing work programme with regard to the various matters regulated by the WTO and which were still to be tackled.
2. The mandate of the Working Group on the Interaction between Trade and Competition Policy had an educational, exploratory and analytical basis and made clear that its work would not prejudice the start of negotiations when those matters were reviewed.
3. The following is the situation on the eve of the Third Ministerial Conference at Seattle:
 - (a) The Working Group has not yet completed its task, as the matters under study call for more in-depth analysis, given their complex nature. There are still areas that need greater review and study, such as the repercussions of the restrictive trade practices utilized by transnational companies;
 - (b) in general, developing countries need to prepare their national structures based on a prior domestic study, in order to implement and/or develop domestic rules on competition policy, as well as to clarify their orientation. Nevertheless, this exercise cannot be subordinated to compliance with new WTO undertakings;
 - (c) furthermore, developing countries are currently having difficulties due to the real problems arising from compliance with existing undertakings.

Proposal

4. Continue the educational, exploratory and analytical work of the Working Group on the Interaction between Trade and Competition Policy.

5. Develop a technical assistance programme for developing countries in order to:
 - (a) Ascertain the real needs of each country in the sphere of competition policy, including cooperation in preparing and adapting infrastructure and providing the required training;
 - (b) study the individual and global consequences of the introduction or development of competition policy regimes; and
 - (c) take an active part in the work being done by the Working Group on the Interaction between Trade and Competition Policy.
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