

PREPARATIONS FOR THE 1999 MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

Proposal for a Declaration on Developing Countries

Communication from the Philippines

The following communication, dated 24 November 1999, has been received from the Permanent Mission of the Philippines.

Ministers,

recalling that it is an objective of the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization (the "WTO Agreement") to ensure that developing countries, especially the least developed among them, secure a share in the growth in international trade commensurate with the needs of their economic development,

stressing that the formulation of rules governing the multilateral trading system is only a means whereby the objectives of the WTO Agreement is to be pursued,

noting that the WTO Agreement was entered into without the benefit of experience on how the rules governing the multilateral trading system would be conducive in promoting the above-declared objective,

considering that valuable relevant experience has been obtained in the first five years of the implementation of the WTO Agreement,

reaffirming that the means must always be reassessed in relation to the objectives,

decide that:

1. A Working Group shall be established to study how the provisions of the various agreements forming part of the WTO Agreement promote or hinder, as the case may be, the attainment of the objective that developing countries, especially the least developed among them, secure a share in the growth in international trade commensurate with the needs of their economic development.
2. Based on the study, the Working Group shall negotiate and formulate appropriate amendments or modifications to the provisions of such agreements for submission and adoption at the Fourth Session of the Ministerial Conference.

3. In formulating such amendments, the Working Group shall focus on measures that take into account the disparities in the relative capacities of Members to assume and to implement the level of obligations imposed, and in accordance with the following general guidelines:

- (a) Obligations assumed by developing countries shall be commensurate with the needs of their economic development and their capacity to fulfill such obligations. This could be pursued through measures such as:
 - (i) Longer transition periods;
 - (ii) Viable thresholds;
 - (iii) Appropriate flexibility in implementation; and
 - (iv) Capacity-related exemptions from compliance with specific provisions.
 - (b) Obligations assumed by Members, especially developed country Members, shall be rendered more enforceable and operational through their elaboration and the provision of adequate financial and other resources, particularly in the following areas:
 - (i) Allocation and commitment of financial and institutional support for technical assistance and capacity-building activities, both for participation in negotiations and implementation of agreements;
 - (ii) Easy and immediate access to relevant information, including information processed by the Secretariat into forms of utility and relevance to the needs of developing countries; and
 - (iii) Other positive measures to promote the interests of developing countries.
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