

General Council

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PREPARATIONS FOR THE 1999 MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

Communication from Jamaica

The following communication, dated 5 October 1999, has been received from the Permanent Mission of Jamaica.

Background

1. Developing countries are committed to the SPS Agreement and to its principles of sound science, risk assessment and the harmonization of national standards to international standards. Notwithstanding, the following proposals, based on the experiences of Caribbean countries in the implementation of the SPS Agreement, are offered with the intent of enhancing its utility to developing countries.

Proposals

2. Members agree that the vague concepts in the Agreement such as "identical and similar conditions" (Article 2.3) and "reasonable period of time" (Article 5.7) should be clarified.

Notification procedures should be further simplified

3. In instances where individual WTO Members are allowed to establish their own standards (Article 3.3), the process of standards development should be open and transparent, with special facilities to assist developing countries in complying with these same standards.

4. WTO Members should agree to the establishment of a joint fund with the expressed purpose of assisting developing countries to increase their participation in the work of the SPS Committee and the various international standard setting bodies. From the perspective of developing countries such a fund is wholly consistent with Article 10.4 of the SPS Agreement.

5. Greater levels of technical assistance resources will be required to assist developing countries to take advantage of the Agreement.
