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Report of the First Substantive Meeting of the Consultative Task Force on Environmental Requirements and Market Access for Developing Countries

Geneva, 5-6 November 2004

UNCTAD/DITC/TED/2005/2

Introduction

The first substantive meeting of the Consultative Task Force on Environmental Requirements and Market Access for Developing Countries took place in Geneva on 5 and 6 November 2004. The meeting was organized back-to-back with the meeting of the WTO Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade. The first session, on 5 November, was held in the Palais des Nations and chaired by H.E. Mr. Enrique A. Manolo, Ambassador of the Philippines. The second session, on 6 November, was held at the Mission of Canada and chaired by Mr. Tobias Nussbaum, Counsellor, Canadian Mission to the WTO. Some 70 experts from Governments, intergovernmental organizations, NGOs and the private sector participated in the meeting. This report, which was prepared by the UNCTAD secretariat, summarizes the main recommendations made at the meeting. The list of participants is annexed to the report.

Background

The Consultative Task Force (CTF) was launched, as a project-based activity, at a pre-UNCTAD XI workshop on Environmental Requirements and Market Access for Developing Countries, organized jointly by the UNCTAD secretariat and the National Institute of Metrology, Standardization and Industrial Quality (Inmetro) of Brazil in Rio de Janeiro on 7 and 8 June 2004. The report of the workshop is available in document UNCTAD/DITC/TED/2004/7.¹

The CTF is an open-ended multi-stakeholder forum of government, private sector and NGO representatives that assists developing countries in analysing key trends of environmental and related health requirements in export markets and to exchange national experience on proactive approaches to meeting such requirements with a view to maintaining market access, harnessing developmental gains and safeguarding social welfare. CTF activities are not intended to “second guess” the legitimacy and objectives of environmental requirements, nor to develop guidelines for good regulatory practice. Rather, CTF activities will involve analysing and discussing ways of overcoming specific developing country challenges regarding the development and implementation of, as well as adjustment to, such measures. CTF activities and discussions should lead to specific conclusions and practical initiatives, based on appropriate country- and sector-focused examples.²

The added value of the CTF is that it (i) links policy and capacity-constraints issues aimed at developing a more holistic and development-oriented approach on environmental requirements (ERs) and market access; (ii) interfaces discussions in the WTO, notably on paragraph 32(i) of the Doha Ministerial Declaration, with other debates at the international and national level; (iii) includes in the analysis and discussion voluntary ERs of the private sector and NGOs and thus provides a formal exchange mechanism between these stakeholders and Governments; (iv) draws into the discussion stakeholders normally not involved in WTO debates; and (v) allows a regular exchange of information among agencies and initiatives that provide technical and capacity-building assistance in fields relevant to CTF discussions.³

¹ Accessible at: http://www.unctad.org/en/docs/ditcted20047_en.pdf

² More information on the CTF and its activities can be obtained from the CTF web site at http://www.unctad.org/trade_env/ctf.htm

³ Report of the pre-UNCTAD XI workshop on Environmental Requirements and Market Access for Developing Countries, Rio de Janeiro, 7-8 June 2004 (UNCTAD/DITC/TED/2004/7)

Recommendations of the 5-6 November 2004 meeting

- (1) On the work programme till the next CTF meeting (planned to be held in early July 2005), the following recommendations were made:
- (a) The Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries (CBI) in the Netherlands, FAO, the National Institute of Metrology, Standardization and Industrial Quality (Inmetro) in Brazil, and other relevant parties are encouraged to form, under the umbrella of the CTF and facilitated by the UNCTAD secretariat, a working group for commenting on a draft feasibility study prepared by UNCTAD on the possible added value of an internet “portal” that guides users on and facilitates access to existing information clearinghouses on environmental and related health requirements for market access. Experts, representing the demand and the user side, should be involved in the discussions of the working group. Defining the need for information, the possibilities of linking information exchange systems of different organizations (mandates, definition and format of content) and the technical aspects of linking systems should be addressed in the feasibility study, which will determine whether the portal should be developed or not. The feasibility study should also consider the viability of including voluntary and private sector requirements. In the event of a positive outcome, a business plan for developing a portal on environmental requirements will be written. The business plan should allow other interested parties that operate information clearinghouses, and which would clearly add value to the portal, to join the working group.
 - (b) Two sector-specific project proposals will be implemented: (i) environmental requirements and market access for developing countries: the case of the electrical and electronic sector; and (ii) assisting developing countries in developing national or subregional codes on good agricultural practice for horticultural products that are benchmarked to EurepGAP (the Euro-Retailer Produce Working Group's Code on Good Agricultural Practice).
 - (c) The proposals will be circulated among CTF participants and posted on the CTF website to facilitate additional comments and appropriate coordination with other relevant activities. Progress of work will be appropriately and transparently presented on the CTF website.⁴
 - (d) The project on electrical and electronic equipment will be implemented in consultation with other agencies, including the Basel Convention secretariat, UNESCAP, UNIDO, the UN University and the Sustainable Trade and Innovation Centre (STIC). It will be initiated within existing extrabudgetary resources.
 - (e) The project on assisting developing countries in developing national or subregional codes on good agricultural practice for horticultural products that are benchmarked to EurepGAP should pay due attention to the developmental dimension. In this connection, the analysis should include: (i) an assessment of the implications of market entry conditions pertaining to horticultural commodities for the livelihoods of low-income farmers, particularly small-scale subsistence farmers participating—or seeking to participate—in out-grower schemes with exporters; as well as (ii) efforts of actual or potential exporters of horticultural produce to fight poverty and provide/safeguard employment. Until the next CTF session, work will focus on two feasibility studies and

⁴ www.unctad.org/trade_env/test1/projects/ctfpp.htm

two stakeholder dialogues in countries/subregions in East Africa and South-East Asia where national codes on good agricultural practice are already under development. A third study and stakeholder dialogue for selected Central and South American countries will be implemented through an existing UNCTAD project. Findings will be reported to the next CTF meeting, which will take a decision on further activities on this subject.

- (2) The CTF will organize (i) sector-specific policy dialogues on each of the above-mentioned project activities for experts in the sectors concerned; (ii) on-line discussions and meetings, as necessary, of the above-mentioned working group preparing the feasibility study on an internet "portal"; and (iii) open-ended CTF meetings. The latter will discuss the results of activities/meetings under (i) and (ii), as well as other issues relevant to the work of the CTF. Future CTF meetings will also provide an opportunity to agencies and stakeholders to exchange information on their analytical, technical-assistance and capacity-building activities relevant to CTF discussions. These meetings will also provide an opportunity for developing countries interested in participating in the CTF to present proposals for further projects of relevance to the work of the CTF and of interest to these countries.
- (3) The UNCTAD secretariat was asked to prepare a CTF funding proposal to raise sufficient extrabudgetary resources to support (i) the participation of developing country experts in future CTF meetings; (ii) project activities; and (iii) the work on the "portal" that interfaces existing information clearinghouses on ERs.⁵ CTF members are encouraged to support fundraising efforts, including for projects to be proposed in the future by participating developing countries.
- (4) It was proposed to hold the next CTF meeting back-to-back with the summer session of the WTO Committee on Trade and Environment, tentatively scheduled for early July 2005.

⁵ A fund-raising proposal was prepared by the UNCTAD secretariat in November 2004 and was submitted to various potential donors in December 2004.

Annex

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