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TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Thirty-first executive session

Geneva, 10–13 March 2003

Item 5 of the provisional agenda

**PROVISION OF DOCUMENTATION IN SIX LANGUAGES TO THE
JOINT ADVISORY GROUP OF THE INTERNATIONAL
TRADE CENTRE UNCTAD/WTO**

Informal background paper prepared by the ITC secretariat

The programme of the Centre is reviewed annually by the Joint Advisory Group on the International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO, open to Member States of UNCTAD and Members of WTO. While the Group has neither legislative nor budgetary authority, it has come to be the main intergovernmental policy forum of the Centre, with the Trade and Development Board of UNCTAD and the WTO General Council reviewing its report and recommendations annually, thus performing their formal role of policy organs of the Centre.

I. BACKGROUND

1. Since the late 1960s, when ITC became a joint UNCTAD/GATT(WTO) operation, interpretation during the Group meetings has been provided in six languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish) and the related documentation in four languages (English, French, Russian and Spanish).

2. The question of providing documentation in Arabic and Chinese in addition to the four other languages was raised for the first time at the thirty-fourth session of JAG in 2001, and the following is an extract from the Report of the JAG:

"The current language arrangements for the JAG sessions called for documentation to be submitted in four languages (English, French, Russian and Spanish); interpretation was effected in the six official United Nations languages. Two representatives requested documentation in all six languages as was customary in United Nations meetings. Another representative, insisting on the joint United Nations/WTO nature of JAG, was not in favour of increasing administrative costs."

3. The issue was again raised at the thirty-fifth session of JAG in 2002 and the following is an extract from the Report:

"At the thirty-fourth session of the Joint Advisory Group, held in the spring of 2001, a proposal had been made for issuing official documentation of the Group in the Arabic and Chinese languages, in addition to the current languages of issuance (English, French, Russian and Spanish). While it was also observed that the administrative costs for this purpose should not be increased, insisting on the joint United Nations/WTO nature of JAG, it was agreed that this should be reflected in the report of the JAG and be brought to the attention of the parent bodies of ITC.

Two representatives asked for information on the status of this request. The secretariat informed the Group that the 2001 report had been submitted to the General Council of WTO and to the UNCTAD Trade and Development Board. The request had also been costed and included in the ITC budget submission to the United Nations and to WTO but no decision had been taken. Consequently, ITC had no authorization to proceed and the documentation for the current JAG session had been issued in the traditional way.

Responding to a question from one representative on action which could be taken at this juncture, the secretariat suggested that a letter could be sent to the Chairman of the thirty-fifth session of JAG asking him to raise the issue again with the UNCTAD Trade and Development Board and the WTO Committee on Trade and Development when this session's JAG report was presented. On the occasion of the next budget cycle, a formal budgetary request could be made following a formal endorsement by both bodies of the proposal."

4. Following the JAG meeting in April 2002, the Chair received a letter from the Ambassador of Egypt, asking that he raise the issue at the Trade and Development Board of UNCTAD and at the WTO General Council on the occasion of the submission of the JAG report.

5. The JAG report was discussed at the twenty-ninth executive session of the UNCTAD Trade and Development Board held in September 2002 and the following is an extract from the report of the Trade and Development Board:

*The representative of **Egypt**, speaking on behalf of the **Group of 77 and China**, said that the documentation of ITC should be translated into all official UN languages, including Arabic and Chinese. The Board should take the necessary decision in this respect so that the appropriate budgetary action could be taken.*

*The representative of **China** agreed that ITC documentation should be translated into all official UN languages. That would require a joint decision by UNCTAD and WTO. It should also be borne in mind that ITC documents formed part of the official*

documentation of the Board's session and should therefore be issued in all official languages.

*The representative of **Denmark**, speaking on behalf of the **European Union**, said that ITC was delivering valuable technical assistance to developing countries. Its assistance was particularly important for the private sector and for developing countries' efforts to overcome supply side constraints and develop their export potential. ITC should pursue its efforts, in cooperation with UNCTAD and other international organizations. With regard to translation of ITC documentation, all budgetary implications of translation into two additional languages would have to be examined.*

*The **Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD** said that resources for translation were not included in UNCTAD's budget. All the Board could do would be to convey a request concerning translation of ITC documentation to the appropriate budget bodies at Headquarters.*

*The **Executive Director of ITC** said that ITC had drawn attention to the financial implications of increasing the number of languages used for ITC documentation. It was now for member States to decide how they wished to proceed.*

Action by the Board

The Board took note of the report of the Joint Advisory Group on its thirty-fifth session, noting that the question of the translation of ITC documentation into six languages would be taken up in the context of the budget.

6. In recommending the approval of ITC's 2003 budget proposal, the WTO's Committee on Budget, Finance and Administration proposed the following approach which was agreed to by the General Council of the WTO:

The Committee on Budget, Finance and Administration endorsed the following approach: (i) the WTO would not include a provision for ITC expenditure for translation into Arabic and Chinese of JAG documents in the 2003 Budget, (ii) the WTO would indicate to ITC that the WTO would leave the decision on the issue to the UN, and (iii) in line with the agreement with the UN on cost sharing of ITC expenditure, the WTO would cover half of the costs arising from any such decision, effective from the date of coming into force of such decision.

II. PROJECTED BUDGETARY IMPLICATIONS

7. JAG is funded from ITC's Regular Programme Budget. It is currently budgeted at SF 271,900 of which SF 134,000 is for the translation, production and distribution of documentation and SF 82,000 for interpretation. The addition of two languages (Arabic and Chinese), as of 2004, would amount to approximately SF 80,000 per year which would be shared between WTO and the UN in equal parts.

8. ITC Plans to add to its proposed *regular* budget for 2004/2005 for the United Nations and 2004 for WTO a detailed reference to the additional appropriations that would be required should the General Assembly endorse the recommendation to increase from four to six the number of languages in which the documentation is submitted to the JAG
