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**JITAP: CAPACITY BUILDING IN ASSURING DEVELOPMENTAL  
GAINS FROM THE MULTILATERAL TRADING SYSTEM**

18 June 2004 – Summary prepared by the UNCTAD secretariat

1. The special JITAP<sup>1</sup> event was chaired by H. E. Professor E. B. Rugumayo, Minister of Tourism, Trade and Industry, Uganda, and by Mr. Mohamed Ould Hitt, Director of Trade, Mauritania. Several delegations from partner, donor and other countries participated in the meeting together with delegates from the regional economic communities. The three executing agencies also participated: UNCTAD, the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). Following is a summary of *best practices and lessons learned* that were highlighted during the discussions:

- a. As a partnership for trade development, JITAP can make an important contribution to UNCTAD XI's subtheme of *assuring development gains from the international trading system and trade negotiations*. This contribution is delivered through capacity building at the levels of institutions, human resources and enterprises.
- b. As a self-implemented, tool-based technical assistance programme, JITAP helps countries develop and/or adjust national trade policies, engage in trade negotiations, develop sector strategies, and elaborate medium- and long-term visions for trade, investment and development.
- c. The management approach of JITAP, as a joint initiative of ITC, UNCTAD and WTO, with the valuable support of donor countries, facilitates coordination of technical assistance at the country level at a time when mostly limited national capacities are strained by numerous and overlapping negotiating processes. This approach helps countries take a more active role in the management of technical cooperation and better understand the policies of development partners in this field. The national management mechanisms of JITAP and other programmes should be further integrated in the countries, or even merged for better complementarity of capacity-building activities.
- d. The capacity set up in JITAP countries assisted them in coordinating the preparatory processes of their negotiating positions and in ensuring more active participation, as well as

<sup>1</sup> Joint Integrated Technical Assistance Programme to Selected Least Developed and Other African Countries.  
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adequate follow-up to trade negotiations. This model was found efficient in dealing with vast, complex and highly specialized issues of international trade.

- e. The institutional framework set up by JITAP to organize national debate on multilateral trade issues proved efficient for involving all parties concerned by the negotiations. The Inter-Institutional Committees consistently contributed to enhancing the participation of the private sector, civil society and other development partners in the countries. These committees are supported by a network of trained professionals and a network of specialized multilateral trading system (MTS) information points – the Reference Centres and National Enquiry Points.
- f. The MTS information infrastructure and the network of experts established in the eight initial African JITAP countries are being extended to eight other African countries that have joined the programme. The institutional and human capacities and the related network are of prime interest to trade experts as a model for helping developing countries and their enterprises to enhance their beneficial participation in the MTS.
- g. The trilateral approach to training experts in the MTS, which involves simultaneously covering MTS rules, policies and business aspects, helps national experts acquire a real knowledge of the agreements and establish a multi-disciplinary knowledge base. This also encourages the formation of networks of trainers, experts and presenters on the MTS, with multiplier effects. This approach continues to be implemented in the new group of countries and can be applied by any country that wishes to do so.
- h. The coaching approach provided by JITAP for the formulation of sector strategies ensures ownership of the outcomes by all participating stakeholders. This warrants implementation of the measures agreed on. It also reinforces reflection on national development strategies involving goods, services and commodities. The methodology applied involves all national partners in sectors with high export potential, thus producing beneficial effects at the macro-economic level and at the level of enterprises that take advantage of the coaching process to enhance their own ability to strategize vis-à-vis new and existing markets.
- i. Sustainability of MTS capacity built is essential for increasing countries' autonomy in ensuring a satisfactory level of economic performance, and for fighting poverty. Networking of such capacities in the various countries, which is a key element of JITAP, will be determinant in this context. Substantial support should be provided to encourage more cooperation among JITAP partner countries. Support and follow-up mechanisms should be defined to help the countries expected to leave the programme after the consolidation phase. In the same context, regional economic communities stressed the need to complement national capacities built in the countries with similar efforts at the regional level. The need for increased collaboration between the JITAP and these organizations was recognized.
- j. The capacity of JITAP to take into full consideration country priorities and its catalyst role in generating complementary initiatives that aim at developing the supply capacity of the countries for increased trade flows was noted with great interest. The programme helped ensure better allocation of resources by countries to the work on the MTS. It also enabled them to better assume their responsibilities in negotiations. Other trade-related technical assistance (TRTA) programmes could be inspired by the JITAP approaches. The importance was highlighted of ensuring synergies with other TRTA programmes, including the Integrated Framework, through better integration of the aspects contributing to poverty eradication and to the mainstreaming of trade into economic and social development strategies.
- k. General satisfaction was expressed by partner countries with the assistance provided by the three agencies and donors. The extension of the JITAP model of technical assistance to other countries was proposed. It was also proposed to institutionalize an annual ministerial meeting to review the programme activities and to integrate its experiences at the political level.