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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

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

List of Participants

Argentina

Ms. Viviana CAMALAY
TBT Division
Ministry of Economy
E-mail: fccalotc@mecon.gov.ar

Brazil

Ms. Maria-Rita FONTES FARIA
Brazilian Mission in Geneva
E-mail: maria.rita@ties.itu.ch

Ms. Mayard Samis ZOLOTAR
International Affairs
Inmetro
Tel: +55 21 25632817
Fax: +55 21 25026542
E-mail: mszolotar@inmetro.gov.br

Ms. Anna CAMBOIM
Standardization and Industrial Quality
Inmetro
Tel: +55 21 2563 2908
Fax: +55 21 2502 6542
E-mail: acamboim@inmetro.gov.br

Ms. Maria Cristina CORRÊA de Sá e BENEVIDES
Standardization and Industrial Quality
Inmetro
Tel: +55 21 2563 2821
Fax: +55 21 2502 6542
E-mail: mcbenevides@inmetro.gov.br

Canada

Mr. Tobias NUSSBAUM
Counselor, Permanent Mission of Canada to the Office of the United Nations and other
International Organisations in Geneva
5, Avenue de l'Ariana
CH-1202 Geneva
Tel: +41 22 919 9200
Fax: +41 22 919 9233
E-mail: tobias.nussbaum@dfait-maeci.gc.ca

China

Prof. XIA Youfu
China Research Center for Technical Barriers to Trade and SPS (CC TBT)
University of International Business and Economics
E-mail: youfuxia@china.com

Ms. LIU, Ying
Department of WTO Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation
talktoying@sohu.com
Fax: +86 10 65917335

Ms. GUO Lisheng
Senior Engineer and Deputy Director General, National
WTO/TBT Notification Authority and Enquiry Point of the P.R.China
tel: +86 10 822 62393,
fax: +86 10 822 60611,
email: lsguo1401@vip.sina.com

Costa Rica

Ms. Alejandra AGUILAR
Tel: +506 256 7111 ext.440
Fax: +506 256 7111
E-mail: aaguilar@comex.go.cr

Cuba

Mr. René FERNADEZ
Oficina Nacional de Normalización
Director de la Dirección de Normalización
Dirección del Centro: Calle E esq. 13 No. 265, Plaza, Ciudad de La Habana
Email: renef@ncnorma.cu

Egypt

H.E. Ms. Naela GABR
Ambassador, Permanent Representative to the WTO
Permanent Mission of Egypt
Tel: +41 22 731 6530
Fax: +41 22 738 4415
E-mail: mission.egypt@ties.itu.int

Mr. Mohamed ELEWA
First Secretary
Permanent Mission
Mr. Amr ALJOWAILY
Second Secretary
Permanent Mission

Mr. Kamel Zayed GALAL
Third Secretary
International Economic Relations
Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Germany

Mr. Jens HOFFMANN
Wuerzburg University

Honduras

H.E. Mr. J. Benjamin ZAPATA
Ambassador and Permanent Representative
Permanent Mission of Honduras to the United Nations and other International Organisations
E-mail: mission.honduras@ties.itu.int

Ms. Gracibel BU FIGUEROA
Counsellor
Permanent Mission
E-mail: mission.honduras@ties.itu.int

Mr. F. Javier MEJIA GUEVARA
First Secretary
Permanent Mission
E-mail: mission.honduras@ties.itu.int

Mr. Mauricio PEREZ ZEPADA
Second Secretary
Permanent Mission
E-mail: mission.honduras@ties.itu.int

India

Mr. Sudhakar DALELA
First Secretary
Permanent Mission of India
E-mail: sudhakar.dalela@ties.itu.int

Mr. Raghav NARSALAY
Consultant
Economic Laws Practice (ELP)
E-mail: raghavnarsalay@elp-in.com

Mr. RAGHURAM Krishnamurthy
Head, Business Development
CRISIL Limited
E-mail: kraghram@crisil.com
Tel: 56913176

Iran

Mr. Mahdi FAKHERI
First Counselor
Permanent Mission
28, Chemin du Petit Saconnex
1209 Geneva
Tel: +41 22 332 2111
Fax: +41 22 733 0203
E-mail: mehdi.jakheri@ties.itu.int

Kenya

H.E. Ms. Amina C. MOHAMED
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kenya to the UN
Permanent Mission of the Republic of Kenya
Avenue de la Paix 1-3
1202 Geneva
Tel: +41 22 906 4050
Fax: +41 22 731 2905
E-mail: mission.kenya@ties.itu.int

Ms. Ruth NYAGAH,
Africert, Kenya
E-mail: rnyagah@icipe.org,
rnyagah@africert.org

Netherlands

Mr. Tjalling DIJKSTRA
Policy Coherence Unit
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Fax: +31 70 3484881
E-mail: tjalling.dijkstra@minbuza.nl

Ms. Ariane VAN BEUZEKOM
Project Manager
Market Information and Trade Intermediary Section
Centre for the promotion of imports from developing countries (CBI)
P.O. Box 30009
3001 DA Rotterdam, The Netherlands
Tel: +31 10 2013434
Fax: +31 10 4114081
E-mail: Abeuzekom@cbi.nl

Ms. Maaïke SCHOUTEN
CREM
Spuistraat 104d
1012 VA Amsterdam
The Netherlands
phone: +31 20 627 4969
fax: +31 20 626 6539
E-mail: schouten.m@crem.nl

Philippines

H.E. Mr. Enrique A. MANALO
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Philippines to the UN
47 Avenue Blanc
1202 Geneva
Tel: +41 22 716 1930
Fax: +41 22 716 1932
E-mail: Philippine.mission@ties.itu.int

Mr. Manuel Antonio J. TECHANKEE
Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the WTO
47 Avenue Blanc
1202 Geneva
Tel: +41 22 7161930
Fax: +41 22 7161932
E-mail: Philippine.mission@ties.itu.int

Mr. José Antonio S. BUENCAMINO
Commercial Counselor
Philippine Mission in Geneva
47 Avenue Blanc
1202 Geneva
Tel: +41 22 7161930
Fax: +41 22 7161932
E-mail: Philippine.mission@ties.itu.int

Mr. Miguel R. BAUTISTA
First Secretary
Philippine Mission in Geneva
47 Avenue Blanc
1202 Geneva
Tel: +41 22 7161930
Fax: +41 22 7161932
E-mail: Philippine.mission@ties.itu.int

Ms. Ma. Victoria L. BARNES
Attaché
Philippine Mission in Geneva
47 Avenue Blanc
1202 Geneva
Tel: +41 22 7161930
Fax: +41 22 7161932
E-mail: Philippine.mission@ties.itu.int

Msr. Lupino J. LAZARO, Jr.
Attaché
Philippine Mission in Geneva
47 Avenue Blanc
1202 Geneva
Tel: +41 22 7161930
Fax: +41 22 7161932
E-mail: Philippine.mission@ties.itu.int

Mr. Benjamin QUIÑONES
Asian Coalition for SME Development
57 Diamond St., NV 1, Filinvest
2 Quezon City, Metro Manila
Tel: +63 2 9327690
E-mail: benqjr117@yahoo.com

Ms. Ma. Teresa D. REGINIO
Director,
Bureau of Export Trade Promotion (BETP)
E-mail: betpmtdr@dti.gov.ph

Slovenia

Ms. Alenka MARKOV
Permanent Mission of Slovenia
E-mail: Alenka.Markov@mzz-dkp.gov.si
Mrs. Vesna STRAZISAR
National Institute for Standardisation

Thailand

Ms. Sunanta KANGVALKULKIJ
Counsellor
Permanent Mission of Thailand to the WTO
Geneva
Switzerland
Tel: +41 22 9295200
Fax: +41 22 791 0166 / 788 8025
e-mail: sunanta@thaiwto.com

Mr. Arthayudh SRISAMOOT
Counsellor
Permanent Mission of Thailand to the UN
Tel: +41 22 715 1010
Fax: +41 22 7151000 or 7151002

Mr. Chirath ISARANGKUN NA AYUTHAYA,
Trade Officer,
Multilateral Trade Negotiations Bureau
Ministry of Commerce
Tel: +66 2 282 6607
Fax: +66 2 280 1579
E-mail: chirathi@moc.go.th

Mr. Saengchai EKPATANAPARNICH
Vice-Chairman, Federation of Thai Industries
Deputy Chairman, Electrical, Electronics and Allied Industries Club
Tel: +66 2 7581974 / 3843848
Fax: +66 2 3843690 / 7581978
E-mail: saengchai.ekpatanaparnich@tanandsons.com

Ms. Nudjarin RAMUNGUL
Researcher, Semiconductor Materials
National Metal and Materials Technology Center
E-mail: nudjarr@mtec.or.th
Fax: +66 2 5646401

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Mr. Bob FAIRWEATHER

Second Secretary,

Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Un

E-mail: bob.fairweather@fco.gov.uk

United States of America

Ms. Melissa KEHOE

First Secretary

Permanent Mission of the US

E-mail: kehoemj@state.gov

Venezuela

Mr. Alfredo AZPURUA MARQUINA

First Secretary

Permanent Mission

E-mail: mission.venezuela@ties.itu.int

European Commission

Mr. Laurent BARDON

DG Trade

Tel: + 32 2 295 25 74

Fax: +32 2 296 93 09

E-mail: Laurent.Bardon@cec.eu.int

Ms. Laurence GRAFF

DG Environment

Tel: +32 2 2960518

Fax: +32 2 2969558

E-mail: Laurence.Graff@cec.eu.int

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

Mr. Ronald STEENBLIK

OECD Trade Directorate

E-mail: ronald.STEENBLIK@oecd.org

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

Mr. Benjamin SIMMONS

Economics and Trade Branch

E-mail: benjamin.simmons@unep.ch

Mr. Asad NAQVI

Economics and Trade Branch

E-mail: asad.naqvi@unep.ch

UNESCAP

Ms. Catherine MONAGLE

Associate Environmental Affairs Officer

Environment and Sustainable Development Division

UNESCAP

United Nations Building

Rajadamnern Nok Avenue
Bangkok 10200, Thailand
Tel: +66 2 2881454
Fax: +66 2 2881025
E-mail: monagle@un.org

United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

Mr. Alberto DI LISCIA
Director
UNIDO Geneva Office
E-mail: A.diLiscia@unido.org

UNITAR

Jonathan KRUEGER
Programme Officer, Chemicals and Waste Management (CWM)
United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)
Palais des Nations
CH-1211 Geneva 10
SWITZERLAND
Tel: +41 22 917 8166
Email: jonathan.krueger@unitar.org
Fax: +41 22 917 8047

UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

Ms. Londa VAN DER WAL
IPFSAPH Project
E-mail: Londa.VanDerWal@fao.org

World Trade Organization (WTO)

Ms. Carla VACA-EYZAGUIRRE
Research Division
WTO secretariat
E-mail: Carla.Vaca@wto.org

Mr. Simon SCHNETZER
Economics and Statistics Division
WTO secretariat
E-mail: Simon.Schnetzer@wto.org

Ms. Marie-Isabelle PELLAN
Legal Affairs Officer
Trade and Environment Division
WTO secretariat
Tel.: +41 22 739 5662
Fax.: +41 22 739 5620
Email: marie-isabelle.pellan@wto.org

Mr. Erik WIJKSTROM
Counsellor
Trade and Environment Division
WTO secretariat

Tel.: +41 22 739 57 29
Fax.: +41 22 739 5620
e-mail: erik.wijkstrom@wto.org

Basel Convention

Ms. Constanza MARTINEZ DEL PEDRO
Consultant
Secretariat of the Basel Convention
Email: constanza.martinez@unep.ch

International Organization for Standardization (ISO)/DEVCO

Mr. Bernardo CALZADILLA-SARMIENTO
Head,
ISO Developing Country Programme
Tel: +41 22 749 0200
E-mail: calzadilla@iso.org

EUREPGAP

Mr. Nigel GARBUTT
Foodplus Ltd.
Tel: +44 1759 371775
E-mail: garbutt@foodplus.org

Centre for Sustainable Design

Prof. Martin CHARTER
Director
The Centre for Sustainable Design
The Surrey Institute of Art & Design
University College
Falkner Road, Farnham
Surrey, GU9 7DS
United Kingdom
Tel: +44 1252 892772
Fax: +44 1252 892747
Email: mcharter@surrart.ac.uk
martincharter@compuserve.com

Europe-Africa-Caribbean-Pacific Liaison Committee - COLEACP

Mr. Roland LEVI
Pesticides Initiative Programme Management Unit (PIP/MU), COLEACP
98, Rue du Trône (boîte 3) - 4è étage
B-1050 Brussels (Belgium)
Tel : +32 2 508 1090
Fax : +32 2 514 0632
E-mail : roland.levy@coleacp.org

Fujitsu

Mr. Kazuyoshi MAEKAWA
Policy Analyst
Representative, European Affairs
Fujitsu Ltd.

Mommaertsiaan, 16a, B-1831 Diegem
Tel: +32 2 7127850
Fax: +32 2 7127851
Mobile: +32 (0)477 334141
E-mail: kaz.maekawa@services.fujitsu.com

International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labeling Alliance (ISEAL)

Mr. Patrick MALLET
E-mail: pmallet@isealalliance.org

International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)

Mr. Tom ROTHERHAM
Associate
E-mail: trotherham@iisd.ca

Pi Environmental Consulting

Mr. Pierre HAUSELMANN
The ECL Space Project
Ave. des Cerisiers 22
CH 1009 Pully, Switzerland
Tel: +41 21 728 1387
E-mail: phauselm@piec.org

Ms. Nancy VALLEJO
Partner
PI Environmental Consulting
Ave. des Cerisiers 22
CH 1009 Pully, Switzerland
Tel: +41 21 728 1387
E-mail: nvallejo@piec.org

WWF International

Ms. Aimee GONZALES
E-mail: AGonzales@wwfint.org

Centre for International Environmental Law (CIEL)

Ms. Nathalie BERNASCONI
E-mail: nbernasconi@ciel.org

South Centre

Mr. Darlan FONSECA MARTI
E-mail: fonseca@southcentre.org

Mr. Vicente YU
E-mail: yu@southcentre.org