

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION (WTO)

Support to NEPAD

Period of Report: 2005 to 2006

The World Trade Organization provides a range of technical assistance and training activities in support of African countries in the area of trade. In 2005, 45 per cent of its national and 34 per cent of its regional trade-related technical assistance was directed at African countries.

Technical assistance and capacity building

WTO supports NEPAD's main objectives in the field of trade, particularly through its technical assistance activities for African countries. A major focus is technical assistance and institutional capacity building to enhance Africa's participation in the Multilateral Trading System (MTS). WTO organizes various general and specialized training courses geared towards assisting recipient countries in their understanding and implementing of international trade rules and to contribute towards human resource development. Whenever possible, priority is given to LDCs.

Regional Trade Policy Courses (RTPCs) have been organized since 2002, resulting from the increased focus attributed to technical cooperation and capacity-building following the commitments made by Ministers at the Doha Ministerial Conference. In 2005, RTPCs were organized for English-speaking Africa in Windhoek (Namibia), and for French-speaking Africa in Rabat (Morocco). The RTPC for English-speaking Africa was held for the first time in partnership with the University of Namibia.

One of the continuing challenges will be to ensure the sustainability of follow-up training activities to RTPCs. During 2005, WTO officials and faculty members of the University of Nairobi jointly delivered two regional activities aimed at government officials from English-speaking African countries: one Specialized Course on Agriculture, Trade Facilitation and Special and Differential Treatment, and one internet-based course "Introduction to the WTO and its Basic Principles". In both instances, professors from the University acted as lecturers or tutors. Further activities in cooperation with the University of Nairobi and other Universities currently hosting the RTPCs are envisaged for 2006.

Short trade policy courses (STPCs) for participants from African countries are regularly organized in partnership with the African Development Bank (ADB). The main objective of STPCs is to explain in detail how the Multilateral Trading System works and its implications at the national level. The programmes of STPCs are designed to ensure that all WTO substantive topics are covered in a coherent and efficient manner. Participants are encouraged at all times to raise issues of concern to their countries and region.

As in preceding years, the Secretariat received numerous requests for technical assistance activities in Services. In particular, there was relatively strong interest expressed by Sub-Saharan African countries in Services seminars. The Secretariat was able in most cases to respond to the requests received within a timeframe of two or three months. Reflecting the increasing workload associated with the Hong Kong Ministerial Conference, some seminars had to be postponed into early 2006.

The eTraining website provides interactive courses over the Internet. Government officials can participate in the courses and have access on-line to the training material and to their assigned tutors from their office in the capital, the mission or anywhere else in the world. An introduction course was held for participants from the English-speaking African region, in partnership with the University of Nairobi, which provided tutors for the activity.

The Joint Integrated Technical Assistance Programme (JITAP)

The Joint Integrated Technical Assistance Programme (JITAP) is implemented jointly by International Trade Centre (ITC), UNCTAD and WTO. The Programme is currently in Phase II, which is expected to be completed early in 2007. JITAP's main aim is to build the capacity of beneficiary countries in the Multilateral Trading System (MTS). In this regard, efficient dissemination of trade-related information and improving transparency are among the factors which can help build the capacity of the beneficiary countries. Consequently, Module 2 of JITAP II, in which the WTO has the lead role for implementation, aims to enhance dissemination of MTS-related information through the establishment/strengthening of Reference Centres and National Enquiry Points, as well as training the operators for them.

2005 marked the consolidation of the implementation for the eight original JITAP countries which were expected to exit the Programme by 31 December 2005 (Benin, Burkina, Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, the United Republic of Tanzania, Tunisia, and Uganda). Technical and training missions comprising resource persons from ITC, UNCTAD, and WTO were undertaken to all these countries (Kenya was already implemented in 2004), with the exception of Cote d'Ivoire, where the implementation has been deferred until circumstances permit.

Collaboration with partners

In the implementation of regional TA activities, a number of WTO Divisions and African partner institutions were involved. These were the African Development Bank, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Commonwealth Secretariat, Trade Law Centre for Southern Africa (TRALAC), Department of Trade and Industry of South Africa, South African Institute of International Affairs, Department of Agriculture of South Africa, University of Pretoria, University of the Western Cape (South Africa), University of Nairobi, University of Dar es Salaam and the University of Namibia. Moreover, the Secretariat has been exploring ways of deepening institutional relations

with the NEPAD Secretariat with the view of assisting NEPAD in achieving its goals in the field of trade. Various contacts have been established to that effect.

The WTO continued its collaboration with the francophone institutions, namely the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF), the Agence Intergouvernementale de la Francophonie (AIF), and the Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF), engaging in various types of activities such as seminars, trade policy courses, assistance missions, and the distribution of documentation, including CD-ROMs. This collaboration has enabled a growing number of citizens of the francophone countries to receive education and training on multilateralism and on the ongoing negotiations.