

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION (WTO)

Support to NEPAD

Period of report: 2002 – 2004

Orientation of work in support of NEPAD

A dialogue between NEPAD and the WTO was initiated on 1 July 2002 when the Head of the NEPAD Secretariat briefed the 41st Session of the Committee on Trade and Development. The WTO can support and does support some of NEPAD's objectives, particularly through its technical assistance activities for African countries.

Technical assistance and capacity building

A major focus of the NEPAD trade theme is technical assistance and institutional capacity building to enhance Africa's participation in the multilateral trading system. The WTO technical assistance strategy for Africa aims to support Africa's trade and economic reform as well as its process of integration into the multilateral trading system. The WTO Secretariat Annual Technical Assistance Plans continue to accord priority to the delivery of technical assistance to LDCs, the majority of which are African countries.

African countries continue to benefit from the various WTO training activities namely, the 12 week Geneva-based training courses for government officials; the regional three-month trade policy courses, the Doha Development Agenda Advanced Training courses, as well as other specialised and introductory courses of shorter duration. In addition, the WTO has arrangements with

the African Development Bank (ADB) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UN-ECA) for training African trade policy officials and negotiators, and assisting the process of institutional trade capacity building in African countries. The WTO Secretariat extended invitations to the NEPAD Secretariat to participate in these trade policy courses.

The WTO Trade Policy Review Mechanism is a valuable forum for institutional trade capacity building and for achieving transparency and understanding of the trade policies and practices of WTO Members, thus contributing to the smoother functioning of the multilateral trading system. The reviews enhance understanding of the WTO Agreements, enabling better compliance and integration into the multilateral trading system; in some cases, better interaction between government agencies is facilitated by the reviews. The wide coverage of Members' policies in the TPRs also enables Members to identify any shortcomings in policy and specific areas where further technical assistance may be required. As of end August 2003, 31 African countries have had their national trade policies reviewed by the WTO Council under the Trade Policy Review Mechanism.

The integrated framework for trade-related technical assistance

NEPAD highlights the need for African governments, the private sector and other institutions of civil society to commit to the genuine integration of all nations into the global economy, thereby ending Africa's

economic marginalization and poverty. NEPAD recognises the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) process as a core vehicle for building Continent-wide priorities into national poverty reduction programs and coordinating international support.

The Integrated Framework (IF) is a unique instrument of coherence that is intended to ensure maximum use of scarce resources in support of enabling LDCs to be full and active players and beneficiaries of the multilateral trading system. The IF enables countries which have been designated as LDCs to work with the agencies (IMF, ITC, UNCTAD, UNDP, the World Bank, and the WTO) as well as with other development partners and the donor community, to ensure that national trade policies are integrated into their respective development strategies. The IF will assist LDCs (34 out of the 49 LDCs are African) to mainstream trade integration strategy chapters into their national development plans and poverty reduction strategy papers. The reflection of trade priority areas of action in development plans and PRSPs will not only ensure that trade is central to development plans, but also that trade-related technical assistance and capacity-building are delivered within a coherent policy framework and not on a stand-alone basis.

The benefits of the Integrated Framework are currently being accorded to 14 African LDCs (Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Guinea, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal, The Gambia, Tanzania, and Uganda). At the 31st meeting of the Integrated Framework Working Group (IFWG), South Africa requested the application of the IF model to African countries within the context of NEPAD.

The Joint Integrated Technical Assistance Programme (JITAP)

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LDC is a major capacity-building programme put in place by WTO, UNCTAD and ITC to address trade-related capacity constraints of African countries. The evaluation of April 2002 confirmed that JITAP had made an important contribution by enabling many of the participating countries to play a fuller role in the multilateral trading system and the on-going negotiations, and that it had also contributed to developing a more holistic and comprehensive view of trade issues in participating countries.

Between 1998 and 2002, the programme covered eight countries namely, Bénin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Tunisia, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. 13 donors contributed \$10 million to the overall budget.

A new phase of the programme (dubbed JITAP II) began in January 2003 and will run for 4 years. JITAP II covers eight additional countries, namely, Botswana, Cameroon, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Senegal and Zambia. The estimated budget is \$12.6 million. The 16 countries in the new phase represent a careful balance among LDCs, non-LDCs, different sub-regions of Africa, and different linguistic groupings.

Contribution of WTO to strengthening the response to NEPAD

The WTO's continued commitment to NEPAD is evidenced by its participation in a number of forums focusing on NEPAD.

The Director General of the WTO had personified this commitment by attending several high profile events in Africa. However, on a number of occasions, NEPAD had not honoured several invitations from WTO for attendance at meetings/workshops. The profile of trade within NEPAD needs to be raised.