

# WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

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General Council

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## PREPARATIONS FOR THE 1999 MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

### Technical Assistance/Institutional Capacity

#### *Communication from Cuba*

The following communication, dated 9 November 1999, has been received from the Permanent Mission of Cuba.

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#### **Introduction**

1. The first Ministerial Meeting of the WTO, held in Singapore from 9 to 13 December 1996, declared as one of the functions of the organization the "integration of developing and least-developed countries and economies in transition into the multilateral system". Likewise, Members acknowledged that "developing country Members have undertaken significant new commitments, both substantive and procedural, and ... the range and complexity of the efforts that they are making to comply with them", as well as the important role that will be played by greater availability of technical assistance in helping them to attain those objectives.

2. The Third Ministerial Conference should reconfirm that the principles and objectives guiding the provision of WTO technical assistance to developing countries remain fully applicable in the light of their continuing difficulties in complying with the obligations arising from membership. Such compliance calls for better technical knowledge of the implications of their participation in the Agreements, the building of institutional and human capacities for the implementation of undertakings, the adaptation or creation of the necessary institutional infrastructure (legal, administrative and national policies), as well as bringing it into line with multilateral trade rules.

#### **Proposal**

3. In Seattle, Members should reconfirm the responsibility of the World Trade Organization in furnishing developing countries with the necessary technical assistance in their process of integration into the multilateral trading system. The Third Conference should therefore assign the costs of this item to the Organization's regular budget, not by means of resource reallocation within the general budget but by the provision of new funds. At the same time, the resources administered by the trust fund should be increased.

4. Drawing on the experience it has gained so far, the institution should direct its efforts in this area of work towards achieving greater efficiency in the provision of technical assistance, based on demand from the beneficiaries, in particular, by using information technology in such a way as to help prepare the developing and least-developed countries for the forthcoming WTO trade negotiations.

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