

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

**A POSITIVE AGENDA FOR DEVELOPING
COUNTRIES:**

**ISSUES FOR FUTURE TRADE
NEGOTIATIONS**



UNITED NATIONS

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This compilation of technical papers reflects the third publication prepared by the UNCTAD Secretariat in relation with the support given to developing countries for their participation in the WTO and the formulation of a “positive agenda” in the multilateral trade negotiations. The papers compiled were prepared by DITC staff members and consultants during 1999, following specific requests of Member States or as background papers in the framework of regional and ad hoc meetings held in parallel with the preparatory process of the Third WTO Ministerial Conference.

This handbook is the result of a collaborative effort which has emerged from the experience of several years of work, in assisting developing countries to prepare for future trade negotiations. I wish to thank all those who have contributed to this volume with their research work or editorial support, and in particular, colleagues from the International Trade in Goods and Services, and Commodities Division, as well as a number of consultants and staff. Murray Gibbs, Head of the Trade Analysis and Systemic Issues Branch, co-ordinated and oriented the work related with the “positive agenda”, to which the following staff members contributed: Ivan Anastassov, Philippe Brusick, Jolita Butkeviciene, Michiko Hayashi, Teresa Hinze, Ulrich Hoffmann, Stefano Inama, Veena Jha, Eila Jounela, Mina Mashayekhi, Josie Maximo, Sophie Munda, Marcel Namfua, Victor Ognivtsev, Bonapas Onguglo, Diego Oyarzun Reyes, Miho Shirotori, Erich Supper, Xiaobing Tang, Manuela Tortora, René Vossenaar, Tokio Yamaoka, Simonetta Zarrilli. While not all of these persons have been identified as authors of papers contained in the book, they have all made their contribution to the “positive agenda” process. A number of internationally recognized consultants also prepared some papers which were included in this book as written by them. These consultants are Carlos M. Correa, Rodney de C. Grey, Veena Jha, Tim Josling, Arvind Panagariya, Ashok Sajjanhar, Stephan Tangermann, Craig VanGrasstek, and Edwin Vermulst.

The views expressed in the papers included in this volume, are those of the authors and should not be construed as the official UNCTAD position on the issues concerned.

John D.A. Cuddy
Director
Division on International Trade in Goods
and Services, and Commodities
UNCTAD

FOREWORD BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF UNCTAD MR. RUBENS RICUPERO

When I attended the first WTO Ministerial Conference in Singapore, in December 1996, it was the first time I had participated in a meeting of the GATT/WTO since leaving my post as Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Brazil to the GATT shortly before the completion of the Uruguay Round. I was struck by the extent to which the WTO had evolved beyond the GATT, and in particular by the new and intensified challenges and opportunities facing developing countries in the multilateral trading system. Basing myself on the fresh and ambitious mandate UNCTAD had then recently received at its Ninth Conference, in South Africa, I decided to launch the “positive agenda” programme in UNCTAD, with a view to assisting developing countries to build their capacity to identify their interests, formulate trade objectives and pursue those objectives in international trade negotiations.

The scope of multilateral obligations, the technical complexity and sheer volume of the issues covered, the extraordinary work load on Geneva-based delegations and the administrative burden on capitals have placed most developing countries in a situation where participation in the system, let alone attempting to shape its future course, is almost beyond their means. However, at the second WTO Ministerial Conference in Geneva in 1998, the decision was taken to initiate a preparatory process that many countries understood to be leading to the possible launch of a new round of multilateral trade negotiations at the third Ministerial Conference. In response to the request of developing countries and the encouragement of our member States and of the General Assembly, UNCTAD began its work on the positive agenda over the period leading up to the Seattle Ministerial Conference of the WTO, which opened on 30 November 1999. This book represents a compendium of papers which were prepared by UNCTAD staff members and consultants in 1999, as part of that process.

The Seattle Conference did not launch a new round of multilateral trade negotiations, and did not achieve a clear consensus as to the appropriate follow-up. This poses a serious challenge not only to the WTO but to the international trading community as a whole, in which UNCTAD plays a particular role, that of ensuring the continuing strength and integrity of the multilateral trading system and its relevance for all countries. The factors which led to the inability to forge a consensus at Seattle must be analyzed so that corrective

steps can be taken. UNCTAD X has a contribution to make in this respect. One issue is that of coherence in global economic policy-making, which must be seen in a broad perspective, involving the various agencies of the United Nations that deal with social, environmental and cultural matters. UNCTAD's particular role is to contribute to coherence between trade and development.

During the preparatory process leading up to the Seattle Conference, developing countries submitted well over 100 proposals for action, more than half the total. These proposals will require further supporting analysis and discussion. The papers in this book are meant to contribute to this objective, and it is hoped that the decisions taken at UNCTAD X will confirm and strengthen the role of UNCTAD in assisting developing countries in their efforts to shape a multilateral trading system that serves the interests of all.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "R. Ruciper", with a horizontal line drawn underneath the name.

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