



## Doha Mandates:

Paragraphs 38-41 of the Doha Ministerial Declaration deal exclusively with overall technical assistance and capacity-building. Paragraphs 42-43 focus more specifically on assistance to least developed countries.

Para. 38 instructs the Secretariat "to support domestic efforts for mainstreaming trade into national plans for economic development and strategies for poverty reduction. The delivery of WTO technical assistance shall be designed to assist developing and least-developed countries and low-income countries in transition to adjust to WTO rules and disciplines, implement obligations and exercise the rights of membership, including drawing on the benefits of an open, rules-based multilateral trading system. Priority shall also be accorded to small, vulnerable, and transition economies, as well as to Members and Observers without representation in Geneva."

Para. 39 underscores the importance of co-ordinated delivery of technical assistance with relevant bilateral, regional and multilateral institutions and calls for consultations with relevant agencies, bilateral donors and beneficiaries to identify ways of enhancing and rationalising the Integrated Framework for Trade-related Technical Assistance to Least-developed Countries and the Joint Integrated Technical Assistance Programme (JITAP).

Continued on p. 44

# Technical Assistance and Capacity-building

The WTO Committee on Trade and Development adopted the 2006 Technical Assistance and Training Plan without the usual delay caused by disagreements over its contents. Delegates spoke favourably about the plan's focus on the quality of technical assistance, as well as its emphasis on nationally-determined needs.

## Background

Several Members see the technical assistance and capacity-building (TACB) provided by the WTO Secretariat as an important component of the 'development' dimension of the Doha Round. The financial commitment, attention and effort put into TACB has increased significantly in recent years, largely in response to demands from developing country delegations for a more coherent and better co-ordinated programme that addresses their needs.

Earlier critiques of the TACB programme - that it focused more on quantity than quality, failed to provide long-term capacity-building, lacked national ownership and did not take into account the needs of beneficiary countries - have been recognised through the monitoring and evaluation process and efforts to address these issues have featured prominently in the WTO's Technical Assistance and Training Plans (TATPs) of recent years. These efforts are part of an ongoing process described as the "blueprint for the delivery of training and technical assistance," explicitly aimed at the long-term enhancement of institutional capacities in developing countries.

## Current State of Play

The 2006 Technical Assistance and Training Plan (WT/COMTD/W/142), adopted by the WTO Committee on Trade and Development in October 2005, focuses on the quality of particular TA 'products' - i.e. courses, partnerships, financial support and physical infrastructure - and the establishment of specific processes and programmes through which to channel their delivery. According to the plan, it is "expected to facilitate the development of a multi-year approach for the delivery of trade-related technical assistance (TRTA), thus leading to sustainable and cumulative capacity-building."

The courses, to be provided by the WTO Secretariat, will vary in length and degree of specialisation, ranging from one-week short courses covering basic information to more comprehensive 12-week programmes. In addition, there will be specialised courses on dispute settlement, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, and commercial negotiation.

Regional-level seminars are planned on virtually every issue area covered by the WTO agreements. The list of subjects for these seminars, however, may be modified depending on the outcome of the Hong Kong Ministerial Conference. Most of these courses are run by the WTO Institute for Training and Technical Co-operation (ITTC), often in co-operation with other international or regional organisations such as the UN Economic Commission for Africa, the Asian Development Bank and the Latin American Development Bank. In total, the WTO Secretariat has signed memoranda of understanding with some 20 international organisations to provide technical assistance to Members.

Provisions exist for some 250 'national activities' that are meant to be taken up by the Secretariat in response to requests from national governments for TA with respect to specific issues. The Secretariat will give priority to issues not covered in other courses, as well as to those that are important either for national policy-making or for the negotiations as a whole.

Some TA activities will specifically target Geneva-based work, such as topic-specific symposia to which both Geneva- and capital-based officials will be invited. Provisions have also been made for advisory assistance to Geneva-based missions, two 'Geneva Weeks' during which officials from non-resident Members will be invited to

*Para. 40 instructs the Committee on Budget, Finance and Administration to develop a plan for adoption by the General Council in December 2001 that will ensure long-term funding for WTO technical assistance.*

*Para. 41 instructs the Director-General to report to the fifth Session of the Ministerial Conference, with an interim report to the General Council in December 2002, on the implementation and adequacy of the technical assistance and capacity-building commitments identified in different paragraphs of the Declaration.*

*Para. 42 lists meaningful market access, support for the diversification of their production and export base, and trade-related technical assistance and capacitybuilding as essential for integrating least-developed countries (LDCs) into the multilateral trading system. Para. 42 also instructs the Sub-Committee for LDCs to design a work programme taking into account the trade-related elements of the Brussels Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at LDC-III.1*

*Para. 43 endorses the Integrated Framework for Trade-related Technical Assistance to Least-developed Countries (IF) as a viable model for LDCs' trade development. It also requests the Director-General to provide an interim report to the General Council in December 2002 and a full report to the fifth Session of the Ministerial Conference on all issues affecting LDCs.*

*The Declaration has specific technical assistance and capacity-building provisions for various negotiating mandates.*

*Yet more specific technical assistance provisions are to be found in the Decision on Implementation-related Issues and Concerns (WT/MIN (01)/W/10) also adopted in Doha.*

Geneva, and a variety of internship and trainee programmes. E-training exercises and other distance learning tools will also be used to help government officials and others access information from remote locations.

The 2006 TATP outlines the responsibilities incumbent on both the WTO Secretariat and beneficiary countries in relation to TA. Most significantly, the Secretariat must ensure that the objectives and outcomes of a particular activity, as well as the required qualifications of the participants, are made clear. For the beneficiary countries the onus is on verifying the appropriateness of candidates. The plan notes that TA-related 'demand' need not be linked with 'need,' emphasising the importance of canvassing Members' requirements. It also draws attention to the guidelines prepared by the Secretariat, designed to assist countries in conducting their needs assessments for TRTA (JOB(04)/113).

The ITTC will continue to promote partnerships between the WTO Secretariat and the trade policy-related academic community in developing countries, through institutional co-operation, workshops for university professors and financial support for doctoral students. The TATP also provides for some outreach activities with parliamentarians and civil society.

The two main programmes that bring the WTO together with donors and recipient countries to co-ordinate the funding and delivery of TRTA are the Joint Integrated Technical Assistance Programme (JITAP) and the Integrated Framework for TRTA to least-developed countries (LDCs). The 2006 TATP outlines the work planned under both programmes for the coming year. The results for TA activities in 2006 will be assessed by TA providers, participants and the WTO's Technical Co-operation Audit. The evaluation results for TA will eventually be used in the general work of the Secretariat.

The Doha Development Agenda Global Trust Fund (GTF) was created in 2001 to "provide a solid and stable financial basis for WTO TACB." The 2006 TATP has been referred to the WTO Committee on Budget, Finance and Administration, which will in turn recommend to the General Council a target amount that is equivalent to the cost of implementing the plan - approximately US\$18.7 million. The implementation of the desired range of TA activities from the start of 2006 would require US\$4.7 million by the end of 2005, and full funding for the entire year by end-June 2006. At press time, Members' pledges seemed on pace to meet these requirements.

## Aid for Trade

Although it has long been discussed in other fora, the issue of increasing 'aid-for-trade' - i.e. assistance aimed at enhancing developing countries' capacity to take advantage of the opportunities created by trade liberalisation - has emerged only recently as a subject of discussion at the WTO. In his introductory speeches as WTO Director-General in September, Pascal Lamy made a point of mentioning aid-for-trade as part of the development package of the Doha Round. The Group of Eight (G-8) industrialised nations also pledged to spend more on foreign aid related to trade during their July summit in Gleneagles, Scotland.

These exhortations took concrete shape in a September paper called 'Doha Development Round and Aid for Trade' from the World Bank and the International Monetary Federation (IMF). According to the paper, "increased international assistance is required to help countries to overcome supply-side constraints in order to take advantage of new trade opportunities from the Doha Round, or to address transitional adjustment costs from liberalisation. This 'aid for trade' is an essential element of a successful, pro-development Doha package." However, although the two institutions called for expanding the Integrated Framework for delivering trade-related assistance to least-developed countries by US\$200-400 million over the next five years, they suggested that creating a general multilateral fund to address adjustment concerns, as many developing countries had requested, would be an ineffective use of funds.

Zambia's Trade Minister Dipak Patel, who co-ordinates the work of LDCs at the WTO, called the proposed increase a "post-dated cheque with insufficient funds." He pointed out that spending US\$200-400 million in 40 countries over five years amounted to no more than US\$1-2 million per country per year, which he said could "hardly be called a significant enhancement." Nevertheless, the EU's conditional offer of deeper farm tariff cuts at the end of October called on developed country WTO Members to agree in Hong Kong to an aid-for-trade package "along the lines of" the World Bank/IMF proposal.