

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

WT/GC/W/167
9 April 1999

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General Council

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PREPARATIONS FOR THE 1999 MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

Negotiations on Agriculture

Special and Differential Treatment

Communication from Australia

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

1. Australia submitted the Cairns Group Vision Statement in WT/GC/W/156 which sets out the Group's objectives for the agriculture negotiations. The following specific proposal is consistent with that Statement and is presented for consideration in the preparatory process.

2. Proposal:

2. That the principle of special and differential treatment for developing country Members remain an integral part of the agriculture negotiations. The resulting framework for liberalisation must continue to support the economic development needs of these WTO Members, including flexibility to implement their commitments, technical assistance and improved export opportunities for products of particular interest to developing countries.

3. Background:

3. Completing the task of liberalising agricultural trade will bring important benefits in terms of economic growth, improved welfare, food security and sustainable development. More farmers, including poorer farmers in developing countries, will be able to respond to market forces and new income-generating opportunities without the burden of competition from heavily subsidised products.

4. The majority of WTO Members are developing countries, including least developed countries and small states: the majority of trade-distorting domestic support and export subsidies is provided by developed country Members. Tariff peaks and tariff escalation, including in products of particular interest to developing countries, are also common in developed countries.

5. The principle of special and differential treatment for developing countries is embodied in the Agreement on Agriculture, including Article 20, and must be taken account of in the attainment of the long-term objective of substantial progressive reductions in support and protection resulting in fundamental reform.
