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To: Members of the Executive Board

From: The Secretary

Subject: UNCTAD - Trade and Development Board - Thirtieth Session

Attached for the information of the Executive Directors is a report by the Fund observers on the thirtieth session of the UNCTAD Trade and Development Board, held in Geneva from March 18 to 29, 1985.

Att: (1)

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Department Heads

INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND

UNCTAD--Trade and Development Board

Thirtieth Session

Report by the Fund Observers 1/

May 8, 1985

1. Introduction and summary

The Trade and Development Board (TDB) held its thirtieth session in Geneva from March 18-29, 1985 under the chairmanship of Ambassador J.A. Lacarte Muro of Uruguay. The work of the Board centered on three topics: the interdependence of problems of trade, development finance, and the international monetary system; the debt problems of the poorer developing countries, and in particular of the least developed countries; and protectionism and structural adjustment. The discussion on the first topic was limited to a general exchange of views. On the second topic, the Group of 77 tabled a draft resolution that called for writing off all ODA loans to least developed countries. This was rejected by Group B countries on the grounds that it went beyond Section A of Board resolution 165(S-IX) regarding the retroactive adjustment of terms on ODA loans to poorer countries, and the Board decided to revert to this issue at its next regular session. Regarding protectionism and structural adjustment, the Board approved a resolution that reaffirmed earlier commitments by the developed countries to a standstill and rollback of protectionist measures and the granting of preferential treatment to developing countries. The Board also approved a resolution on services which authorized the UNCTAD secretariat to assist interested member countries in their analysis of the role of services in their economies. Messrs. Carlos Sanson, Jack Barnouin and Richard Eglin of the Geneva Office were the Fund observers.

2. Interdependence of problems of trade, development finance, and the international monetary system

The spokesman for the Group of 77 said that the developing countries had reaped meagre benefits from the uneven economic recovery underway in the developed market economy countries. While economic growth had

1/ Documents referred to in this report are on file in the Secretary's Department.

resumed in the developing countries as a whole in 1984, per capita income had continued to decline in many of them, especially in Africa and in Latin America. The current account deficit of the countries facing heavy debt payment liabilities had been somewhat reduced as a result of an increase in exports, but imports remained depressed and commodity prices were at uncharacteristically low levels for a recovery phase of the trade cycle. A more widespread and sustained improvement of the situation in the developing countries, he argued, would not occur so long as the fundamental weaknesses of the international trading, monetary and financial systems were not tackled.

A matter of immediate concern for his Group was the international trading system, where frequent departures had occurred from the norms, rules and regulations adopted by the international community. Restoring confidence in the system, he stressed, required the prompt implementation of the commitments already undertaken by the developed countries on a standstill and rollback of protectionism and on improved market access for the products of developing countries.

The current trade problems confronted by the developing countries, he went on to say, had been exacerbated by adverse developments in the fiscal, monetary and financial fields, such as extreme exchange rate volatility, chronic overvaluation of key currencies, exceedingly high interest rates, and inadequate provision of international liquidity. This underlined the need for a thorough reform of the international monetary and financial systems that, in the view of his Group, could be carried out only by a conference on money and finance with universal participation as called for by the heads of state of the non-aligned countries at their 1983 meeting in New Delhi. He expressed the hope that the forthcoming meetings of the Interim and Development Committees could pave the way for the convening of such a conference, and he suggested that UNCTAD should review the outcome of these meetings.

Regarding the state of UNCTAD, he said that the organization was the victim of a widespread erosion of support for international development cooperation and for the UN system. To revitalize UNCTAD, member states should reaffirm their adherence to the development consensus, which constituted the basis of UNCTAD activity, and should take concrete measures to implement the various programs of international cooperation adopted at UNCTAD VI. His constituents were ready to explore all avenues for improving the UNCTAD machinery, but they could not accept institutional changes that would curtail UNCTAD's mandate, prevent countries from using UNCTAD as a political forum for bringing about systemic changes, or compromise the independence and objectivity of the Secretariat. In conclusion, he said that the decision to convene a ministerial meeting of the TDB in 1985 had been taken at UNCTAD VI and he expressed the hope that an agreement could be reached at the present session of the Board on the scope and mandate of such a session.

The representative of Ghana recognized that the "crisis facing developing countries, particularly in Africa, while largely attributable to external factors, was also the result of internal causes." Despite the acute difficulties posed by the drought, many African countries had made valiant efforts to tackle these internal difficulties. For example, her country had carried through a comprehensive program of adjustment including the rationalization of the structure of administered prices, the introduction of production incentives, and the devaluation of the currency. The initial results had been encouraging as inflation had abated and real GDP had increased by about 5 percent in 1984 compared with declines in the three previous years. Such reforms, however, were unlikely to yield their full benefits in the absence of adequate support from the international community, including *the strengthening of the resource base of multilateral lending agencies*, a substantial allocation of SDRs to the developing countries, and a reassessment of the procedures for debt rescheduling including longer consolidation and repayment periods.

Other speakers emphasized problems of direct interest to their countries. The representative of Algeria was concerned by the lack of progress in the recent meeting of the Committee on Commodities on the issue of processing, marketing, and distribution of commodities. The representative of Sri Lanka regretted that the agreement to establish the Common Fund had not yet entered into force and he appealed to all countries which had not already done so to ratify the agreement as a matter of utmost urgency. The representative of Bolivia described the crisis that affected her country and she explained that as a result her Government had been left with no alternative but to declare a moratorium on all debt service payments. This, however, should not be "interpreted as a repudiation of Bolivia's external debt" and it was her Government's intention "to resume debt service payments once a process of economic recovery had begun."

The spokesman for Group B said that the economic performance of the industrial countries as a whole had improved in 1984 as output had grown by 5 percent--the highest level since 1976--while inflation had been of the order of 5 percent, the lowest figure since 1972. While real interest rates and unstable exchange rates continued to carry potential risks for investment, trade, and employment, it was the firm intention of his constituents to consolidate their recovery by enhancing the flexibility of their economies, and taking meaningful steps towards a further liberalization of international trade. It was obvious that the developing countries would only be able to take advantage of the export opportunities offered to them by economic recovery in the industrial countries if they continued to implement strong adjustment programs. In this context, his Group was encouraged by the genuine efforts made by an increasing number of developing countries to adjust to the realities of the world economic situation and

to implement "the often painful domestic measures which were indispensable to ensure accelerated development." In conclusion, he stated that the current session of the Board offered a good opportunity to re-examine the role and operating methods of UNCTAD.

The representative of the United States said that his country, after a severe recession, had enjoyed a significant recovery that had assisted developing countries to raise their exports to the United States from \$104 billion in 1982 to \$127 billion in 1984, an increase of 22 percent. At the same time, U.S. performance in the field of ODA had remained impressive and his country stood ready to consider requests in the Paris Club for debt relief from individual countries experiencing debt servicing problems. As important as these actions were, he went on to say, they could not by themselves bring about growth and development in the Third World countries "because the economies that grow and prosper are those that have the internal spark to encourage individual initiative and to reward investment and thrift." Such a favorable framework for development did not come from the external but from the internal environment which was rarely discussed in UNCTAD. He stressed that UNCTAD was at a crossroads; the organization had to choose between continuing "to chase the myth of global solutions to global economic problems" or reorienting itself and seeking to foster an environment that was pro-growth and pro-development. That issue had to be tackled as a matter of urgency, he concluded, because, if UNCTAD did not change, other existing fora would take on its role.

The spokesman for the European Communities said that economic growth in EC member states had accelerated in 1984 and inflation had slowed down. Meanwhile, the EC had pursued its efforts in the field of international cooperation for development, as witnessed by the new agreement between the EC and the ACP countries, further improvement in the EC's GSP schemes, and the implementation of a special program of action for combating famine in the world. His authorities, he went on to say, attached great importance to the maintenance and improvement of an open multilateral trading system and considered that a new round of multilateral trade negotiations within GATT would help to strengthen world economic recovery. They were also aware of the crucial role played by the IMF in assisting developing countries confronted by acute debt problems, and he welcomed discussion of this topic at the meetings of the Interim and Development Committees.

The spokesman for Group D stated that, despite some recovery of economic activity in capitalist countries, developing countries continued to be confronted with acute difficulties as commodity prices remained at a very low level, export growth was hampered by the protectionist measures introduced by industrial countries, and the debt burden had

reached an unprecedented scale due to high interest rates and the overvaluation of the U.S. dollar. The countries of his Group were deeply concerned by the fact that some industrial countries were now reneging on their commitments with respect to the establishment of the New International Economic Order. He also felt that the "new round of the arms race initiated by the United States" had an increasingly negative impact on trade and development, and he suggested that UNCTAD should actively participate in the preparation of the conference on the economic aspects of disarmament called for in General Assembly resolution 39/160.

The representative of China said that the current recovery in the world economy was obstructed by large budgetary deficits in the United States, high interest rates, and the overvaluation of the U.S. dollar. He regretted that developed countries had not been able to resist protectionist pressures and he urged them to expeditiously fulfill their commitments regarding the rollback of protectionist measures and the granting of preferential treatment to developing countries.

3. Debt and development problems of poorer developing countries and in particular of the least developed countries

The spokesman for the Group of 77 drew attention to the serious debt situation of the poorer developing countries. These countries had a narrow, and mainly agricultural export base and were therefore extremely vulnerable to commodity price fluctuations and adverse weather conditions. All available indicators, such as import-reserve ratio, terms of trade, and imports per capita, pointed to a rapid deterioration of their economic situation. Financial assistance for these countries, he argued, should be geared towards the mobilization of additional development assistance to make possible an improved utilization of existing capacity. Debt relief measures, including the conversion of outstanding bilateral ODA loans into grants, constituted an effective mechanism for such assistance. This, he concluded, highlighted the need for a full implementation of Section A of Board resolution 165(S-IX) on the retroactive adjustment of terms on bilateral ODA loans to poorer developing countries, and in particular to the least developed ones among them.

The spokesman for Group B said that the total value of the debt relief measures adopted by DAC countries under resolution 165(S-IX) had amounted to \$7.5 billion, of which \$3.3 billion was in the form of debt cancellation and \$4.2 billion in the form of "equivalent action." He attributed this good result in part to the flexibility of the resolution which left to the discretion of the donor countries the decision on the distribution of debt relief among beneficiary countries.

The spokesman for Group D stated that the debt problems of developing countries were due to "the unjust and unequal relations of those countries with developed western countries." The situation had been aggravated in recent years by a mushrooming of protectionism in the capitalist countries, stiffer credit terms, and increased transfer of profits by transnational corporations out of the developing countries. The members of his Group considered that UNCTAD should examine ways to alleviate the debt burden of developing countries through such measures as improved access to the markets of western countries, the wider application of international agreements on the stabilization of commodity markets, a 50 percent reduction in interest rates charged by western commercial banks, and the enforcement of limits on profit remittances by transnational corporations.

The representative of China said that in order to service their external debt many developing countries in recent years had adopted "rigorous adjustment measures which had adversely affected their economic development as well as the living standards of their people." He felt that the best way to solve the debt problem of the poorer developing countries was to promote their economic development. While such development depended mainly on those countries' own efforts, they could also be greatly assisted by the adoption of positive and effective measures in their favor by the developed countries, such as the rollback of protectionist measures, a lowering of interest rates charged on loans to developing countries, and a substantial increase in the volume of aid.

Following this exchange of views, the Group of 77 tabled a draft resolution which, inter alia, called on the developed donor countries "to adopt with immediate effect concrete financial measures to lighten the burden of bilateral ODA debt including the writing-off of debt for the least developed countries and for countries affected by the unprecedented drought." ^{1/} The draft further stressed that "debt service payments associated with bilateral ODA loans to developing countries eligible for debt relief under Part A of resolution 165(S-IX), particularly the least developed countries, should not exceed a reasonable proportion of their export earnings." This draft resolution was rejected by Group B on the grounds that it went considerably beyond Section A of resolution 165(S-IX) in calling for a generalized writing-off of all ODA debt owed by the least developed countries. While Group B members recognized the special plight of the poorer developing countries, and in particular of the least developed ones among them, they considered that each donor country should remain free to decide on actual relief measures on the basis of a case-by-case examination of the situation of the debtor countries.

^{1/} TD/B/L.761.

Despite extensive discussions, no compromise emerged on this issue and the Board decided to forward the draft proposal of the Group of 77 for further consideration to its next regular session.

4. Protectionism and structural adjustment

The spokesman for the Group of 77 fully shared the views expressed by the Secretariat in its report 1/ that there had been neither a halt to protectionism by the developed countries nor an abatement in the discriminatory application of protectionist measures against developing countries. In actual fact, he said, the economic recovery currently underway in the industrial countries seemed to lead to more protectionism and more resistance to structural adjustment rather than the reverse. As an example of protectionist measures against developing country exports, he mentioned "the highly restrictive and discriminatory arrangements in the fields of textiles and clothing." As a result of these arrangements, he argued, the percentage share of developing countries in world trade for textiles and clothing had decreased, thus substantiating his Group's fears that such arrangements aimed at curtailing or freezing their trade shares until the developed countries had regained their comparative advantage by making labor-intensive production more capital- and technology-intensive. The ultimate result of such an approach would be to force developing countries completely out of the market. He also referred to the wide range of non-tariff measures applied by importing developed countries against agricultural exports from developing countries. Such measures, he argued, were clearly at variance with the need to revitalize the agricultural sector in the developing countries and in particular in the least developed countries.

Concerning a new round of trade negotiations, he stressed that the developing countries "did not believe that any such exercise was possible until earlier commitments and undertakings in their favor had been fully implemented." While his constituents were committed to an open and liberal multilateral trading system, they could not accept that the onus of trade liberalization should be shifted to them. What was important in their view was to restore confidence in that system by enforcing long-standing commitments relating to standstill, rollback, and differential and more favorable treatment for developing countries as set out in UNCTAD resolution 159(VI). Finally, he said that the UNCTAD Data Base on Trade Measures provided a good basis for discussing the reduction and elimination of trade barriers against products of export interest to the developing countries, and he was therefore strongly in favor of the publication of the information contained in the Data Base, as suggested by the Secretariat.

1/ TD/B/1039.

A number of developing country representatives--Bangladesh, Brazil, Ecuador, India, Jamaica, Republic of Korea, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Tunisia, and Yugoslavia--spoke along the same lines as the spokesman for the Group of 77, while emphasizing certain issues of particular concern to them. The representative of Brazil, for example, stated that, while antidumping and countervailing actions were a legitimate device at the disposal of governments, he seriously doubted whether these actions really conformed to the purposes for which they had been designed since many unfounded investigations were currently underway in the United States and elsewhere against competitive producers. For his part, the representative of India stressed that since most of the nontariff measures maintained by the developed countries were inconsistent with the rules of the multilateral trading system it was out of the question that the countries affected by these measures be asked to pay for their removal through reciprocal concessions.

The spokesman for Group B said that, as a result of the current economic recovery, world trade had increased in 1984 by 8 percent in real terms and was forecast to grow by a further 5 percent in 1985. Developing countries had benefited from this reactivation of foreign trade as OECD imports from those countries had grown by nearly 12 percent in nominal terms in 1984. While he felt that the overall picture of protectionist measures in the UNCTAD report was too pessimistic, he recognized that protectionist pressures had continued and the process of phasing out trade measures had been delayed for various reasons, including the uneven geographical pattern of economic recovery and the persistence of rigidities in the economies of many developed market economy countries. The members of his Group strongly supported the further liberalization of trade and the pursuance of sound policies conducive to structural adjustment, but they were aware that a balance had to be struck "between economic rationalization and a legitimate concern for social problems." In an increasingly interdependent world, this required a coordinated approach by all countries within the limits of their responsibilities and possibilities.

While he agreed that the periodic review of protectionist measures conducted by UNCTAD should be based on a comprehensive inventory of such measures, he felt that this inventory should be established on the basis of internationally-agreed terms of reference if it was to have credibility. He complained that the Data Base on Trade Measures compiled by the Secretariat not only included measures with a clear protectionist character but also other measures which had other purposes or were related to international rules that aimed at preventing abuse. His Group consequently believed that an agreement should be reached on the definitions and methods adopted by the Secretariat in compiling the Data Base before contemplating distribution of its contents outside of UNCTAD.

Finally, he said that several members of his Group had proposed opening a new round of multilateral trade negotiations since they considered that it was the best way for strengthening the trading system and consolidating the recovery. Various ideas had been expressed on the form and conditions of such negotiations and it would be necessary to continue discussions to arrive at a consensus. In any event, trade liberalization should not be merely a matter of unilateral effort by the developed market economy countries. All countries should share responsibility and contribute to strengthening the multilateral trading system.

The representative of the United States stated that the most effective framework for structural adjustment was to permit market forces to operate freely, even though in cases where free market adjustment would be socially and politically disruptive it was legitimate for governments to slow the speed of adjustment and to provide appropriate compensation for "the victims of adjustment." Free trade and unrestricted capital flows, he went on to say, were major ingredients for such successful structural adjustment. As regards the former, he believed that the best way to maintain the momentum of trade liberalization achieved so far under GATT auspices was to launch a new round of trade negotiations in the near future. With respect to capital movements, he stressed that investment played a central role in the pursuit of adjustment and that investment restrictions and incentives imposed by host countries could constitute as much of an obstacle to effective structural adjustment as were trade barriers. Turning to the UNCTAD Data Base on Trade Measures, he said that while this compilation was useful it could make a more fruitful contribution to future discussion of protectionism and structural adjustment if it took "internationally-accepted rules of conduct as its starting point." In this context, he pointed out that measures such as antidumping and countervailing duties and the investigation that preceded the imposition of such duties did not constitute protectionist barriers since they were taken to offset unfair trade practices.

The spokesman for the European Communities said that his authorities had continued to pursue an open external trade policy even though this entailed considerable sacrifice in terms of employment and production for the Communities, especially in the textile and clothing sector where 1.5 million jobs had been lost between 1977 and 1983, and the steel sector where output had dropped by 30 percent between 1974 and 1983. Referring to the documentation prepared by the Secretariat, he regretted that all nontariff measures had been equated with barriers even though some of them were not restrictive.

The representative of Japan stated that his country had faithfully implemented its commitments regarding standstill and rollback of protectionism under Conference resolution 159(VI). In this context, he mentioned a number of measures implemented in 1984 including the elimination or reduction of tariff rates on certain items, the advanced implementation of Tokyo Round tariff reductions, relaxation of import restrictions on certain agricultural products, and further improvement in Japan's standards and certification system and in its GSP scheme. His Government believed that a new round of tariff negotiations would bring benefits to all trading partners through the revitalization of an open and non-discriminatory trading system and the adaptation of GATT to changes in economic and trade structures. However, in a world of increasing interdependence, developing countries should make a contribution to such negotiations by "taking appropriate measures to liberalize trade and permit the structural adjustment of their economies." Finally, he regretted that the Secretariat had compiled information on nontariff measures without seeking prior consultation and agreement with members of the Board on the definition of such measures and on the criteria for selecting them. He felt, for example, that measures taken on health or safety grounds should not be included in a list of nontariff measures.

The representative of Canada said that economic and social strains had increased the protectionist pressures in all countries, whether developed or developing, and that action had been taken by many governments to insulate their domestic economy against the threat posed by imports through increased reliance on nontariff barriers and especially on "grey area" measures. Nevertheless, world trade in 1984 had experienced its largest gain in eight years and some heartening liberalization actions had also taken place in several countries including his own which had considerably improved its GSP scheme. He reiterated his Government's view that the issues facing the international community in trade could best be tackled in the context of a new round of trade negotiations that would be responsive to the needs of all countries. While he appreciated the improvements in the Data Base on Trade Measures, he considered that further work on definitions and a broader geographical coverage of the inventory was necessary before publication could be contemplated.

The representative of Australia considered that with some exceptions the UNCTAD report on protectionism and structural adjustment was reasonably accurate and balanced in its factual content. The Secretariat's commentary on the increased resort to managed trade, voluntary export restraints, and other nontariff measures, reflected Australia's long-held concerns. He felt, however, that the Secretariat wrongly treated antidumping and countervailing action as nontariff measures applied by developed countries in an arbitrary fashion against the exports of developing countries. In his view, it was right and proper for countries to

remove the unfair elements of subsidization and dumping practices. Because of the deficiencies which pervaded the UNCTAD Data Base on Trade Measures, he doubted whether the time was right for publishing the information it contained. With respect to future trade liberalization action, he said that, while his country did not object to special consideration being given on a global MFN basis to sectors and products of export interest to the developing countries, he could not support preferential trade liberalization for those countries because such an approach was likely to result in further distortions of the international trading system.

The representative of Sweden, speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, regretted that despite the commitments undertaken to reverse protectionist trends there had not been a significant reduction in protectionist measures. He reiterated his constituents' support for a new round of trade negotiations and stressed the need for reaching agreement on the definition used in the Data Base on Trade Measures before publication of that document could be envisaged. This latter point was also mentioned by the representative of Switzerland.

The spokesman for Group D complained about the increasing application of protectionist measures by developed market economy countries, despite their pledge to reduce such measures. Moreover, these measures, he argued, were applied in a discriminatory manner against exports of the developing countries and of the centrally-planned economy countries. He considered that the reduction and eventual elimination of such restrictions should take place on an MFN basis in accordance with the principle of nondiscrimination and in addition should cover both agricultural and industrial sectors.

The representatives of Bulgaria, the German Democratic Republic, and the U.S.S.R. supported the statement of the Group D spokesman and denounced the discriminatory character of the trade measures introduced by western countries. The representative of the U.S.S.R. complained in particular that the United States refused to grant MFN treatment to his country's exports for reasons that had nothing to do with trade. Among the latest restrictions applied by the United States, he mentioned a further extension of the list of Soviet products banned from import into the United States and increased restrictions imposed on the financing of mutual trade. He also sharply criticized the attempts made by the U.S. Government to restrain exports to the U.S.S.R. on purely political grounds and "to impose a similar policy on the other developed market economy countries."

Following this exchange of views, the Board approved a decision on protectionism and structural adjustment 1/ which reaffirmed the support of UNCTAD members for Conference resolution 159(VI) and called on developed countries to effectively fulfill their commitments on standstill and rollback, to work towards reducing and eliminating quantitative restrictions and measures having a similar effect, to provide differential and more favorable treatment for developing countries in the field of international trade, and to follow policies to facilitate structural adjustment on the basis of a dynamic pattern of comparative advantage. The resolution also called for the convening of an intergovernmental group of experts to seek agreement on the definitions and the methodology employed for the compilation of the UNCTAD Data Base on Trade Measures.

The Board also adopted a decision on services 2/ which called for a further indepth study by the Secretariat on the role of services in the development process and which authorized the Secretariat to assist, upon request within available resources, interested member countries in their analysis of the role of services in their economies.

1/ TD/B/L.771, attached.

2/ TD/B/L.770.



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United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD
Thirtieth session
Geneva, 18 March 1985
Agenda item 5

PROTECTIONISM AND STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT

Draft decision submitted by the President

The Trade And Development Board,

In accordance with its mandate under Board resolution 286 (XXVIII), having carried out the annual review of protectionism and structural adjustment, recommends that:

- I. There should be a reaffirmation and full implementation of past commitments contained in Conference resolution 159 (VI);
- II. Further liberalization efforts would be necessary to strengthen the trading system and contribute to a further expansion of trade;
- III. Developed countries should effectively fulfil their commitments on stand-still and roll-back and work towards reducing and eliminating quantitative restrictions and measures having similar effect;
- IV. Developed countries should effectively fulfil their commitments to provide differential and more favourable treatment for developing countries in the field of international trade and follow policies to facilitate structural adjustment based on a dynamic pattern of comparative advantage. Particular attention should be paid to the special problems of the least developed countries;
- V. As a step towards fostering greater transparency, work on the UNCTAD Data Base on Trade Measures should continue. The information in the Data Base should be circulated to members of UNCTAD whose comments should be taken into account with a view to updating it. An Intergovernmental Group of Experts should be convened whose work should focus on reaching a consensus

on definitions and methodology employed in the Data Base, keeping in mind the importance of a global coverage and objective and balanced treatment. This work should assist the Board in addressing the questions of dissemination of the inventory on non-tariff barriers, preferably at the next annual review;

- VI. The UNCTAD secretariat should for the next annual review intensify its analysis of structural adjustment, in line with Conference resolution 159 (VI) and Board resolution 286 (XXVIII) drawing upon information already available in other organizations. The problem should be considered in the context of all relevant factors including a liberal trade régime. The secretariat should bear in mind the need for improved access especially in the case of products of export interest to developing countries;
- VII. The UNCTAD secretariat should also, when preparing the documentation on protectionism and structural adjustment for the next annual review, give particular attention to paragraph 2 (e) of Board resolution 286 (XXVIII), on the problems of strengthening the participation of developing countries in agro-industrial production and trade. Special attention should also be given to the difficulties of the African countries and the least developed countries.