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JITAP: An Effective Answer to Trade-Related Capacity Building on the Multilateral Trading System

Joint Background Note by the ITC, UNCTAD and WTO Secretariats

Introduction

1. The Joint Integrated Technical Assistance Programme (JITAP), implemented jointly by ITC, UNCTAD and WTO, and financed by several donor countries, is making a sustained and unique contribution to assisting African countries in building endogenous capacities to integrate effectively and beneficially into the multilateral trading system (MTS). It is a successful joint endeavour in terms of a coordinated response by the three leading multilateral trade agencies, to build trade and trade-related capacities in Africa, drawing on their complementary strengths, respective expertise and comparative advantages.

2. JITAP has its roots in the African Trade Ministers' Meeting in Tunis in October 1994, following the conclusion of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations. This meeting called on the international community to help African countries strengthen their capacity to engage effectively in the WTO, and take advantage of the emerging MTS. Following consultations between the Geneva-based agencies, donor and African countries, the Heads of ITC, UNCTAD and WTO announced, during the UNCTAD IX Conference in Midrand, South Africa (May 1996), their commitment to develop a joint programme that meets the basic needs expressed by African countries. Subsequent ground work on putting into effect this commitment, the three organizations set up in March 1998 with donors, a Common Trust Fund that mobilized support and implementation was initiated soon after.

3. The first phase of JITAP, which started with eight beneficiary countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Tunisia, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania), was successfully completed in December 2002 and positively evaluated. A new phase was launched in February 2003 for a period of 4 years up to 2007. The 16 African countries currently benefiting from the programme are the eight original countries and eight new ones, namely Botswana, Cameroon, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Senegal, and Zambia. The launching of the second phase of JITAP and expansion of membership was a concrete response by the three executing agencies and the donors to the rising demand from African countries for qualitative technical assistance that builds sustainable capacities for negotiating trade agreements, implementing them and to taking advantage of trading opportunities. JITAP has good international support as an important and effective trade capacity building programme. For example:

- The UN General Assembly Resolution A/59/221, adopted in December 2004 reiterates the importance of supporting capacity building programme including the Integrated Framework and JITAP;
- In 2005, JITAP was endorsed by the African Union Trade Ministers Meeting; and the LDC Trade Ministers Meeting;

- The UNDP Human Development Report 2005 and the UK Commission for Africa Report identified JITAP as an innovative and effective trade-related capacity building tool.
- JITAP was highlighted in the Sao Paulo Consensus adopted by UNCTAD XI.
- JITAP is specifically mentioned in the Doha Ministerial Declaration of 2001.
- Lastly, many African and other countries have requested to become beneficiaries of JITAP; and
- In consideration of JITAP's success in Africa, Arab countries have requested an Arab JITAP to be developed for them.

A: JITAP Capacity Building Goals

4. JITAP aim's to build capacities at the national level to assist partner countries in using trade as an engine of sustained growth and human development. Capacity development is a long-term process, especially in least developed and low-income countries with low absorptive capacities. The Doha Ministerial Declaration states that "The delivery of 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 benefits of an open, rules-based multilateral trading system." The capacity being built under JITAP, therefore, corresponds to the spirit of the Doha Ministerial Declaration.

5. JITAP is contributing to the setting up of a trade policy process that helps each country identify its trade interests in the framework of its overall development and poverty reduction strategies and, based on this identification, develop a specific approach for trade policy formulation and trade negotiations. This requires a nation-wide process involving all stakeholders including parliaments, private sector, media, academia, and civil society. The day to day operation of JITAP itself, involving all these actors, has a visible 'on the job' pedagogical value, by making people from various institutions work together within a single set of interwoven activities on issues of common interest, but that are traditionally dealt with separately. This has proven to be efficient in promoting a comprehensive approach to trade policy. The inclusive and consultative process is key to national ownership of trade policy reform proposals, elaboration of trade negotiation objectives and implementation of negotiated trade agreements.

6. JITAP II builds and/or strengthens human, institutional and entrepreneurial capacities in five main areas. These are, first, trade negotiations, implementation of WTO agreements, and related trade policy formulation through the Inter-institutional Committees (IICs) that are official frameworks to organize national stakeholder discussion and decision-making on the MTS; second, MTS Reference centres (RCs) and National enquiry points (NEPs) for the provision of reliable technical information on MTS, with attention to standards and quality requirements; third, development of the national knowledge base on MTS through training of trainers and formation of trainers networks; fourth, develop goods, commodities and services policy framework and sectoral strategies including market knowledge of exporting and export-ready enterprises to develop and increase production and exports; and fifth, networking of the institutional and human capacities built in each country to encourage synergy and exchange of expertise and experiences including at the sub-regional level as a means to ensure sustainability of such capacities beyond the programme's life.

B: MTS institutional support, compliance, policies and negotiations

7. The first pillar of JITAP capacity development is to develop and strengthen MTS institutional support to trade negotiations, for the implementation of trade agreements, and for formulation of related trade policies. This capacity development will be interfaced with the implementation of the other four pillars of JITAP II to ensure parallel and coordinated development of institutional capacity alongside the development of human and entrepreneurial capacities, information centres and networking.

8. Under JITAP I, the eight partner countries developed Inter-Institutional Committees (IICs) with the objective of providing for participatory national coordination and management of trade policy

formulation, for monitoring the implementation of WTO Agreements, and for preparation for trade negotiations with a view to strengthening their effective participation in, and drawing maximum benefits from, the multilateral trading system. The IICs have acted as platforms for analyzing negotiating strategies, for preparing and supporting trade negotiations, and for coordinating and undertaking consensus-building among governmental institutions, as well as between the government and the private sector, academia, civil society and other stakeholders.

9. Under JITAP II, the sixteen partner countries are being assisted in developing and strengthening national IICs that can support: (a) constructive dialogue amongst government institutions, the business sector, academia, and the civil society around their concerns and interests regarding WTO issues; (b) effective participation in the negotiations in WTO under the Doha Work Programme; (c) formulation of appropriate national trade policy in the context of the MTS and strengthened linkages with national development plans; and (d) effective implementation and enforcement of rights and obligations of the WTO. The establishment of an IIC, either through a government decree or as part of existing or new legislation, was an important entry criteria for new countries to be included in JITAP II. In 2005, all JITAP partner countries have operational IICs.

C: MTS Reference Centres, and National Enquiry Points (NEPs)

10. This second pillar of capacity development seeks to provide reliable technical information on the MTS, and it pays particular attention to the very important standards and quality requirements in target markets. It responds, *inter alia*, to the Doha Ministerial Declaration for the delivery of technical assistance to assist developing and least developed countries and low-income countries. Reference Centres would serve as an important conduit of MTS information to the relevant stakeholders, whether from the public, private and/or academia. National Enquiry Points could raise the awareness of the business community and relevant public sectors of the requirements and standards, as well as all trade related rules and technical regulations, required by their trading partners.

11. A Reference Centre is a physical location available to government officials, business representatives, university professors, students and/or the general public, where information resources from the WTO, UNCTAD and ITC can be easily obtained on their Internet sites, in electronic versions on CD-ROMs or downloaded files, as well as information and data in print versions and periodic publications. The users can obtain information about the MTS and their country's commitments in the WTO from the Reference Centres.

12. A National Enquiry Point is an information point required by several WTO Agreements under the provisions of information and transparency. Member countries are required to designate a single central government authority as responsible for implementing, on a national level, the notification requirements of the WTO Agreements. The four main agreements with this requirement are: the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS); the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT); the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS); the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). JITAP helps build NEPs in all four areas, capitalizing on the experience acquired in the eight countries that participated in the JITAP's first phase, where NEPs were assisted to set up capacity for providing information on TBT, SPS, TRIPS and Services.

D: Enhancing MTS Knowledge and Networks

13. This third pillar of JITAP capacity development seeks to develop/strengthen the MTS knowledge base in the partner countries. The building and consolidation of an MTS knowledge base in the partner countries and at the related national and sub-regional organizations aims to enhance the partner countries' capacity for a better understanding of, and participation in, the ongoing negotiations at the WTO and in the MTS. JITAP provides the partner countries with tools and training programmes on the different aspects of the MTS, particularly those under active negotiations under the Doha work

programme. At the end of the programme, each JITAP partner country is expected to have developed a network of MTS trainers and professionals who understand the WTO rules, the policy dimensions and issues related to such rules and the business aspects of both the rules and the policies. The respective networks should become the pillars of the countries' institutional capacity to understand and take an active part in the MTS.

14. Up to 2005, and in addition to training programmes delivered by each agency individually, ITC, UNCTAD and WTO jointly trained specialists in all JITAP countries on subjects of active negotiations at the WTO, notably on the agreements on Agriculture, Services, TBT, SPS, as well as on NAMA, Trade Facilitation and customs matters, trade negotiation skills, information management (Reference centres and National Enquiry Points) and several trade development tools: ITC's Trade Map, Product Map, Market Access Map, UNCTAD's Trains and World Integrated Trade Solution (WITS) and WTO's Integrated Data Base (IDB). More than three hundred and sixty professionals and experts participated in such trainings and formed non-government organizations to carry on with information dissemination on the MTS and the education of farmers, traders, government and private sector executives and various stakeholders.

E: Product and Services Sector Strategies

15. This fourth pillar of JITAP capacity development is aimed at building capacity to derive practical and commercially meaningful benefits from the MTS. Activities under this pillar have the primary objective of enhancing the country's capacity to take advantage of the MTS through improved export readiness and to help entrepreneurs and policy makers convert new trading opportunities into actual business. Products and services sectors are identified for their potential to generate employment and provide income generation opportunities to the rural poor, hence contributing to the poverty reduction efforts of the countries concerned. The sector strategy exercise brings together product-sector associations, business persons, apex business organizations, and policy makers in an effort to better understand demand for products with export potentials, evaluate domestic supply capacities and bottlenecks to be addressed, leading to the formulation of a strategic plan for exports of the product concerned. Moreover, policy constraints affecting appropriate supply-side response are identified and recommendations made for addressing them.

16. The sector strategy formulation process begins with setting up working teams consisting of public and private sector stakeholders and the selection of high priority sectors through quantitative and qualitative analyses, using the tools delivered by the agencies. A careful diagnosis of the selected sector is undertaken to identify its strengths and weaknesses. Particular attention is given to defining the core competencies that should be developed in the enterprises operating in the sector and to identifying specific measures for creating an enabling environment in which the private sector can flourish. This is followed by the development of strategies for enhancing exports of the selected products and the preparation of action plans for implementing them.

17. Such capacity building provides public administrations and enterprises in a particular sector, in which a given country may have export potentials, with a medium- to long-term vision and a strategy on how to convert comparative advantages into competitive ones; and on how to develop exportable goods and services, thus creating job opportunities and contributing to poverty eradication. The formulation of sector export strategies for selected goods and services is key in allowing countries to draw advantage from the market access opportunities.

18. The sector strategy formulation includes the development of entrepreneurial and policy capabilities in the partner countries, with a view to allowing countries to define and implement sound strategies and policies to strengthen their domestic services' capacities and their efficiency. At the same time, the product sector strategies address policy design issues pertaining to commodity sub-sectors that would be more conducive to the promotion and competitiveness of both raw and processed commodity-based products in international markets.

F: Networking and Programme Synergy

19. This fifth pillar of JITAP capacity development seeks to underpin all work carried out under JITAP and lays the foundation for making the capacities developed under the programme sustainable. It aims at linking national capacity built to regional and global networks for long-term sustainability and deriving added synergy from enhanced JITAP programme-wide coordination. The networking of national and regional MTS-related capacities is not seen only as a means for ensuring increased synergies and cross-fertilization of MTS expertise among partner countries and their sub-regional and continental integration organizations. The individual and institutional capacities that are built under JITAP and other technical cooperation and national programmes, must become interdependent and sustainable, beyond the lifetime of the technical assistance programme. The very fact that people and institutions are linked and work together at the regional level contributes substantially to their self-reliance and challenges them for enhanced performance nationally.

20. Global, sub-regional and national networks are set up to link the national capacities to regional and global networks for long-term sustainability, using modern communication technologies, including the Internet and remote conferencing and discussions. Other technical cooperation initiatives could also use the networks that exist in JITAP countries; helping a strengthened and enhanced coordination in the field, and optimisation of the return on technical cooperation.

G: JITAP toolkits and programme documents

21. For the above five JITAP capacity building areas, ITC, UNCTAD and WTO have prepared toolkits that facilitate self-implementation of the required activities in the partner countries, using programme resources and counterpart funds to be allocated by the concerned public and private sector stakeholders, and other trade-related technical assistance programmes. The design and development of individual toolkits for each of the five capacity development pillars represent an innovation in the provision of trade-related technical assistance under JITAP. It is meant to facilitate self-application, sustainability and ownership by the participating countries. The toolkits have been made available, and training provided on them, to the beneficiary countries. They lend themselves to adaptation by the individual countries to customize the pedagogical and trade development tools to their own requirements and national conditions.

H: Contribution to the 6th WTO Ministerial Conference

22. JITAP's contribution to the 6th WTO Ministerial Conference will focus on showcasing JITAP as a technical cooperation vehicle that builds and/or strengthens human, institutional and entrepreneurial capacities of the 16 participating countries. JITAP will be show cased as being a pragmatic and coordinated approach by ITC, UNCTAD and WTO, in conjunction with interested donor countries. It will demonstrate how joint technical co-operation activities can specifically help build capacities in participating countries with the view to assisting them to participate fully in the ongoing multilateral trade negotiations and to gain benefits from them and from the market openings that are agreed upon.

23. A side event is organized at the WTO 6th Ministerial Conference in December 2005 that intends to illustrate how trade-related capacities of participating African countries have contributed to improving the level of integration of these countries into the MTS. It will also highlight JITAP as a practical answer to the objectives of technical assistance and capacity building set forth in paragraphs 38 to 41 of the Doha Ministerial Declaration adopted on 14 November 2001, to the extent of the resources made available.
