In 2001, the World Trade Organization (WTO), the legal and institutional foundation of the multilateral trading system, continued to oversee the rules of international trade, settle trade disputes and organize trade negotiations.

The Fourth WTO Ministerial Conference, WTO’s highest authority, which comprised all of its members, was held in Doha, Qatar, from 9 to 14 November. It adopted the Doha Development Agenda, which set out WTO’s work programme for the coming years. Specifically, it incorporated expanded negotiations and other activities and decisions designed to address the challenges facing the trading system and the needs and interests of WTO’s diverse membership. The Conference also adopted a declaration on the WTO Agreement on Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) and public health, which clarified specific segments of the TRIPS Agreement, thereby allaying concerns about the possible implications of the Agreement for access to drugs.

WTO’s General Council, the body entrusted with overseeing the organization’s work in the interval between Conferences, continued to monitor the implementation and operation of the multilateral trading system embodied in the WTO Agreement [YUN 1995, p. 1515]. It oversaw progress in electronic commerce and examined, among other things, the internal transparency and effective participation of member States.

During the year, WTO membership increased to 143 with the admission of China, Lithuania and the Republic of Moldova.

General activities

The three working groups set up by the 1996 Ministerial Conference [YUN 1996, p. 1441] met during 2001. The Working Group on the Relationship between Trade and Investment continued to examine the implications of the relationship between trade and investment for development and economic growth, and for stocktaking and analysis of related international instruments and activities. The Working Group on Transparency in Government Procurement discussed the definition and scope of government procurement; procurement methods; publication of information on national legislation and procedures; information on procurement qualifications; contract awards; domestic review procedures; maintenance of records; information technology; language; bribery and corruption; notifications to other Governments; dispute settlement procedures; and technical cooperation and special and differential treatment for developing countries. The Working Group on the Interaction between Trade and Competition Policy continued to discuss the relevance of fundamental WTO principles of national treatment, transparency and most-favoured-nation treatment to competition policy and vice versa; approaches to promoting technical cooperation; and the contribution of competition policy in achieving WTO objectives, including the promotion of international trade.

During the year, the Trade Policy Review Body carried out reviews of Brunei Darussalam, Cameroon, Costa Rica, the Czech Republic, Gabon, Ghana, Macao (China), Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mozambique, Slovakia, Uganda, the United States and WTO members of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States.

WTO provided technical cooperation and training to developing countries and economies in transition through courses, seminars and symposiums to widen understanding of trade policy, the multilateral trading system, international law and other trade and development issues.

Trade in goods

During 2001, the Council for Trade in Goods continued to monitor implementation of agreements and examined and approved requests for waivers and waiver extensions from members in connection with the transposition of their schedules into the Harmonized System. It reviewed the operation of the Trade-related Investment Measures Agreement; adopted terms of reference under which 18 regional agreements were to be examined in the Committee on Regional Trade Agreements; and continued work on trade facilitation. It extended the transition period for application of the Trade-related Investment Measures Agreement for Argentina, Colombia, Malaysia, Mexico, Pakistan, the Philippines and Romania.

The Committee on Agriculture carried out negotiations under article 20 of the Agreement on Agriculture on the continuation of the reform process, as agreed in 2000 [YUN 2000, p. 1445]. During the first phase (March 2000–March 2001), 121
members submitted 45 negotiating proposals. A programme for the second phase of the negotiations up to early 2002 was also adopted. The Committee continued to review progress in the implementation of commitments under the Uruguay Round agricultural reform programme, or resulting from WTO accession negotiations.

The Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures monitored implementation of the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures, which set out the rights and obligations of members to ensure food safety, protect humans from plant- or animal-spread diseases, or protect plants and animals from pests and diseases. In 2001, the Committee discussed trade concerns of members and considered the difficulties faced by developing countries regarding the need for technical assistance.

The Committee on Safeguards continued its review of national safeguard legislation.

**Trade in services**

In 2001, the Council for Trade in Services held five formal meetings and, among other things, held a stocktaking exercise to consider progress made in negotiations to progressively liberalize trade in services. It also held one special meeting to review the Annex on Air Transport Services.

**Intellectual property**

The TRIPS Agreement provided for minimum international standards of protection in copyright, trademarks, geographic indications, industrial designs, patents, layout designs of integrated circuits and undisclosed information. In 2001, the Council for TRIPS continued to review the national implementing legislation of developing countries and WTO members with economies in transition.

**Regional trade agreements**

As at December 2001, the Committee on Regional Trade Agreements had completed factual examination of 82 of the more than 100 regional trade agreements under its purview.

**Trade and development**

In 2001, the Committee on Trade and Development continued to examine, among other things, special and differential treatment in favour of developing countries and their participation in world trade; technical cooperation and training; market access for least developed countries; the development dimension of electronic commerce; and implementation of WTO agreements.

**Plurilateral agreements**

The Committee on Government Procurement continued to carry out work relating to negotiations on expanding the coverage of the Agreement on Government Procurement; its simplification and improvement, especially with regard to advances in information technology; and the elimination of discriminatory measures and practices that distorted open procurement.

The Agreement on Trade in Civil Aircraft eliminated customs duties and other charges on imports of civil aircraft products and repairs, bound them at zero level, and required the adoption of end-use customs administration. Although part of the WTO Agreement, it remained outside the organization’s framework. The Committee on Trade in Civil Aircraft adopted the Protocol (2001) Amending the Annex to the Agreement on Trade in Civil Aircraft and a decision on interim application of duty-free treatment to aircraft ground maintenance simulators.

**International Trade Centre**

The International Trade Centre (ITC), operated jointly by WTO and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (see p. 876), played a crucial role in trade-related technical cooperation and trade-related capacity-building. It was also responsible for the day-to-day management of the Integrated Technical Assistance Programme in Selected Least Developed Countries and Other African Countries.

**Budget**

The WTO budget for 2001 totalled 143 million Swiss francs.

**Secretariat**

At the end of 2001, WTO staff numbered 550.

NOTE: For further information on WTO activities, see the organization’s Annual Report 2001.