International Trade Centre
UNCTAD/GATT

The Preparation of Publications and Publicity Material

A Guide for Chambers of Commerce

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FOREWORD

In March 1979, the Joint Advisory Group on the International Trade Centre UNCTAD/GATT (ITC) approved a programme of technical co-operation with chambers of commerce in developing countries. These chambers bring together manufacturers and exporters who are essential to the development of exports and who should be encouraged to contribute as a group to national efforts for trade development. The programme therefore aims at strengthening the capability of national chambers of commerce and other organizations representing the business sector in developing countries to promote trade. It complements programmes undertaken by the governments of these countries to develop foreign trade.

After preparatory research and a planning meeting in June 1979, an international symposium was held in New Delhi in November 1979. It was attended by representatives of more than 60 chambers of commerce in developed and developing countries and recommended a detailed programme of co-operation and its priorities. The latter included strengthening the chambers' organizational structure for trade promotion, improving or expanding their services to the business community and training their staff and members.

This programme is being implemented, in co-operation with the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), with national chambers in developing and developed countries, and with chambers of foreign trade in the socialist countries of East Europe.

Activities from 1980 included the following:

- Programming missions, some jointly with ICC, to selected regions and countries;
- Technical advisory missions;
- Training courses and seminars;
- Research;
- Trade facilitation.

These activities resulted in many contacts with government authorities, chambers of commerce and other business organizations. They led to the following general conclusions concerning the role of chambers of commerce and other business organizations:

- The organization, policies, legal status, etc., of chambers vary from country to country, even within a subregion.
- Whereas most chambers provide a range of basic services to the business sector, including acting as its representative vis-à-vis the government, comparatively few provide extensive services in trade promotion.

- Where governments organize and manage national trade promotion programmes, the chambers' role in these programmes tends to be unclearly defined. This minimizes the contribution that these chambers, which normally group together the country's most powerful and wealthiest business interests, can make to trade promotion programmes.

- Similarly, many chambers do not perceive for themselves a large role to play in national trade development and particularly in trade promotion programmes, and consequently limit their participation in these. Many chambers expressed their willingness to participate more fully in trade promotion activities.

- Chambers often have inadequate organizational structures and limited legal status, financial resources and memberships. These adversely influence the range and types of technical services provided.

- There is evidence, however, that governments and chambers of commerce are beginning to adopt a more constructive attitude towards co-operation in trade promotion.

These conclusions and the recommendations of the New Delhi symposium led ITC to prepare and publish jointly with ICC in 1982 the following publications:

- Chambers of Commerce under Public and Private Law;

- Organization and Structure of Chambers of Commerce;

- Income-Generating Activities of Chambers of Commerce.

In addition, ITC prepared the guide Making the Most of Trade Fairs and co-operated with chambers of commerce in the socialist countries of Eastern Europe in the preparation of two studies on the legal status of chambers of commerce and their income-generating services.

This monograph forms part of a series of four being published in 1983. The other monographs are entitled:

- The Role of Chambers of Commerce in Import Management;

- The Role of Chambers of Commerce in Trade Facilitation;

- Trade Information Services of Chambers of Commerce.

The monographs aim at creating in governments and chambers of commerce and other organizations representative of the business sector an awareness of the role that chambers and business organizations can play in promoting trade. They can, for example, provide the following services:

- Collect and disseminate information on foreign trade;

- Conduct, or assist in, training programmes;