

## **QUESTIONS ABOUT THE AGREEMENT**

### **Q.1. When did the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) come into existence?**

**A.1.** The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) came into existence as a result of the Uruguay Round of negotiations and entered into force on 1 January 1995, with the establishment of the WTO.

The multilateral legal instruments resulting from the Uruguay Round were treated as a single undertaking. India also signed all the WTO agreements under the single undertaking rule and GATS is a part of this whole package.

### **Q.2. What is the main purpose of GATS?**

**A.2.** Prior to the Uruguay Round, services were considered to offer less potential for trade expansion than goods, thanks to existence of technical, institutional and regulatory barriers. However, the development of new transmission technologies facilitating the supply of services (e.g. satellite communication, electronic banking, tele-education), the opening of monopolies in many countries (e.g. voice telephony), and gradual liberalization of hitherto regulated sectors like transport, banking and insurance combined with changes in consumer preferences, enhanced the “tradeability” of services. These developments increased international services flows and created a similar need for multilateral disciplines – as in the area of goods. Thus, the main purpose for the creation of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) was to create a credible and reliable system of international trade rules, which ensured fair and equitable treatment of all countries on the principles of non-

discrimination. It aims at stimulating trade and development by seeking to create a predictable policy environment wherein the member countries voluntarily undertake to bind their policy-regimes relating to trade in services.

### **Q.3. What is the importance of liberalization in the services sector to the economy?**

**A.3.** The importance of services sector can be judged from the fact that world trade in commercial services.

In the year 2008, World's total commercial Services exports was US\$ 3,780 billion and commercial services imports was US\$ 3,490.

India's commercial services exports grew from \$17.5 billion in 2000-01 to US\$102.6 billion in 2008. India's commercial services imports have also grown from US\$ 20 billion in 2000-01 to US\$ 83.6 billion in 2008. India ranked 9<sup>th</sup> in export of services and 12<sup>th</sup> in import of services.

**Economic performance:** Presence of an efficient services infrastructure is a precondition for economic success. Services such as telecommunications, banking, insurance and transport, supply strategically important inputs for all sectors, both in goods and services.

**Development:** Access to world-class services help exporters and producers in developing countries to capitalize on their competitive strength, whatever goods and services they are selling.

**Consumer Choice:** There is strong evidence in many services, e.g. Telecom, that liberalization leads to lower prices, better quality and wider choice for consumers.

**Technology transfer:** Services liberalization encourages, foreign direct investment (FDI). Such FDI generally brings with it new skills and technologies that spill over into the wider economy in various ways.

**Q.4. What services are covered under GATS and what areas are excluded?**

**A.4.** The GATS covers all internationally traded services with two exceptions: services provided to the public in the exercise of governmental authority, and, in the air transport sector, traffic rights and all services directly related to the exercise of traffic rights.

The WTO Secretariat has divided all services into the following 12 sectors.

1. Business services (including professional and computer services)
2. Communication services
3. Construction and Engineering services
4. Distribution services (e.g. Commission agents, wholesale & retail trade and franchising)
5. Education services
6. Environment services
7. Finance (including insurance and banking) services
8. Health services

9. Tourism and Travel services
10. Recreation, Cultural and Sporting Services
11. Transportation Services, and
12. Other services not elsewhere classified.

These 12 areas are further divided into 161 sub-sectors. A full list of service sectors is at **Document NO. W/120**.

**Q.5. How are the supply of services categorized under GATS?**

**A.5.** GATS provides for four modes of supply of services: cross-border supply, consumption abroad, commercial presence, and presence/movement of natural persons.

**Mode 1: Cross-border** supply refers to a situation where the service flows from the territory of one Member country into the territory of another Member country. For example, an architect can send his architectural plan through electronic means; a teacher can send teaching material to students in any other country; a doctor sitting in Germany can advise his patient in India through electronic means. In all these cases, trade in services takes place and this is equivalent to cross-border movement of goods.

**Mode 2: Consumption abroad** refers to a situation where consumer of a service moves into the territory of another Member country to obtain the service. For example, a tourist using hotel or restaurant services abroad; a ship or aircraft undergoing repair or maintenance services abroad.

**Mode 3: Commercial presence** implies that service suppliers of a Member country establish a territorial presence (a legal presence) in another Member country with a view to providing their services. In this case, the service supplier establishes a legal presence in the form of a joint venture/subsidiary/representative/branch office in the host country and starts supplying services.

**Mode 4: Presence or movement of natural persons** (in simple language it is export of manpower) covers situations in which a service is delivered through persons of a Member country temporarily entering the territory of another Member country. Examples include independent service suppliers (e.g. doctors, engineers, individual consultants, accountants, etc.) However, GATS covers only temporary movement and not citizenship, residence or employment on a permanent basis in the foreign country.

Let us consider a specific example to distinguish between the four modes of supply. A particular firm in country 'X' establishes a subsidiary in country 'Y'. This is supply of services through Mode 3 i.e. Commercial Presence. An architect of the said firm sends blueprints over the Internet to another firm in country "Y"- this is Mode 1 i.e. Cross Border Supply. An Engineer from the said firm is deputed to work in the subsidiary firm established in country 'Y' for a limited period for managerial operations – this is Mode 4 i.e. Movement of Natural Persons. Certain trainees from the subsidiary in country 'Y' visit country 'X' and consume both education and tourism services in country 'X' – this is Mode 2 i.e. Consumption Abroad for country 'X'.

## **Q.6 What are the general obligations under the GATS?**

**A.6** Obligations contained in the GATS may be categorized into two groups:

- (i) General obligations which apply directly and automatically to all Member countries of the WTO, regardless of the existence of sectoral commitments;
- (ii) Conditional obligations which apply to sectors where the Member country has assumed market access and national treatment obligations.

The general obligations include:

- (a) **MFN Treatment:** Favour one, favour all. MFN means treating one's trading partners equally. Under GATS, if a country allows foreign competition in a sector, equal opportunities in that sector should be given to service providers from all other WTO members. (This applies even if the country has made no specific commitment to provide foreign companies access to its markets under the WTO).

MFN applies to all services, but some special temporary exemptions have been allowed.

The only possible derogation/exclusion from the MFN principle exists in the form of a so-called Article II-Exemption. At the time of entry into force of the WTO Agreements, the member countries were allowed to schedule exemptions to the MFN principle, i.e. they could indicate their measures which they did not intend to multilateralise on an MFN basis to the WTO member countries. These MFN exemptions are subject to review and should, in principle, not last longer than 10 years.

Since negotiations are still under way in maritime and air transport services, members have elected to maintain existing bilateral and plurilateral agreements by taking necessary exemptions. The only air transportation services covered at present under GATS are

aircraft repair and maintenance, selling and marketing of air transport services and computer reservation systems. Not included in GATS are traffic rights and services directly related to exercise of those rights since these are all governed by existing rights and obligations such as the Chicago Convention.

(b) **Transparency:** Member countries are required, inter alia, to publish all measures of general application and establish national enquiry points to respond to other Member's information requests.

(c) **Other unconditional obligations:** include the establishment of administrative review and appeals, procedures and disciplines on the operation of monopolies and exclusive suppliers.

## **Q.7 What are the conditional obligations under GATS?**

**A.7** GATS follows a positive list approach under which each member is expected to undertake specific liberalization commitments through a process called "scheduling". Each Member identifies the service sectors/ sub-sectors and modes of supply in which it is willing to make commitments. Then the member inscribes the conditions under which it will allow services and service suppliers access to its market. This is done by indicating limitations it wishes to place on market access and national treatment while granting access. Thus national treatment is not mandatory in GATS but is negotiated on a sector to sector basis.

This contrasts with the way the national treatment principle is applied to goods – in that case, once a product has crossed a border and been cleared by customs it has to be given national treatment even if the importing country has not made any commitment under the WTO to bind the tariff rate.

**a) Market Access:** The granting of market access is a commitment undertaken by individual Members in specified sectors after negotiations.

It may be made subject to one or more limitations. For example, limitations may be imposed on the number of services suppliers, service operations or employees in a sector, the value of transactions, the legal form of the service supplier, or the extent of participation of foreign capital.

**b) National Treatment:** National treatment means treating one's own nationals and foreigners equally. In services, it means that once a foreign company has been allowed to supply a service in one's country there should be no discrimination between the foreign and local companies.

Under GATS, a country only has to apply this principle when it has made a specific commitment to provide foreigners access to its services market. It does not have to apply national treatment in sectors where it has not made any commitment even though the service is permitted under liberalized regime. Even in the sectors where it has made commitment for market access, GATS does allow limitations on national treatment to be taken fully or partially.

## **Q.8 What information is contained in services “schedules”?**

**A.8** Each WTO Member is required to have a schedule of specific commitments. It is a document which identifies the services sectors, sub-sectors or activities which are subject to Market Access and National Treatment obligations and any limitations attached to them. The necessary indications must

be entered with respect to each of the four different modes of services supply.

Most schedules consist of a sectoral and a horizontal section. The limitation(s) indicated in the sectoral section apply only to the particular sector/sub-sector to which the section refers. For instance, in the sectoral commitments relating to banking services, India has indicated that only 12 foreign bank branches would be allowed to open in a year. This means that the commitment is limited only to the banking services. This commitment was made in 1997 but autonomously we are permitting more foreign bank branches in a year. (However, in India's Revised Offer, this number has been raised to 20). On the other hand, the limitation(s) contained in the horizontal section would apply to all sectors/sub-sectors committed in the schedule. For example, if a member country undertakes a commitment in horizontal section that it will allow entry to business visitor(s) under Mode 4 for 90 days only, this will mean that the business visitor belonging to any service sector which has been committed in the schedule will be allowed entry for 90 days.

The schedules of specific commitments of various countries can be accessed on line at the WTO website (<http://www.wto.org>.) [[http://tsdb.wto.org/wto/public\\_nsf/Fset Preddefined Report? Open Frame set](http://tsdb.wto.org/wto/public_nsf/Fset_Preddefined_Report?_OpenFrameSet)]

### **Q.9 Can specific commitments be withdrawn or modified at any time?**

**A.9** As per Article XXI of the GATS, specific commitments may be modified not earlier than three years after their entry into force. However, countries which may be affected by such modifications may request the modifying Member to negotiate compensatory adjustments. This does not mean monetary compensation but the replacement of the commitment withdrawn by another of an

equivalent value. Any such adjustments made are to be granted on an MFN basis.

**Q.10. Can commitments be introduced or improved upon outside the context of multilateral negotiations?**

A.10. Yes, any commitment can be added or improved at any time autonomously by the member concerned but it becomes a binding commitment only if it is scheduled. It may be mentioned here that autonomous policy is decided irrespective of commitments taken / offered in GATS. Once a commitment is taken in GATS, it cannot be rolled back. For example, in Telecommunication Services, India has undertaken commitments to allow 25% Foreign Direct Investment. This commitment is binding on us and cannot be rolled back.

**Q.11. Are there any specific exemptions in the GATS to cater to important national policy interests?**

A.11. Governments are free to pursue any national policy objectives provided the relevant measures are compatible with the GATS. More specifically, the GATS allows Members in specified circumstances to take or maintain measures in contravention of their obligations. This applies in particular to:

- (i) Measures in reaction to serious balance of payments and external financial difficulties;
- (ii) Measures necessary to protect public morals or human, animal or plant life or health; and
- (iii) Measures necessary to secure compliance with laws or regulations not inconsistent with the Agreement including, among others, measures

necessary to prevent deceptive or fraudulent practices.

Further, the Annex on Financial Services entitles Members, regardless of other provisions of the GATS, to take measures for prudential reasons, including for the protection of investors, depositors, policy holders or persons to whom a fiduciary duty is owed by a financial service supplier, or to ensure the integrity and stability of the financial system.

GATS recognizes the right of members to regulate, and to introduce new regulations on the supply of services within their territories in order to meet national policy objectives. Such legitimate objectives could include quality of service, safety of consumers, code of conduct etc. In short, there has to be a balance between the right to regulate and ensuring that such regulation is administered in a reasonable, objective and impartial manner on a non-discriminatory basis.

Further, Article VI: 4 of GATS states: "with a view to ensuring that measures relating to qualification requirements and procedures, technical standards and licensing requirements do not constitute unnecessary barriers to trade in services, the Council for Trade in Services shall, through appropriate bodies it may establish, develop any necessary disciplines. Such disciplines shall aim to ensure that such requirements are, inter alia:

1. Based on objective and transparent criteria, such as competence and the ability to supply the service;
2. Not more burdensome than necessary to ensure the quality of the service;
3. In the case of licensing procedure, not in themselves a restriction on the supply of the services. As per the

mandate of the Hong Kong Ministerial, efforts are under way to put in place disciplines in Domestic Regulation involving qualification requirement procedures, licensing requirement procedures and technical standards before the end of the current round. Developing countries, including India have argued to strike a balance between the right to regulate and regulations becoming unnecessary barriers to trade.

**Q.12. Are there any provisions of interest to developing countries?**

**A.12.** Article IV of GATS specifically provides that increasing the participation of developing countries in world trade shall be facilitated by different members through strengthening of their domestic services capacity, improvement of their access to distribution channels and information networks, and liberalisation of market access in sectors and modes of export interest to developing countries. The agreement also recognises that in the negotiations on liberalisation of trade in services, appropriate flexibility will be given to individual developing country members for opening fewer sectors, liberalising fewer types of transactions and attaching such access conditions which aim at achieving the objectives of Article IV while allowing foreign service suppliers access to their markets.

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## **QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ONGOING NEGOTIATIONS**

**Q.13. What is the present status and calendar of the WTO negotiations on Services?**

**A. 13.** The GATS came into existence at the end of the Uruguay Round establishing the WTO in 1995. Under Article XIX of GATS, further round of negotiations for progressive liberalisation had been mandated to begin not later than 5 years from the date of establishment of WTO. Accordingly, negotiations have commenced from 1/1/2000.

To take stock of the progress of the Doha Round of trade talks, a Ministerial meeting was held in Hong Kong from 13th-18th December, 2005, in which the timelines were further revised as follows:

- a) 28th February, 2006, for submitting plurilateral requests;
- b) 31st July, 2006, for submitting the second round of Revised Offers; and
- c) 31st October, 2006, for submitting the draft final schedule of commitments

The abovementioned dates could not be adhered to as there was lack of consensus amongst member nations on various issues in trade in Agriculture and NAMA. The talks were therefore suspended from July 2006 till February 2007. The talks have since resumed and discussions are going on for finalizing the timelines for submission of the Second Revised Offers on Services.

**Q.14. What principles underlie the Negotiations?**

**A.14.** The underlying principles of the services negotiations are contained in the Guidelines and Procedures for Negotiations on Trade in Services (NGP) which member countries were required to finalise. India played an instrumental role in finalisation of the NGP. India along with 22 other developing countries prepared and submitted a draft proposal on NGP entitled “Elements of Negotiating Guidelines and Procedures” for consideration of the WTO membership. The adopted NGP is largely based on India’s proposal. According to NGP, the negotiations will fully preserve the right to choose the sectors and modes of supply while undertaking commitments. The process of liberalisation shall take place with due respect to the national policy objectives and the level of development. Due considerations will be given to the needs of small and medium-sized service suppliers, particularly those of the developing countries.

In so far as the developing countries are concerned, the negotiations shall aim to increase their participation in the Trade in Services. There shall be flexibility for developing country members in making commitments and special priority shall be given to the least developed countries in view of their special economic situation and their development, trade and financial needs. Recently, in the Hong Kong Ministerial Members agreed to enter into plurilateral negotiations in line with paragraph 11 of the NGP. Two rounds of plurilateral negotiations have been held so far.

**Q.15. What Negotiating methods are to be adopted?**

**A.15.** The main method of negotiations shall be the request and offer approach. In a request-offer approach at the initial stage countries would lay on the table their requests on other trading partners (i.e. their list of demands, seeking greater market access for their exports from them) and in turn also place their offers to other trading partners (i.e. the concession that they are willing to

offer giving greater market access to imports of services from its trading partners). Subsequently, it will be followed by negotiations between countries either bilaterally or between Groups of Countries or multilaterally. Any commitments agreed to during this process with a particular country or a Group of countries or multilaterally will be made applicable in respect of other countries at the end of negotiations. The starting point of negotiations will be the existing schedules of specific commitments of the member countries.

**Q.16. What are the sectors of interests to developed countries?**

**A.16.** The main sectors of interest to developed countries in the current negotiations are business services, telecommunication services, financial services, transport services, distribution services, energy services, environmental services and education services. The main mode of supply of particular interest to developed countries is Mode 3, i.e. commercial presence because they have the financial capability required for establishment of legal presence in the territory of the trading partner

**Q.17. What are the sectors and modes of supply of particular interest to India?**

**A.17.** The modes of supply of interest to India are Mode 1 (Cross border supply) and Mode 4 (Movement of Natural Persons). Trade through Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) / Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES) is undertaken through electronic modes of delivery i.e., Mode 1. BPO/ITES and off-shoring are likely to continue as major thrust areas from India's point of view. In the present Round of Services negotiations, one of our major objectives is to achieve better access for our service suppliers under this mode. When it began, outsourcing had a

limited objective to achieve cost savings in transaction-intensive, back-office business processes. However, it has now emerged as a flexible and powerful approach to address even tactical and strategic aims. There has been a movement up the value chain with India emerging as the new hub for Research & Development activities in Financial Services, Engineering related Services, Medical and related Services etc.

India has also a large pool of well-qualified professionals in the services sectors like computer and related services, education services, audiovisual services, accountancy services, architectural services, construction and engineering services, health services and consultancy services. India has a fairly large comparative advantage over other Member countries with regard to supply of professional services in these service sectors.

In the recent past, Mode 3 is also becoming important for India because of overseas expansion of a number of Indian companies (eg. banking (ICICI, State Bank), Pharma (Dr Reddy's, Ranbaxy), Non-Conventional Energy (Suzlon), Telecom (VSNL, Reliance) and IT (Infosys, WIPRO).

**Q. 18. What is India's strategy for achieving its objectives in Mode 1?**

**A.18.** India has been seeking support for broad based commitments in Mode 1 from a critical mass of countries, at least in some of the key areas except in some sensitive sectors such as Financial, Telecommunications and Audio visual Services. The objective is to freeze the existing liberalisation in those countries, thus removing potential future hurdles in outsourcing of business to countries like India. In this regard, India, Chile and Mexico co-sponsored a joint statement (JOB (04)/87 dated 28 June 2004) on this issue. Recently, another Joint Statement on the Cross-Border supply (JOB (05)/90 dated 1 June 2005) was also tabled in the WTO.

**Q. 19. What is India's strategy to achieve greater liberalisation in Movement of Natural Persons?**

**A.19.** India is a proponent of liberalisation of trade in services through Mode 4. In order to promote the liberalisation of mode 4, India has been submitting negotiating proposals at the WTO. In November, 2000 India submitted a proposal on "Liberalisation of Movement of Professionals" (S/CSS/W/12 dated 24<sup>th</sup> November, 2000). The Indian proposal notes that the developed member countries have taken limited commitments in Mode 4, which is of significant interest to developing countries. These commitments are further reduced in scope on account of various measures taken by developed member countries, such as Economic Needs Test (ENT); restrictive visa regimes; Non-recognition of qualifications etc. The proposal suggested various strategies for improving access for Indian service providers such as transparency in the visa regimes, creation of a separate GATS visa different and less onerous from the normal immigration visa, facilitation of Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) etc.

Subsequently India also tabled various proposals along with other like minded members, for liberalization of Movement of Natural Persons. The proposal contained in paper No. TN/S/W/14 dated 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2003 addressed similar issues and suggested several remedial measures. The paper on Categories of Natural Persons for commitments under Mode 4 of GATS (**TN/S/W/31 dated 18 February 2005**) stressed on the need for arriving at a common understanding on a list of categories of natural persons for whom commitments are being sought, along with common parameters and market access conditions attached to them. The objective of the paper was to ensure greater uniformity and clarity in scheduling commitments and improving the level of commitments in Mode 4. In addition, India has also tabled along with other

countries at the WTO a paper on the “Assessment of Mode 4 offers of members” (JOB (05)/131 dated 30.6.2005).

In the area of disciplining of domestic regulations, which is important for gaining effective market access for our service providers, India has been playing a pro-active role at the WTO. In this regard, India has put in several proposals for discussions on this subject, including a paper on Development of Disciplines for Professional Services (JOB (03)/192 dated 30 September 2003). Recently, India along with some other developing countries such as Chile, Mexico, Pakistan and Thailand again tabled a proposal (JOB (05)/50, dated 30 March 2005) suggesting some alternative approaches for addressing the issue of recognition such as development of disciplines for Professional Services; establishing guidelines for recognition of qualification; possibility of undertaking Additional Commitments for verifying a foreign service provider’s competence to provide the service etc.

In pursuance of the Hong Kong Ministerial, disciplines in Domestic Regulations have to be concluded before the end of this round. Discussions on this are under way in the Working Party on Domestic Regulation (WPDR). In this connection, India along with some other countries had submitted a Room Document on 1.5.2006 on Disciplines on Qualification Requirements and Procedures. Chairman of the WPDR has circulated a Room document dated 20 March 2009 for the disciplining of domestic regulation for discussions.

**Q.20. Is it possible that there could be surge of imports in any service sectors? If yes, what could be done?**

**A.20.** The GATS architecture is based on a positive list approach where the member countries have a right to choose the sectors and the modes of supply in which they would undertake commitments. Normally, it is expected that the commitments

made would be in accordance with the comfort level of the member countries. In most cases, autonomously similar liberalisation policies are in any case being followed. It is, therefore, unlikely that there would be a surge in imports on account of the commitments undertaken. However, in view of the possibility, the GATS provides for negotiations on emergency safeguard measures under Article X. The negotiations are now under progress on the question of Emergency Safeguard Measures whose purpose would be to provide for the suspension of a commitment in case of injury or the threat of injury to a domestic service sector on account of surge in imports.

**Q.21. Will the Services Negotiations force India to open all the service sectors to foreign competition?**

**A.21.** There is no obligation on any WTO member to allow foreign supply of any particular service. Governments are free to choose those services on which they will make commitments guaranteeing access to foreign suppliers. Each member must have a national schedule of commitments but there is no rule as to how extensive it should be. India had also undertaken commitments at the end of Uruguay Round (1994). In this Round, commitments were taken only in 33 sub-sectors and while taking commitments a number of limitations on market access and national treatment were made in the schedules consistent with our national policy objectives. In most cases, these were no more than the autonomously liberalised policies already in force in India.

Under the Doha Round of services negotiations, India submitted its conditional Initial Offer at WTO in January 2004. In the Initial Offer, India substantially improved access in critical service sectors and offered commitments in 47 sub-sectors.

India also submitted its Revised Offer at WTO on 24<sup>th</sup> August 2005. Building further on the improvements in the initial offer, India has offered to undertake extensive commitments in a number of new sectors/sub-sectors and also improved its existing commitments in various service sectors and modes. Under Mode 4, we have already made improvements to our commitments by including Contractual Service suppliers and Independent professionals in the Initial Offer, the definitions and conditions for which have further been refined in the Revised Offer. India's Revised offer to WTO can be accessed at <http://commerce.nic.in>.

**Q.22. What is the plurilateral process in the WTO Services negotiations?**

**A.22.** The plurilateral process was mandated in the Hong Kong Ministerial Conference to provide greater momentum to the services negotiations and reduce the transaction cost of such negotiations. Plurilateral process has also been recognized in the Negotiating Guidelines and Procedures (NGP) of the WTO for the Services negotiations. It entails a group of members putting a single request in sectors / Modes of interest to them. It is intended to supplement the bilateral request – offer process which would continue to be the primary method of negotiations. The participation is limited to the requesting and requested members and the outcome would only be reflected in the Revised Offers of each individual member as is the case with the bilateral requests. As a part of the plurilateral process, 21 plurilateral groups have been formed at the WTO in service sectors/areas viz: 1) Air Transport Services, 2) Architecture, Engineering and Integrated Engineering Services; 3) Audio Visual Services; 4) Computer and Related Services (CRS); 5) Construction and Related Engineering Services; 6) Education Services; 7) Energy Services; 8) Environment Services; 9) Financial Services; 10) Legal Services; 11) Logistics; 12) Maritime Services; 13) Postal/Courier Services

(including Express Delivery); 14) Telecom Services; 15) Distribution Services; 16) Cross Border Supply; 17) Mode-3 (Commerce presence); 18) Mode-4 (Presence of natural persons); 19) MFN Exemptions (General); 20) MFN Exemptions (Financial Services); and 21) MFN Exemptions (Audio-Visual Services)

**Q .23 What is the current status of plurilateral negotiations and what has been India's role in these negotiations?**

**A.23:** It has been agreed that all Members making requests will be considered to be deemed recipients of the request except in Mode 4. The first and second rounds of meetings of all plurilateral groups were held from 28th March to 6th April 2006 and 15th - 24th May 2006 respectively. India is the coordinator of Mode-1 (Cross Border Supply) and Mode-4 (Temporary Movement of Natural Persons) plurilateral groups. India has also participated as a requesting member in the Computer and Related Services (CRS) group and Architecture, Engineering and Integrated Engineering Services (AEI) group. As a part of the plurilateral process, India has also received a number of plurilateral requests in all the sectors/areas listed in para 4.2 above except for the Horizontal Request in Mode 3 (Commercial presence), MFN Exemptions (General) and MFN Exemptions (Financial Services). India has therefore received requests in 14 sectors/areas, excluding those sectors/areas in which India is a requesting member and therefore a deemed recipient.

All Members, including India, are expected to respond to the plurilateral requests and bilateral requests placed on them by making improved Offers in the second round.

At present, the discussions on bilateral and plurilateral requests are going on and the Second Revised Offers will be submitted as

and when the timelines are agreed upon by the member countries.

**Q .24 What is Signaling Conference and what was the outcome of it?**

A.24: A mini-Ministerial meeting was held at the WTO during 21-30 July, 2008 to finalize Agriculture and NAMA modalities when a 'Signalling Conference on Services' was also held on 26<sup>th</sup> July, 2008. At the conference members gave signals with regard to the services sectors/modes they are likely to offer a qualitative improvement upon their earlier commitments / offers. In the Signalling Conference India has indicated that it may improve its Revised Offer in some of the services sectors of interest to the developed countries subject to the conditions that the developed countries should also respond positively to India's interest in Modes 4 & 1 and disciplining of Domestic Regulations.

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