

COMMUNICATION FROM JAPAN

Negotiating Proposal on Education Services

The attached communication has been received from the delegation of Japan with the request that it be circulated to Members of the Council for Trade in Services.

1. Japan presents the following proposal for consideration by Members regarding Education services. Japan reserves its right to make additional proposals on the same and other services as well as on other aspects of the negotiations on trade in services.

I. BASIC PROPOSAL

2. Recently, it has become extremely important for each country to improve the quality of education and research, responding flexibly to the rapidly changing needs of the society. Japan recognizes that, in order to pursue these policy objectives, it is effective to promote a certain level of liberalization, while taking various governmental policy measures.

3. From this viewpoint, Japan encourages each Member in the course of the forthcoming request and offer negotiations to promote liberalization in the education services sector through better market access, further assurance of national treatment and deregulation of related domestic regulations.

II. SUGGESTIONS FOR NEGOTIATIONS

4. Japan recognizes the importance of the role of the government in the education sector, and in particular takes note of the fact that many Members reserve responsibility on primary and secondary education to state. In the course of liberalizing this sector it is necessary to take into consideration aspects of government policy objectives and the specificity of the education sector as indicated below, some of which have already been pointed out by other Members.

(a) Any measures in the education services sector should be considered with primary interest in maintaining and improving the quality of the service. Due consideration needs to be taken to the following points among others.

- (i) maintenance and improvement of the quality of education and research activities in each Member;
- (ii) protection of consumers (learners) -- measures to ensure that consumers are not damaged by services of low quality, and a safety-net in such areas;
- (iii) measures to ensure international equivalence of degrees, diplomas, etc;

- (b) The educational system (for example, authorization of establishment, third-party evaluations and degree-granting system) varies from country to country, due to different social background and varied course of development of system. The roles of the central and local governments also seem to vary from country to country due to the difference in their administrative structures. Therefore, while seeking the liberalization of education services, these differences should be carefully taken into consideration.
- (c) The development of globalization and information technology has given rise to the question of how to maintain the quality of higher education supplied across borders.

There are cases, for example, where the quality of a service supplied by a “university” in one country is not necessarily of the same level as that supplied by a university of another country, due to the difference in higher education system of the two countries. It has also emerged that the quality of education services fails to be correctly judged, in cases where the service is supplied by a “degree mill” of one country by means of e-Learning.

From the viewpoint of protecting consumers (learners), Members should thus recognize the significance and necessity of constructing an information network on the higher education supplied across borders. Moreover, in international organizations such as the OECD as well as in international groups consisting of university evaluation organs in each country, Members should make intensive efforts for realizing a collaborative research.
