important for the integrity of the system, however, that these bilateral solutions be consistent with the international rules.

Contracting Parties to the GATT have been making increasing resort to the dispute settlement mechanism. More cases (24) were considered in the period from the end of the Tokyo Round (1979) to 1986 than in the entire period from the establishment of the GATT to the Tokyo Round. In the last 22 months alone, 20 GATT dispute settlement panels have been established. This has given rise to the need to streamline the process, to make it speedier and to limit bottlenecks in the system, including those exploited by one or more of the disputants.

It is hoped that tangible progress will be registered at the Montreal Ministerial Meeting that will provide the basis for improved, streamlined procedures in the GATT dispute settlement system. The thrust of these improved procedures should involve:

- greater certainty of access to the panel procedure (usually within 30 days of request);

- expanded procedures for use of good offices, conciliation, mediation and voluntary binding arbitration techniques;

- stricter time frames: the operative stages of the panel process, including the consultative stage, are to be limited to a period of 15 months (extended consultations were often used to delay the establishment of panels); various stages within the overall process are also limited (e.g. six months from the setting of the panel and terms of reference to the circulation of the report -- in recent experience, this stage averaged over 10 months);

- provision for standard terms of reference and time limits on the selection of panels, areas where the process have been delayed in the past;