

V. AGREEMENT TO ESTABLISH THE WTO

A. OVERVIEW OF THE AGREEMENT

Before the conclusion of the Uruguay Round, the multilateral trading system was a collection of stand-alone agreements to which varying numbers of countries were party. The Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization brings responsibility for all previously existing and all new agreements into one comprehensive intergovernmental organization. It requires that parties sign on to the whole package of agreements (although a few remain voluntary); they can no longer pick and choose among them. The preamble to the Agreement also recognizes the important relationship between trade and economic and sustainable development objectives.³

B. POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

The creation of the World Trade Organization will not have any environmental impacts per se. However, the WTO is required to "make appropriate arrangements for effective co-operation with other intergovernmental organizations" with related responsibilities. This will ensure that the WTO co-operates with other institutions involved in trade- and environment-related issues, including the OECD, UNEP and UNCTAD. These kinds of integrated discussions should be a factor in ensuring that progress is made on complex trade and environmental issues.

In addition, the Agreement provides for the WTO General Council to make "appropriate arrangements for consultation and co-operation with non-governmental organizations concerned with matters related to those of the WTO." With respect to environmental issues, such arrangements will provide the WTO with access to environment, business and development expertise. This will provide a context for future discussions in the WTO on environment-related matters, and should improve the contribution of its future decisions to sustainable development.