

Issue & Analysis

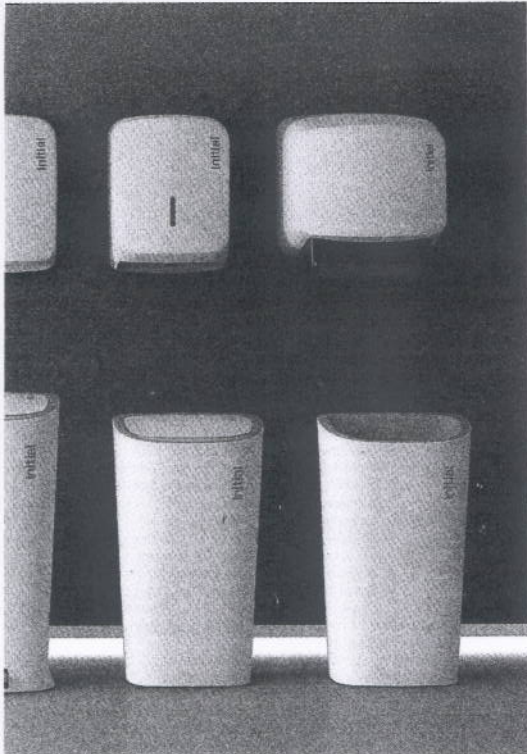


Andrea Ewart is an American trade lawyer with Jamaican roots.

**Andrea Ewart
On The
Right**

cellence

or its Signature Range of Hygiene Products



Initial's Signature Range of washroom products not only the highest standard in washroom hygiene. It also boasts winning design. Durable, functional and stylish, the Signature was recently awarded the prestigious Red Dot Design for its quality design and innovative strength.

Setting the standard of washroom hygiene

Signature Range
Awarded in Barbados in 2013, Signature is a range of 11 washroom products such as paper towel dispensers, feminine units and toilet seat sanitisers. The range addresses the needs through the integration of sensor technologies and innovation and is designed to raise the standard of washroom hygiene.

Identify, state specific needs

There is language in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) agreements that recognises the existence of special and differential treatment. I think the challenge for the region and other developing countries that advocate for this is getting that expressed on a practical level.

So there are provisions, or at least the practice has evolved, where developing countries, including Caribbean countries, get a longer period of time to implement obligations and if there is a dispute between a developed country and a developing country member they get to make sure that they have a developing country member on the panel.

With special and differential treatment, much of the language has been that developed countries should do their best to ensure they protect the interests of developing countries. But what does that mean exactly? So I think the challenge for developing countries, and particularly for the Caribbean region, is to find ways to concretely advocate for specific policies and practices that they would like to see implemented as a means of expressing what special and differential treatment means.

Preferences are being eroded, so saying that 'we should get duty free access for all our goods' means less and less because everybody is getting duty-free treatment, so it has to be expressed in other ways, and I think that's the challenge for the region.

Some preferences are being eroded through the process of trade liberalisation. Preferences are an exception to the underlying WTO rule of giving all WTO members the same level of access to your markets, whatever you give to one you have to give to the rest. But it is an allowed exception so long as WTO members continue to agree that they are willing to extend these preferences.

The Caribbean has formally become part of the small vulnerable economies group within the WTO framework and that I think is getting more and more

traction within the WTO. So there is general agreement that developing countries deserve special and differential treatment and that there is this category of small vulnerable economies whose interest need to be protected.

The one area of agreement as to how

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you do that is, "Well, we can help you to build capacity", and so I think the region has a role to play in getting really specific about what its needs are and making the request for the support for the capacity that they need.

I don't think that is done as efficiently or as effectively as it could be done. It's one thing to go and say, "Well, we need help". It's another thing to say, "Our ports need this", or "We want to be able to export mangoes to the United States or the European Union markets and these are the issues we have".

So I think we need to do a whole lot more work on our part to figure out what the barriers are and how we can be helped and not just say, "We need help".