

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

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FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION

Statement circulated by Mr. Jacques Diouf
Director-General
(as an observer)

You are today celebrating the Golden Jubilee of the operation of the multilateral trading system which can be said to have begun in earnest in 1948 with the entry into force of the GATT. Fifty years on, world trade has expanded enormously and international trade law has grown to cover so many parts of our economic life. First GATT and now the WTO have been a key part of that evolution as witnessed by the seven-fold increase in membership over the past 50 years.

Throughout this period our two Organizations have had extremely cordial and ever closer relations, particularly in the last decade during which agriculture has become integrated into the same global system as other economic sectors. Indeed the Uruguay Round Agreements represented a milestone in the evolution of the multilateral trading system. For the first time, agriculture has been incorporated into the overall international system of operationally effective rules and disciplines. We are pleased at having contributed to the Uruguay Round, where FAO's technical expertise was drawn upon in negotiations on the Agreement on Agriculture, on applications of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures and on the Decision on Measures Concerning the Possible Negative Effects of the Reform Programme on Least-Developed and Net Food Importing Developing Countries.

Not only is agriculture affected by changes in the world trading system but food security itself is intimately involved. Indeed at the World Food Summit in November 1996, the entire international community committed itself to ensure that food, agricultural trade and overall trade policies were conducive to fostering food security for all through a fair and market-oriented world trade system. The role of the GATT and now the World Trade Organization in developing such a system has been indispensable. I, therefore, with pleasure extend my congratulations to the WTO on this auspicious occasion and look forward to continued and deeper collaboration between our two Organizations.
