GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

Meeting of Ministers

SPEECH BY H.E. MR. AHMED BEN SALAH, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR PLANNING AND FINANCE, TUNISIA, MADE AT THE CLOSING MEETING ON 30 NOVEMBER 1961

As a provisional Member, Tunisia is happy to be able to take part in the work and activities of GATT. We want to be able to make a modest contribution, so far as the circumstances of our development permit, to the promotion of international trade for we feel that such promotion is one of the crying needs of our time.

I am glad to associate myself with those who spoke before me and who made at times fervent and urgent appeals that the promotion of trade should really signify not a perpetuation of inequalities but should above all, express a de jure and de facto equality as regards concessions, on the one hand, and the substance and effects of trade, on the other hand. We feel it is important that the industrialized countries should realize more and more fully the serious problems that arise from inequalities between countries, between areas of the world and between continents, and we are happy to note that for those countries economic integration does not mean the creation of blocs. That is how we understood speeches made here, more especially, by the representatives of Powers, members of the European Economic Community. We were interested to hear the explanations given on this point since, in our case 85 per cent of our trade is conducted with EEC countries.

It will still be desirable, however, for those countries and also for the industrialized countries as a whole, to take bolder action to encourage the development of the new countries. We have no doubt that in its province GATT can always play a positive rôle in such action and we are gratified to note the efforts made by the Executive Secretariat of GATT to bring the views of the industrialized countries and the developing countries closer together to ensure concerted action for the promotion of international trade on satisfactory bases.

Tunisia, which is taking the first steps towards streamlining its economy as part of a plan, will do its best to co-operate loyally with the GATT countries in particular, since our country's foreign trade is destined, as we see it, to expand very substantially and to play a leading part in the development of the country's economy.

We shall, of course, sometimes have to take provisional measures to encourage the development of a particular sector or reduce the obstacles impeding such development.

We are, nevertheless, convinced that, on a long-term view, these measures will permit the realization of the aims for which GATT is working, though GATT itself sometimes deviates from its principles in order to facilitate the task of the developing countries.
I would like to announce, if I may, that my country proposes to waive, as regards Japan, the application of Article XXXV and is anxious to expand its trade with that friendly country.

I shall conclude these few remarks by stressing that it is reassuring to find that this ministerial meeting of GATT has strengthened the realization of the crying need for co-operation in the development and advancement of human beings, whatever be their continents or countries.

We trust that co-operation will be the path which every country will adopt without bothering itself about special ideologies or allowing considerations of mere profits or exploitation to gain the upper hand.

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