GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

Meeting of Ministers

STATEMENT MADE BY H.E. Mr. MAHAMED SCEK HASAHASSAN,
AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY
OF SOMALIA TO ITALY
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Item I: Measures for the Expansion of Trade of Developing Countries as a Means of Furthering their Economic Development

After having, with great attention, listened to the statements made in this conference yesterday and this morning, and after having considered the results and the suggestions made by the various delegations, it seems to me that most of the delegates have tuned their addresses on the subject of the liberalization of international trade.

My delegation is sympathetic to the various voices raised here by many delegates from developing nations. Nevertheless we must have, and bear in mind that among the developing countries there are some like mine which are not yet ready for international competition and which suffer, so far, from the direct consequences of the colonial economy of days gone by. This economy was adequate at a given period. Nevertheless, today, with the help of the friendly industrialized nations, the unfavoured countries, such as mine, are on their way to establishing diversification programmes in order to overcome the present difficulties, and are determined to face, within the next few years, the wide-open market competition.
There are certain countries which, terminologically speaking belong and enter within the framework of developing countries comparatively - only comparatively - to the standard of industrialized countries, and yet who are more favoured than those who are less-developed. Comparing the two groups of countries (a) and (b), group (a) being the unfavoured and group (b) the favoured in the group of undeveloped countries, it brings forth very many complicated problems in the field of a progressive standard of economy. Group (a) would reach group (b) only and when the first has approximately the same standard of trade inasmuch as the first give us an average of the same amount of exportable products. But certain countries have very little exportable products. Consequently their export earnings depend heavily on such limited items whose markets are temporarily protected until the diversification programmes become realizable in order to give the needed support.

It would be ruinous, if not disastrous, to call off all trade barriers and preferential tariffs without studying thoroughly the consequences of such action.

The financial and technical aid put at the disposal of those countries by developed nations and international organizations is not so far sufficient to meet their present requirements. Imports for development purposes increased impressively while export earnings have shown a substantial decrease. Although GATT, and other international organizations concerned in this matter have recognized these difficulties and envisaged various devices which might lead to satisfactory solutions of these urgent problems, I would like to draw the attention of my fellow delegates to the advisability of taking into due consideration the requirements of those countries whose export possibilities are based on very limited products and who, in addition to that, are not in a position to sell their products, for the time being, at a competitive price.

Finally, many delegates have mentioned the problems of preferential treatment accorded to certain developing countries without taking into account the above-mentioned difficulties. In this connexion I would like to call their attention to be more realistic, and to look to the inner side of the problem and to the danger which might arise from such a solution to those developing countries now enjoying certain temporary preferential treatment.

To conclude, there is a saying in our language as "Day is on the edge of night, and night on the edge of day". So should be the task of all the nations here gathered to find a harmonious and wise solution to these problems.