May I first of all congratulate you on your unanimous election as Chairman of this important and historic meeting. We are confident that under your wise and experienced leadership this meeting will successfully tackle the complex and delicate issues under consideration. I would like to take this opportunity to thank, through you, the distinguished President of Uruguay, H.E. Mr. Sanguinetti, for his very inspiring opening speech and to the Government and people of Uruguay for their warmth and hospitality extended to us.

This meeting here at Punta del Este is undoubtedly the most important GATT meeting held at ministerial level since the creation of GATT in 1947. Its results will have far-reaching consequences both for GATT and the multilateral trading system. By taking a decision to launch a New Round of multilateral trade negotiations we shall be laying the foundation for a new era of growth and prosperity. We are meeting at a time characterized by an upsurge of protectionist pressure in the major developed market economies, continued falling commodity prices, maintenance of high real interest rates, volatile exchange rates, high unemployment and crushing debt-servicing problems facing a large number of developing countries. All these have combined to frustrate the attainment of the proclaimed objectives and principles of the open multilateral trading system as a necessary framework for the conduct of international trade with a view to stimulating and sustaining economic growth through the liberalization and expansion of international trade.

In these circumstances, and in the face of the uncertainty surrounding growth in the world trade and considering that the work programme agreed by the 1982 GATT Ministerial meeting has run out of steam, my delegation is of the view that the world trading system requires more than ever before a fresh, dynamic and decisive impetus to put world trade back on the path of stable and predictable growth for the benefit of all countries. This meeting has also assumed critical importance as we have to take here the crucial decision of successfully launching a New Round of multilateral trade negotiations which will result in the establishment of a framework for a more just, equitable and stable multilateral trading system.

Mauritius is a small island developing country without any known mineral resources, located far from major international markets. Faced with the constraints of a small internal market, high population density
and high unemployment it has to trade to survive. It adheres firmly to the policy of free trade and depends heavily on an open multilateral trading system for its economic development and social progress, otherwise its fragile economy will be choked.

A breakdown of the multilateral trading system is not in its interest, nor is it in the interest of any other country. The collapse of the system will no doubt have serious and unprecedented political and social consequences for all of us. It is, therefore, in the interest of all countries not only to preserve the multilateral trading system and the integrity of GATT, but also to strengthen and modernize the latter so as to make it more responsive to the changes of the present time and better equip it to deal with the changing world trade patterns of our time.

My delegation feels that this Ministerial meeting is fully aware of the change undergoing world trade and the stakes involved. They are not only the issues but also the all transcending and overriding responsibility of preserving the multilateral trading system and re-establishing confidence in GATT whose credibility in dealing with trade problems has lately been fast eroding.

All these require great moderation on our part and unity of purpose and given the goodwill and wisdom which the CONTRACTING PARTIES have demonstrated in tackling difficult problems in the past, my delegation sincerely hopes that this Ministerial meeting will rise to the occasion and take the decisive step to move forward by launching a New Round of multilateral trade negotiations with the expectation that it will reverse the protectionist trend and thereby benefit all the countries. But these benefits will be simply negated unless parallel actions are taken in the monetary and financial sectors.

Before concluding, let me briefly deal with some key elements which my country would like to be taken into account in the New Round. For the successful launching of a New Round there is an important need for the establishment of trust and confidence among participants and the consideration of the legitimate interests of all CONTRACTING PARTIES. A credible, binding and enforceable commitment to standstill and a similar commitment to rollback measures inconsistent with GATT rules and principles within an agreed time-frame will help to build the required confidence.

The New Round should aim at the liberalization and expansion of world trade for increased mutual benefits and improved access to markets of the developed countries for the products of developing countries.
There is an urgent need to strengthen GATT disciplines. The New Round must deal on a priority basis on all unresolved issues from the Tokyo Round and more specifically the 1982 work programme especially safeguards, dispute settlement and grey area measures.

Agriculture and tropical products are two areas which require special and priority consideration during the early stages of the New Round of negotiations. There is an imperative need for effective multilateral disciplines in agriculture which is at present characterized by an unacceptable imbalance between supply and effective demand which has resulted in depressing agricultural commodity prices, relatively much to the detriment of the developing countries. My delegation believes that the problem of structural surpluses must be approached in a more vigorous and effective manner and world trade rules be strengthened so as to stabilize the world agricultural market. While dealing with this problem, particular attention should be paid to the contractual obligations entered into between a number of developing countries and some developed countries. This consideration is of vital and critical importance to some developing countries.

In this connection, a clear reference should be made in the Ministerial Declaration launching the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations highlighting the need to preserve this special arrangement.

The New Round must bring about a substantial reduction in tariff and especially non-tariff barriers. But this should not result in the erosion of the preferential margin currently being enjoyed by a number of developing countries.

The New Round must consider measures to deal with the trade distorting effects of the restrictive business practices followed by large transnational corporations. The principle of differential and more favourable treatment for developing countries as contained in Part IV of the Agreement and the Enabling Clause must be applied in all areas which will be covered in the New Round.

To make GATT responsive to changes in world trade patterns and to deal with the growing importance of certain new areas of activities the New Round should continue, in accordance with the provisions of the Agreement and in strict pursuance of existing decisions and conclusions of the CONTRACTING PARTIES, the useful works already initiated within GATT. This applies to the question of the treatment of trade in services under GATT.

There is a need to improve the effectiveness and decision-making process of the institutions of GATT through more active involvement of Ministers.
My delegation sincerely hopes that when we leave Punta del Este we shall have already started a process which will lead to the strengthening of the multilateral trading system and to the reinforcement of the GATT rules and principles to enable it to better respond to the changing environment and pattern of world trade with a view to ensuring stable growth in international trade for the benefit of all participants, more particularly to the needs and legitimate aspirations of the developing countries.