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STATEMENT BY H.E. DR. MILENKO BOJANIĆ,
FEDERAL SECRETARY FOR FOREIGN TRADE OF YUGOSLAVIA

The multilateral trading system is threatened by a growing bilateralism which is seriously weakening the GATT system based on multilateral rights and obligations. In recent years, we have witnessed an escalation of protectionism which, in the absence of the necessary restructuring of the world economy, has aimed particularly at products representing comparative advantages for developing countries. Certain sectors are being protected outside the GATT rules, thus constituting a "grey zone" devoid of any legal standing.

The present meeting of the GATT CONTRACTING PARTIES is being held in a situation of general crisis which, while not sparing any country, has very seriously impaired the position of the developing countries in international trade and consequently their economic development.

No disagreement should arise as to the need and urgency for understandings among us on common actions to put an end to the negative trends in trade and the international trading system, and to improve the GATT system for the benefit of all countries.

All of these unfavourable trends, resulting from the national policies of the most important participants in international trade, call not only for a reaffirmation of GATT rules but also for the adaptation of the multilateral system to the needs of world economic development and the long-term interests of all countries.

The high degree of insecurity now affecting trade relations renders difficult the stable development of international trade and in particular the diversification of the export structure of developing countries, thereby disorienting their production and export programmes. We are particularly disturbed by the weakening of the special solutions already agreed on in favour of the developing countries and by their arbitrary interpretation, in particular in connection with bilateral arrangements marked by an obvious imbalance between developed and less developed partners.

There is increasing emphasis on an arbitrary "graduation" of developing countries, the object being to subject the relatively advanced developing countries to the same rules as for the developed countries. In

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this trend one encounters the argument of reciprocity and the opening of developing-country markets, without any regard for their balance-of-payments, financial and economic possibilities. At the same time, this trend represents a negation of the solutions so far reached in GATT in their favour. Differentiated and more favourable treatment of the least developed among the developing countries, in all spheres of international trade, remains our common obligation.

For the future of the international trading system, an agreement on safeguards is becoming increasingly important and even urgent. In our opinion, the basic elements should deal with elimination of discrimination in the implementation of safeguard measures, necessary transparency and international surveillance, and strict observance of the obligation to demonstrate the losses responsible for the safeguard measures. We believe that special solutions should be envisaged with a view to safeguarding the interests of developing countries in the matter of exports, having regard to the temporary and degressive nature of such measures and their close connection with the process of structural adjustment in the economic sectors of the countries having recourse to such measures.

We also see a way of promoting the international trading system by involvement of GATT in the settlement of the problems of trade in agricultural products, with its special features and various forms of protection, which are largely beyond the framework of GATT. The establishment of an appropriate GATT forum that would permanently deal with such questions for the purpose of finding acceptable solutions at the international level could represent a first step towards a more equitable international commitment.

In our opinion, among the key questions would be an examination of national agrarian policies and of their direct and indirect impact on international trade distortions.

We believe that the Trade and Development Committee should make all necessary efforts to increase and improve trade between developed and developing countries in all fields, taking into account the profoundly changed international circumstances.

If the growing protectionist trend is clearly defined as an increasingly dangerous departure from the GATT system, it would in our view be indispensable to provide the Declaration with a decisive orientation against such trends and to give it the character of a trade pledge on the part of all participants that would guide the national trade policies of the contracting parties during this decade.

The profoundly changed international circumstances call for new solutions based on respect for interdependence and the need to achieve a more balanced development in the world aimed at general prosperity.