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STATEMENT BY DR. THE HONOURABLE D.J. DE VILLIERS,
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This meeting of the CONTRACTING PARTIES of the GATT takes place against the background of the world-wide recession causing escalating pressure for protectionism. As such, it is appropriate that the conference should be held in a city which for more than half a century has been closely associated with the endeavours to facilitate the creation of a more balanced international economic society.

The continuous collective attempts over the past thirty-five years at national and international levels to reshape the world economy undoubtedly have had a beneficial effect on increased world production and expansion of trade on a non-discriminatory basis. South Africa is a founder member of the GATT and the volume and nature of its trade today make it one of the larger trading nations of the world. South Africa is not only an important supplier of essential raw materials, but also offers a lucrative and expanding market for the goods of its trading partners.

We remain firmly convinced of the need to maintain and strengthen the pre-eminent position of the GATT as an instrument for the promotion of international trade. Continued progress towards the attainment of this objective will do much to solve many of the major economic and other problems confronting the world today. We therefore welcome the renewed commitment by CONTRACTING PARTIES to reduce trade frictions, to overcome protectionist pressures and to promote the liberalization and expansion of trade. The GATT system can only function effectively if all the signatories adhere to the principles contained in its Articles and the rules and procedures evolved since the establishment of the Agreement some three and a half decades ago. Regrettably, there has been an increasing tendency to impose trade barriers of rather formidable proportions outside the disciplines of the GATT.

My Government considers it of great importance that this tendency should be redressed and that these barriers should be eliminated as far as possible in conformity with the rules of the GATT.

The acceptance by my country of the various codes and disciplines which emanated from the Tokyo Round of trade negotiations is continuously receiving the attention of my Government. South Africa has already accepted certain codes and subject to certain issues being satisfactorily resolved, my Government has decided in principle to sign the Agreement on

the Interpretation and Application of Articles VI, XVI and XXIII of the General Agreement. South Africa has already indicated its intention to accede to the Valuation Code on 1 July 1983 and active consideration is being given to adherence to the Anti-dumping Code. However, South Africa has on numerous occasions stressed its particular requirements consistent with the country's development needs. This must necessarily have a bearing on South Africa's ability to assume commitments comparable with those accepted by the highly industrialized countries.

Regarding the subject of safeguards my Government would prefer that the present position be retained, which would imply the invocation of Article XIX on a most-favoured-nation basis.

In exceptional circumstances, however, justification may exist for the application of safeguard measures on a selective basis under surveillance of the GATT.

Agricultural products feature prominently in South Africa's international trade. The fluctuations which occur from year to year in the volume of this trade are indicative of South Africa's susceptibility to variable climatic conditions.

Many unresolved problems remain in the trade in this sector. My Government supports the establishment of a committee on trade in agriculture. Transparency of the trade distorting effects of national support policies and measures which influence trade in agricultural products, should receive high priority in the work programme of the committee.

There is a need to dispose of normal surpluses which are characteristic of the agricultural sector and my Government is of the opinion that further consideration needs to be given to these problems.

My Government agrees to an examination of the question of counterfeit goods and trade therein.

South Africa is an important exporter of processed and semi-processed minerals and metals and has a significant fishing industry. We are therefore interested in the proposed study of the trade in natural resource products.

My Government agrees that the services sector falls outside the purview of the GATT. It must be acknowledged, however, that there is no other international body which could deal adequately with the increasing problems in this important area. GATT could provide a competent infrastructure to initiate the necessary preparatory work. South Africa would subscribe to the view of a proposed examination of the matter at international level.

In conclusion, my Government would like to register its commitment to the basic principles of the GATT.