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STATEMENT BY
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The decision to convene this Ministerial meeting of the GATT signifies a wide appreciation amongst governments of the critical economic problems facing the international community and the near breakdown in the institutional framework for reconciling trade and related questions.

The economic indicators dictate that the all-important concern before us today is the need to avert the imminent collapse of the global economic system.

The world economy is projected optimistically to grow by only 1.5 per cent in 1982. On the financial side, it is not only the \$400 billion external debt of the developing countries which is creating shock waves in the international banking community, but equally the uncertainty now evident in the payments capacity of some developed countries.

As contracting parties to the GATT we are constrained to take especial note of the fact that world trade is projected to grow by only 0.7 per cent in 1982 and that there are no discernible signs of improvement in primary commodity prices which registered an overall decline of 22.5 per cent in real terms during the last eighteen months.

The root cause of the malaise in the international trading system is the failure by the industrialized countries to take the necessary structural adjustment measures. Instead they have resorted to increasingly protectionist policies in a futile search for solutions. Underlying this is an increasing lack of faith in the effectiveness of an open-trading system as a contributor to economic growth.

We must therefore utilize the political authority invested in this meeting to agree on individual and joint action to remove the existing protectionist measures.

The fight against protectionism is not a fight about an abstraction. It is about trade restrictions which lead to a pattern of inefficient resource allocation, declining employment opportunities, and a reduction in output, incomes and standards of living on a global scale.

The primary objective of this Ministerial meeting is to improve the conditions for international trade, expanding the flow of goods and services and thereby increasing employment and incomes in all our countries. It is therefore necessary to identify a programme of work and the appropriate mechanisms for achieving these objectives. It is in this context that I would like to suggest an approach which could be considered and hopefully adopted by this meeting.

As a first step we should seek to improve the organization and method of work of the Council of the GATT so that it can effectively carry out its notification, surveillance and dispute settlement functions. The movement already evident in this direction should be pursued on a priority basis. Protectionist measures currently in force should, on a progressive basis, be brought within the GATT and subjected to its disciplines. At the same time greater emphasis should be placed on conciliation in the dispute settlement procedures of the GATT.

The Council should set in train a comprehensive review of the results of the multilateral trade negotiations. We must ensure that in the implementation of the agreements and arrangements there is full consistency with the General Agreement and that they do not inhibit the attainment of the objectives of the GATT. We must be certain, in particular, that the interests of the smaller trading partners and, more specifically, the developing countries are fully protected.

Existing committees should conclude work on issues left over from the multilateral trade negotiations with priority being given to safeguards and the provision of greater security of access for developing countries. Another major item of unfinished business is agriculture. Jamaica supports efforts for a comprehensive review of all measures affecting trade in this sector and believes that a committee on agriculture would make an important contribution to this exercise.

Part IV of the General Agreement and the enabling clause have not been effectively implemented. The plight of the developing countries in the current economic recession makes imperative an immediate review of these provisions by the Committee on Trade and Development. This review would give renewed impetus to the development and expansion of their trade on the basis of differential and more favourable treatment.

The developing countries have been the dynamic element in international trade over the past few years. One index of this is the fact that between 1973 and 1980 trade amongst industrialized countries declined from 74 to 67 per cent while the share of their exports to all developing countries increased from 19 to 26 per cent. The measures we agree on at this meeting should not merely assist in averting trade wars amongst developed countries but must advance the trade, financial and development needs of each developing contracting party. In formulating these measures full account must be taken of regional and global arrangements which already exist for advancing their interests.

In addition to the measures I have outlined, I would commend for the consideration of this meeting a proposal for a group of governmental and independent experts whose task would be to study present trends and seek to discern future issues of significance to the international trading system. The last time that this was undertaken in GATT was in 1958 when the Haberler report was published. Over the past twenty-four years the structure of world production and trade has undergone fundamental changes. There is need for another comprehensive examination.

Our mission would be unfinished and we would be failing in our political responsibility to our peoples if we left this meeting without a firm decision about convening the next Ministerial session.

I wish firmly to propose that we meet again at ministerial level, within the next eighteen months, to review the programme of work that we agree on here and to examine the developments which flow from this meeting.

This meeting must serve to re-commit our governments to the fundamental principles enshrined in the GATT and Jamaica joins fully with all those in this meeting who have explicitly reaffirmed that commitment.

In the final analysis governments will have to demonstrate leadership in order to halt the current economic slide and arrest the increase in unemployment. Failure to act will induce further speculation in the money markets, a further decline in productive investment and a return to the situation which prevailed in the depression era of the 1930s.

We must not fail to act.