

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

RESTRICTED

Spec(82)144

November 1982

CONTRACTING PARTIES
Thirty-Eighth Session
Ministerial Meeting
(24-27 November 1982)

Original: English

STATEMENT BY THE HONOURABLE R.C. HOVE, MINISTER OF TRADE AND COMMERCE OF ZIMBABWE

Let me begin like most of my distinguished colleagues by congratulating you upon your assumption of the chairmanship of this important thirty-eighth session of the GATT CONTRACTING PARTIES.

Your task is most unenviable but given your ability and experience I should want to believe that you will steer this ship to safety and security. I should like to pay a special "thank you" to the Director-General of the GATT, the GATT secretariat and the chairmen of the various GATT bodies for their efficiency and untiring efforts in the successful organization of this meeting.

Equally deserving our thanks are our remarkable hosts without whose hospitality our stay in Geneva would have been less memorable.

My country was one of the original twenty-three founder members of the GATT in 1947 but due to the unfortunate event of UDI we have for many years been noticeably absent from GATT activities. We are naturally glad to be back and to resume our rightful place amongst GATT contracting parties. To this end it gives us pleasure to take this opportunity to reaffirm my country's commitment to the principles of the GATT.

We resume our active participation in GATT at a time when the multilateral trading system which, since the Second World War sustained and guided trade relations among nations, is poised on the verge of collapse.

We meet at a critical time when, as a result of the prolonged and ever-increasing economic crisis, the value and volume of production and trade are severely depressed.

Our economic experiences, as those of other developing countries, are characterized by slow and negative growth rates, increasing unemployment, high interest rates and unstable exchange rates which are seriously inhibiting our ability to develop our economies. These problems have been compounded by the increasing trend to protectionism in our market countries.

./.

It is not my intention, at this late hour in our deliberations to delve into the evils of this surge called protectionism as many previous speakers have fully and ably covered this area. What remains to be said, is that in seeking solutions to these problems of unemployment negative growth rates, declining terms of trade which have been compounded by the increasing resort to protectionist measures, my delegation is of the view that if the multilateral trading system is to be preserved, all contracting parties should reach a compromise and thereby assure an open trading system.

Ministers at this session cannot afford to fail because if we do, we would all go down in history as the Ministers who failed to prevent the collapse of the free-trading system.

It is therefore incumbent upon us to generate the necessary political will to recommit our nations to the principles of the GATT. The minimum objective we should attain is that of adopting a standstill resolution.

In conclusion, my delegation attaches particular importance to compliance with the provisions of Part IV of the GATT and to commitments made by the developed contracting parties during the Tokyo Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations and I urge that the GATT rules should be more effectively implemented and improved.