

# GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

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Allow me first of all to add my voice to that of my predecessors on this rostrum, in congratulating you on your election as Chairman of this important meeting which is called to take decisions which may prove to be momentous for the future of world trade.

May I also express to the Swiss authorities my appreciation for their warm hospitality. Our thanks also go to Mr. Arthur Dunkel, Director-General of GATT, for his untiring efforts and dedication in the preparation of this meeting.

After having heard the numerous speakers who have addressed this assembly, it has become abundantly clear to all of us that there is today an acute awareness of the interdependence of nations in matters of trade and a general acceptance that certain basic principles will have to be agreed upon before the end of this meeting if we want to grow out of the present depressed state of affairs. Representatives of developing countries have expressed their anxiety at the lack of a clear perception of their problems on the part of the industrialized world. We recognize the problems of the latter. We understand that in their preoccupation with their own stagnant economies, unemployment problems and other evils they may not have perceived the disaster that is staring us, developing countries, in the face. Many countries such as mine, burdened with an unemployment rate of about 25 per cent; with massive recurrent balance-of-payments deficits, with a debt servicing that uses up nearly 40 to 50 per cent of our recurrent budget, having to borrow at prohibitive rates of interest on the private capital market, we have had to turn to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank for balance-of-payments support and development loans. Such assistance has been forthcoming only on the introduction of structural adjustments to our economies. We have chosen to follow the prescriptions of the World Bank and of the IMF and have introduced measures which, although socially unpalatable, may in the long run prove economically profitable and ensure our survival.

That is why the address made to this assembly by Mr. de Larosière on behalf of the IMF, and by Mr. Clausen on behalf of the World Bank, proposing as they did, greater openness in trade among nations have come as a breath of fresh air and a message of hope for the future. The new form of export-oriented development which we have adopted can only succeed if dynamic decisions emerge from this meeting. We would expect, at least a

general acceptance of the points developed in paragraph 7 of the proposed Ministerial Declaration. We would also expect a more serious approach to the implementation, finally, of the non-reciprocal provisions of Part IV of GATT.

Suggestions have been made that we should study without any commitment or any precondition issues relating to trade in services.

We, developing countries, will have to be extremely careful in order to establish and maintain an indigenous ownership and control of our infrastructures. We therefore do not feel that the time is right, nor that this is a proper forum to debate that issue.

The voice of several countries has been heard on the necessity for GATT to include within its purview certain measures affecting trade in agriculture. This is obviously a very difficult question, as it goes to the root of fundamental matters such as security, in its wider sense, and traditional agricultural activities, but there is certainly a case to take a long and hard look at the problem in the context of a well-planned global agricultural strategy. As far as my country is concerned, as a major producer and exporter of sugar, we are among those who suffer most from the present practices in agricultural development. It is well known that, through the lack of planning and co-ordination at international level, and because of the adoption of certain domestic policies, this commodity fetches today, on the world market, sometimes not even half of what it costs to produce. Were it not for the contractual benefits which we enjoy, accompanied by obligations which we scrupulously observe, under the Sugar Protocol annexed to the Lomé Convention, our economy would have already floundered. It is essential that the sugar-producing countries, signatories of the Lomé Convention, should continue to enjoy the contractual benefits, while observing the contractual obligations, under that protocol.

This situation is illustrative of the imperative need to ensure that, within the group of developing countries, those countries which, like the African, Caribbean and Pacific States are enjoying a certain measure of preference in the framework of contractual agreements they have entered into with industrialized countries such as the European Economic Community, should, as is recognized already by the international community, continue to enjoy this comparative advantage in order that they should become solid trading and economic partners both in the interest of the whole group of developing countries, and in that of the entire international community.

My delegation attaches special importance to this being adequately reflected in the record of the proceedings of this Ministerial Council.

At this particularly crucial juncture, it is of the highest importance that the GATT Ministerial Conference should demonstrate real political determination to overcome the difficulties which stand in the way of the vigorous expansion of international trade as well as of an urgent reduction

and diligent elimination of imbalances in the flow of world trade detrimental to the developing countries. It is equally important that the stage should be set to enable the restoration of confidence in the multilateral trading system through substitution of predictability for insecurity.

Finally, there is a clear choice to be made, between on the one hand, short-sighted approaches with far-reaching adverse consequences, and on the other, concerted approaches based on genuine mutual advantage. May the establishment of environmental conditions conducive to the orderly regulation of world trade be unanimously accepted by our conference as an inescapable commitment and an irreversible process.