

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

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STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF THREE

At the twentieth session of the Committee on 1 February 1972, the following statement was made, on behalf of the Group of Three, by Ambassador G. Smoquina.

Mr. Chairman,

In deciding to continue in existence the Group of Three, the CONTRACTING PARTIES gave Ambassador Archibald as the Chairman of the Council, you as Chairman of the Committee on Trade and Development, and me as the Chairman of the CONTRACTING PARTIES, the heavy responsibility of carrying forward the task so ably performed by our predecessors of exploring problems affecting the trade of developing countries and making recommendations or suggestions aimed at facilitating solutions for these problems.

In taking over this task we are fully aware that our predecessors succeeded in turning, what at the beginning was no more than a general proposal, into a precise and important contribution to GATT's activities and it is our intention so to continue to the best of our ability.

The report the Group of Three presented to the twenty-seventh session of the CONTRACTING PARTIES provides impressive evidence of the thoroughness and painstaking devotion with which our predecessors have dealt with those trade problems of developing countries where the prospects of concrete results appeared to them to be the brightest. The proposals and recommendations made by the Group on the basis of its examination of these problems and the two rounds of consultations carried out by it with representatives of developed countries were widely praised at the last CONTRACTING PARTIES session for the constructive realism of their approach. The CONTRACTING PARTIES received also some preliminary indications from a certain number of representatives of the initial and, on the whole, positive reaction of their governments to these recommendations. Some other representatives of developed countries indicated that since the report had been with their governments for only a few days, more time would be needed for consideration of its specific recommendations. It is, therefore, understandable that the CONTRACTING PARTIES have made it our first task to take the follow-up action on the report and to explore with the contracting parties concerned the possibilities of resolving difficulties related to the implementation of the recommendations it contains.

In this connexion, my colleagues and I are hopeful, since the report has been in the hands of governments for some time, that they will have found it possible to complete their detailed consideration of the recommendations and to explore the possibilities of dealing individually and jointly with any difficulties which, in

...their view, impede their implementation. We, accordingly, intend shortly to initiate a process of informal consultations with representatives of developed countries so that we may be informed of any action that has been taken or that is being planned by the governments of these countries in pursuance of the Group's recommendations and may have an opportunity to discuss any specific difficulties which may be holding up implementation. We are fully confident that we will receive the same ready co-operation from representatives of developed countries in this effort as was extended by them to our predecessors and we trust that following these further discussions and consultations it will be possible for us to inform the next session of the Committee on Trade and Development of substantive progress in the removal or relaxation of the tariff and non-tariff barriers to which the report of the Group of Three is addressed.

At the same time, Mr. Chairman, my colleagues and I are very conscious that we are moving into an era that may offer new challenges and opportunities for multilateral action in the trade policy field. The recent agreement on re-alignment of parities and the signing of the Treaties providing for the accession of the United Kingdom, Norway, Denmark and Ireland to the Community may be expected to remove many of the inhibitions that have, until now, affected consideration of initiatives towards new trade policy negotiations in GATT. Arrangements will also have to be made, inter alia, for the GATT examination of the Accession Treaties and for negotiations under Article XXIV:6. It is to be hoped that it will be possible, within the framework of our organization, to direct renewed attention both to the solution of any specific problems which lend themselves to short-term action and to preparations for the broader multilateral negotiations for the reduction of trade barriers which many of us look forward to. Our predecessors had stressed that the solutions for many of the problems of developing countries, particularly in the difficult fields of non-tariff barriers and agriculture could be found only in the context of multilateral negotiations. In the light of this, it is of the highest importance that the developing countries should be able to make their due contribution to the multilateral action that may be undertaken in GATT and that they should benefit effectively from the results of such action. To this end, the Group would seek to maintain close touch with discussions in the various GATT bodies and Committees, both in relation to the current work programme and in relation to any new activities that may be undertaken in the light of developments.

Indeed, Mr. Chairman, we are already moving into a phase of considerable international activity in the trade policy field, even though not all this activity is in Geneva. The Group intends to keep in touch with developments that may be of direct interest to the trade of developing countries wherever these occur. We consider this to be an important part of our responsibility.

In their task of identifying problems which require attention, our predecessors were assisted by very extensive documentation from the secretariat and also from contracting parties. Of course, the Group will follow closely discussions in this Committee as in other GATT Groups and bodies with a view to examining how, in pursuance of the mandate given to it by the CONTRACTING PARTIES, it could lend its good offices towards facilitating the implementation of Part IV. However, it seems to us that the developing countries themselves could make an

important contribution to our efforts by bringing to the Group's attention any specific problems they have encountered in securing implementation of the commitments under Part IV. It is the Group's hope that its informal procedures for consultations will encourage full co-operation by all countries concerned in the solution of these problems.

Mr. Chairman, I hope that these preliminary reflections on the approach that the new members of the Group of Three intend to develop towards its future work have been of interest to the Committee. We welcome suggestions because there is no doubt that any results the Group can achieve must flow from the common commitment of all contracting parties to improve the situation of developing countries in the field of trade. My colleagues and I, therefore, look forward to a constructive contribution from everyone to the work of the Group of Three.