

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

RESTRICTED

L/1645

24 November 1961

Limited Distribution

CONTRACTING PARTIES
Nineteenth Session

Original: French

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY

Association of Overseas Territories

Statement Made by the Representative of Senegal on 17 November 1961

My friends have done me the honour of asking me to submit a few remarks on the discussion about the association of the sixteen African States with the European Economic Community and the reciprocal preferences implicit in this association.

I propose to make my remarks in an entirely uncritical and quite unpolemical fashion - to speak in calm and friendly tones, in the hope of dissipating the misunderstanding - for I feel that it is merely a misunderstanding - and I trust that, as a result of this exchange of views, the misunderstanding will be cleared up.

I am speaking in the name, and on behalf, of the following African delegations: Cameroons, Ivory Coast, Congo (Brazzaville), Dahomey, Gabon, Mauritania, Upper Volta, Senegal, Central African Republic, Chad, Republic of the Congo (Leopoldville), the Niger (represented by the Ivory Coast) etc.

Several delegations have been protesting against the diversion of traditional trade caused by the reciprocal preferences arising from association with the European Economic Community; some have asserted that they are inconsistent with the GATT rules and, in particular, with the provisions of Article XXIV, paragraph 3 or 4.

Others advance economic arguments, more particularly, the harmful effects of the so-called diversion of trade.

What is the point at issue?

From the formal standpoint, several delegations still agree with me in considering that

- OAMCE (African-Malagasy Economic Co-operation Organization)
- the franc area
- the European Economic Community

are free-trade areas of the same type as the Commonwealth, the Free Trade Association, the Central American Free Trade Area, whose representatives are

today attacking the alleged privileges which the European Economic Community proposes to grant to the associated African countries.

I feel that the discussion is hardly likely to be exhausted, still less settled, by a legal wrangle.

The verdict pronounced would not close the gap; it might, on the contrary, widen it, because attitudes would harden. I am glad to see that both sides have voluntarily dropped the argument - though its logical sequel would favour my view - that the reciprocal preferences arising from association with EEC are perfectly compatible with the GATT rules.

Let us take an impartial look at the economic arguments, more particularly, those advanced by the parties who accuse the Community and the associated countries of diverting traditional trade and the volume of trade.

What do we find? Statistics show, quite to the contrary, that trade between the Economic Community and third countries has expanded instead of shrinking, as some prophets in this assembly forecast.

Take, for instance, the case of coffee alone:

- Statistics of coffee imports into the EEC:

For the last three years 1958, 1959 and 1960, the average amount imported was 170,000 tons from the associated overseas countries and territories, and 300,000 tons from third countries.

Total EEC imports rose by 17 per cent between 1958 and 1960 (about 90,000 tons); imports from Latin America rose by 84,000 tons; in other words, it was the Latin American countries which benefited almost entirely by the increased requirements of the EEC.

Or, take another case:

- Statistics of cocoa bean imports:

Between 1958 and 1960 the total EEC imports rose by 25 per cent (59,000 tons); those from non-associated Africa by 37 per cent (41,000 tons) i.e. a higher proportion than the overall increase.

I would, therefore, be glad to hear the plaintiffs define arithmetically the nature and volume of the damage they have suffered; I waited in vain to hear it at the eighteenth session and since this discussion began I have still not heard any figure stated.

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen, this discussion is absolutely similar to the one in which I took part on 19 May last. Since the charges levelled are still the same, as is the problem at issue, why should I make any change in my reply?

May I remind you of what I said at the eighteenth session? I simply said that both sides, whether we be the supporters or the opponents of reciprocal

preferences in the European Economic Community or in the other free trade areas, represent brother countries and under-developed countries - I address this remark more particularly to our brother countries in Africa.

When they refer in their arguments to the divisions that exist in Africa, my reply is that the Heads of African States fully realize that some African representatives talk English and others French; they have already taken steps to remedy this situation. To begin with, they have also set about organizing inter-African economic co-operation, important stages in which are constituted by:

OAMCE, the Monrovia group and the Casablanca group,

and in the weeks ahead;

the Lagos Conference.

I agree that African unity will not be achieved from one day to the next, but it is on the way and the exciting prospects it offers urge us to display mutual understanding and co-operation.

I am glad to repeat what I said in this hall last spring: "The enemy of an under-developed country is not another under-developed country.

"The common enemy we have to fight is poverty, hunger, ignorance, or people who might try to recolonize us. We don't want any others. It is not a matter of robbing Peter to pay Paul; as we see it, Peter and Paul have both to be provided for."

As countries associated with the EEC, we are pleased when the African countries of the Commonwealth, as a result of imperial preferences, enjoy economic advantages; likewise, we enthusiastically welcome the considerable assistance promised by a great Western democracy to the "Alliance for Progress", the Central American Free Trade Area, although the Community offers us comparatively few benefits in this field.

I make all these remarks in order to affirm our solidarity with the under-developed countries wherever they are and in order to improve mutual understanding of the situation.

As I have just proved to you, no one's interests are diminished by the advantages offered by the European Economic Community to the associated countries.

In conclusion, the Europe of the Six proposes to associate us with an economic co-operation organization, the central feature of which would be organization of the commodity market, with guaranteed advantages equal at least to those which the franc area granted to certain associated countries.

Our confidence in this original scheme for ensuring active co-operation is enhanced by facts that are concrete, important and can be checked - not to speak of the numerous candidates who are at the present moment knocking at the EEC's door.

I am referring to the recent striking applications for accession which the Community is at present considering.

Pending the confirmation of reciprocal preferences, the EEC, through its development fund, has already built up some strong points in our country - I mean, schools, hospitals, roads and railways - strong points which will protect our people against poverty, hunger and ignorance.

Is anyone saying more or doing more to promote human betterment, advance decolonization and, consequently, peace among men?

I think it was President Senghor who said, a few days ago, in the United Nations, that peace will follow on a phase of decolonization - economic decolonization, lacking which political independence would be a delusion.

