

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

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AFGHANISTAN: STATEMENT BY DR. M.A. KHERAD, AMBASSADOR,
AT THE MEETING OF THE GATT CONTRACTING PARTIES
AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL, 15-19 SEPTEMBER 1986,
PUNTA DEL ESTE, URUGUAY

Allow me, first, to offer you my sincere congratulations on your election as Chairman of these meetings. We are sure that under your able chairmanship this important conference will achieve the satisfactory results expected. We also wish to congratulate the other officers of the conference who are called upon to assist you in your task.

My delegation also takes this opportunity of expressing its thanks and appreciation to the people and Government of Uruguay for the warm welcome they have given us in this beautiful town of Punta del Este.

My delegation attaches great importance to this historic meeting at Punta del Este, which provides a unique opportunity of facing up to realities, assuming our responsibilities, taking appropriate measures to normalize and rationalize international trade, and to establish a multilateral trading system that is more open, more viable and more durable; in doing this we must consider preservation of the GATT as the first objective in international trade relations and as a prior condition for subsequent action to strengthen the multilateral trading system, taking the Ministerial Declaration of 1982 into account.

The international economic situation is still characterized by instability and uncertainty that are extremely worrying. Certain phenomena are fraught with consequences for the whole international community: the lowering of living standards and substantial reduction of real income in developing countries; the critical indebtedness of those countries; the disastrous collapse of commodity prices; increasingly strong protectionist tendencies; reduction of the flow of resources to developing countries; net transfer of financial resources from developing countries to the developed countries; the critical state of the trading system; inadequacy of the international monetary system and high rates of interest; distortion, disparities and fluctuations in exchange rates; embargoes; unequal and diverse recovery in the industrial countries; lack of confidence in international economic relations; and the sterile arms race.

The developing countries are indeed facing severe difficulties and heavy handicaps.

The prolonged economic crisis and continuing inequality and lack of equity in international economic relations are having disastrous effects on the economies of developing countries, especially the less advanced and the land-locked countries, whose development is gravely endangered. Thus the gulf between developed and developing countries has continued to widen.

The critical situation of the developing countries in their trade with the developed countries is a consequence of the prevailing international economic system. This situation has deteriorated as a result of the non-application of the rules of GATT, by reason of increased recourse to protectionism, which hinders the development of international trade and the marketing of exports from developing countries.

Some developed countries have not fulfilled their commitments: they have not checked protectionism, but, on the contrary, continue to strengthen protectionist and discriminatory measures against the developing countries, which prevents them from paying their debts out of export earnings.

It is therefore essential to pay particular attention to the negative effect of protectionism on the capacity of developing countries to accomplish their development; to renounce protectionist measures; to put an end to restrictive practices and barriers not in conformity with the General Agreement, in particular those affecting the export products of developing countries; to liberalize trade by eliminating existing restrictions incompatible with the GATT; to apply more broadly and appropriately the preferential treatment of developing countries in international trade, without any discrimination; to formulate measures to stabilize the situation on world commodity markets; to promote confidence in international economic relations; to open the markets of the developed countries to increased access by the products of developing countries, which will enable them to participate in international trade and reduce their debt problem, so that they may achieve growth and economic stability and that their efforts to become full partners in the international trading system may not be doomed to failure; to ensure the liberalization of international trade in accordance with the principles and rules of GATT, in the interests and to the advantage of all countries; and to establish a more open and more viable multilateral trading system.

The Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, which can only express concern at the alarming situation and economic crisis faced by the less advanced countries, considers it essential to pay special attention to the situation and particular problems of these countries; to give special consideration, on a preferential basis, to the primary products of these countries, which are mainly agricultural and craft-industry products; to apply special measures to assist these countries in improving, as to both quality and quantity, the export potential of their products and in increasing the

volume and value of their exports; and to take particular account of the need for immediate implementation of the provisions of the Ministerial Declaration of 1982 intended to facilitate the trade of these countries, in order to solve their problems and accelerate their growth.

International trade makes for rapprochement and understanding between peoples and States. Multilateral trade negotiations should play a positive part in the normalization of trade relations and should help to renew and reinforce the authority and effectiveness of the existing principles and rules of the GATT.

Being aware of the lasting validity of the basic principles and objectives of the General Agreement in a world where economic interdependence is increasing, the delegation of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan considers that the multilateral trade negotiations should be conducted in accordance with those principles and objectives, having regard to the mutual advantage of all participants and taking account of their interests and needs, and should be directed towards the solution of the present problems of international trade, giving particular consideration to the problems, poverty and critical economic situation of the developing countries.

The results of the multilateral trade negotiations, their effectiveness and their application will also depend on the number of countries taking part. My delegation considers that these negotiations should be open to participation not only by contracting parties to GATT and countries which have established formal relations with GATT, but also by all developing countries and by all interested countries wishing to co-operate actively in the liberalization of international trade.

We are convinced that the normalization of international trade and the development of international trade relations depend, in the last resort, on the efforts of all the trading partners and that the growth of international co-operation in the field of trade and in other sectors of economic activity contributes to the promotion of economic and social progress.

The world urgently needs to co-operate in order to solve the problems of international trade. It is being more and more widely accepted that no nation or group of nations can remain in an island of prosperity in the ocean of poverty and despair; we must therefore take account of the needs and aspirations of the developing countries and act in a spirit of international solidarity and co-operation based on equality and on respect for the sovereignty of States, in order to promote true economic progress and thus achieve our final objective, which is peace, justice and socio-economic development for all.