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I should like to begin my statement by emphasizing the special significance of this year's Session of the CONTRACTING PARTIES. This significance is explained by the successful launching of a new round of multilateral trade negotiations last September at Punta del Este. Since then, this important development which dominates all GATT's activities has aroused a feeling of hope - albeit guarded - because its ultimate objective is the establishment of an international trade system that is in every respect more balanced.

It is only fair to recognize that the dynamism displayed by GATT as an organization played a vital rôle in launching the Uruguay Round; this is particularly gratifying to us at a time when international trade practices have evolved in a way that is not too encouraging from the standpoint of establishing a more liberal trade system.

Multilateral trade relations continue to have their ups and downs, and during the past two years the characteristic feature of international trade trends has been stagnation if not decline. The studies carried out by GATT reveal that, this year, the volume of trade will increase at the same rate as in 1985, namely by 3 per cent, against 9.5 per cent in 1984.

There is certainly no denying that protectionist trends contributed in large measure to this negative development. Studies reveal that, during the past five years, the number of protectionist measures applied by the industrialized countries has increased. These measures usually take the form of non-tariff barriers and often self-restraint, and are difficult to reconcile with the GATT system. The inevitable result of these measures, together with the decline in commodity prices on the international market, has been a reduction of the exports and import capacity of the developing countries and, therefore, a decline in their share in world trade.

Yet, in this interdependent world of ours, the most appropriate method of protecting the interests of all parties is to increase the volume of trade between the developed countries and the developing countries. The latter need an equitable and just trade environment free from any obstacles likely to hamper the achievement of their objective of increasing their share in world trade and to hinder their economic development efforts.

During the past few years, Turkey, convinced of the advantages of liberalization, has pursued a far-reaching liberalization policy by eliminating all quantitative import restrictions and by considerably reducing the number of products for which licences are required. My Government considers that, in view of their possibilities, a large number of our partners, and in particular our industrialized partners, are in a position to make a much more substantial contribution to the achievement of a liberal international trade system.

The reason why we supported the new round of multilateral negotiations from the outset is precisely because we desire the creation of an environment of this kind. We therefore hope that the new round will succeed in bringing about an equitable system reflecting, in a balanced manner, the legitimate interests of all the parties concerned, and particularly those of the developing countries, since any prosperity based on the chronic poverty of others is inevitably unstable and temporary.

We are aware of the difficulties that await us during the new round. Yet we are firmly convinced that any obstacles can be overcome if we act sincerely in accordance with the letter and spirit of the objectives and principles to which we committed ourselves in the Ministerial Declaration adopted at Punta del Este.

Another point I should like to mention concerns the impact of monetary and financial problems on trade relations. Any measures adopted in the field of trade must, if they are to be productive, be supported by other measures in the monetary and financial fields.

I should also like to say a few words about another development which caught the attention of a large number of developing countries, namely, the extension of the validity of the Multifibre Arrangement for a further period of five years.

It is difficult to agree that this Protocol makes a positive contribution to the solution of outstanding problems at a time when the goal in international trade is greater liberalization.

We honestly hope that this Protocol is the last, and that the industrialized countries will in future approach this subject in accordance with their numerous commitments to and declarations concerning just, equitable and liberal international trade.

I should like to conclude my statement by reaffirming our ardent hope that our future work will lead to the achievement of the objectives to which we are committed, namely:

- to ensure the greater liberalization and expansion of world trade to the advantage of all countries, and in particular the less-developed contracting parties,
- to strengthen the rôle and increase the capacity of GATT, and
- to promote a convergent movement towards co-operation.

The attainment of these objectives is, in our view, in the interest of all parties concerned.