

GATT/1456

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BOLIVIA SIGNS PROTOCOL OF ACCESSION TO GATT

Bolivia's Protocol of Accession to the GATT was signed today at GATT Headquarters in Geneva by Ambassador Raúl España-Smith, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Bolivia to the United Nations Office at Geneva and other international organizations.

Accession will take effect in 30 days, subject to ratification by the Bolivian parliament. Bolivia will then become the 97th Contracting Party to the GATT.

The terms of the Protocol were negotiated in a working party whose report was approved by the GATT Council on 19 July 1989. The decision on Accession was subsequently taken by GATT member states in a postal ballot. The necessary two-thirds majority of Contracting Parties - 64 affirmative votes - was attained in less than three weeks.

On becoming a contracting party to the General Agreement, Bolivia will be able to participate fully in all GATT's work, including the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations, which was launched in 1986 and is to conclude in December 1990. It will benefit from all tariff concessions negotiated by GATT contracting parties since the inception of the General Agreement in 1948 and will enjoy other benefits of GATT membership, including the possibility of recourse to the dispute settlement procedures.

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At the 19 July 1989 GATT Council meeting, representatives of Bolivia said that more than anything else, its accession to the General Agreement would be an "act of faith" in the multilateral trading system and in the GATT. Bolivia pledged to add to the efforts of the contracting parties to uphold the principles of the General Agreement and considered that the binding of its whole tariff schedule was a generous concession. Bolivia requested that in the context of the Uruguay Round negotiations, other contracting parties would grant equivalent concessions to Bolivia. Bolivia will study the possibility of acceding to the Tokyo Round Agreements on Customs Valuation and Import Licensing Procedures.

GATT's basic aim is to liberalize and to achieve greater security in world trade through the reduction or elimination of tariff and non-tariff barriers, and by providing a forum for negotiation on current international trade issues, thereby contributing to economic growth and development. The General Agreement has a number of provisions which deal particularly with the trade interests and needs of developing countries; some of these provisions were reinforced as a result of the Tokyo Round of multilateral trade negotiations in GATT which concluded in 1979.

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