

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON

SR.46/ST/1
4 January 1991

TARIFFS AND TRADE

Limited Distribution

CONTRACTING PARTIES
Forty-Sixth Session

Original: French

ROMANIA

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I should like to begin by saying that only a few days ago we were to have concluded, barring the details, the Uruguay Round of negotiations. Many of us have come directly from Brussels, where we were to have finalized the efforts exerted over the last four years to complete the most ambitious and thorough-going multilateral trade negotiations in GATT's history. In practice, that did not happen, despite the hopes voiced by virtually all contracting parties.

Nevertheless, as we see it, there is a silver lining to the Brussels experience: a new multilateral trading system for the future, a system that is more liberal, more stable and more transparent, can only be built with the effective and growing participation, as well as the necessary political will, of all contracting parties.

In a world that is increasingly interdependent and in the midst of radical political and economic change, such a multilateral trading system must be reliable and meet the needs of all contracting parties, whether developed or developing. Through strengthened and clearer rules and disciplines, such a system should encourage all countries to exercise their rights and obligations as full participants in international economic relations.

Developing countries, and countries that are in the midst of the transition towards a market economy, are obviously especially interested in increasing their participation in international economic activity, by means of multilateral trade instruments that can satisfy their objective conditions, needs and specific interests as regards development.

All these elements are particularly important for Romania. By overthrowing the communist dictatorship, through the resolve and sacrifices of its people, Romania is now engaged in a process of radical change. The main overall objectives of these changes are to introduce and consolidate the principles of democracy at all levels of social life, and in this framework, rapid economic reform aimed at moving to a market economy. The choice of an open economy is definite and irreversible. The many legislative and radical measures adopted in a very short space of time - only a year - are evidence of this.

* As received by the secretariat

With regard to matters of common interest to us here, I should like to stress that special attention is being paid to the preparation of an entirely new trade policy. Rigid, extremely centralized planning has been abolished, as has the State monopoly in foreign trade and foreign exchange. A new and increasingly active private sector is developing in the Romanian economy, inter alia, in foreign trade. I may also mention that outdated trade restrictions - such as the counter-trade obligation and the prohibition of trade credits and the restrictive use of import licences - have been eliminated.

As a result of the measures already taken, all economic operators have full independence in their production and marketing activities.

These are just a few examples of autonomous liberalization measures, having real and tangible effects, in this process of opening up the Romanian economy to foreign competition.

Other measures aimed at this same objective of switching to a market economy are at various stages of preparation and implementation. Price liberalization was begun on 1 November. Privatization of State enterprises is also underway. Sustained efforts are being made to prepare a new and modern customs tariff, based on the harmonized system, which will be the main instrument of trade policy. A liberal import-licensing system based above all on automatic licensing will also be introduced shortly. At the same time, Parliament is studying important bills aimed at promoting competition and further encouraging foreign investment in the Romanian economy, including external trade in goods and services, as well as the banking sector.

In this complex reform process, the Romanian authorities are fully resolved to comply strictly with GATT rules and disciplines. While thanking international organizations and agencies, including GATT, and the institutions of many countries which intend to support our economic reform, I should like to stress that we remain sincerely open to all suggestions, and to any offer of assistance that could support our efforts in this direction.

As a country undergoing the transition to a market economy, as well as a developing country, Romania attaches great hopes to the future of the multilateral trading system and consequently to its power-house, the GATT. It is convinced that only by participating fully in that system, and making the most of the ensuing rights and obligations, will Romania be able to achieve the necessary structural adjustment and development of its economy.

It is in this belief that Romania is and remains ready to co-operate with all other contracting parties for the constant improvement of the multilateral trading system and, in this context, the work of GATT. It is likewise ready to contribute to the rapid conclusion of the Uruguay Round, which is essential to ward off protectionist pressures and the temptation to seek partial solutions outside the GATT.