

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON

TARIFFS AND TRADE

RESTRICTED

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ACCESSION OF ALBANIA

The following communication, dated 12 November 1992, has been received from the Prime Minister of Albania.

On behalf of the Government of Albania, I wish to inform you that we have carefully studied the text of the General Agreement and, having held consultations with contracting parties, wish to accede thereto, pursuant to Article XXXIII.

Historic changes have taken place in Albania over the past two years. We have now firmly chosen the avenue of democracy and a market economy despite tremendous economic and social difficulties and a catastrophic economic situation. Our Government is now resolving the very difficult problems of the transition to a market economy. We have embarked on a privatization program with the assistance of industrialized countries and international institutions.

Albania is a member of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, and we have taken major steps to strengthen our trade relations with other countries, including contracting parties to GATT. We have signed numerous bilateral economic agreements, some of which contain most-favoured-nation and national treatment obligations. Bilateral agreements also require us to provide transparency in our economic regulation and follow certain procedures in the application of safeguards.

We recently adopted a new customs law, the main purpose of which was to enact our tariff schedule, which has been prepared according to the Harmonized System of Tariff Classification. Our tariffs currently range from 5 to 15%; 30% in a few sensitive areas. Our trade policy is to keep tariffs low.

Under our new import trade régime, there are no import license requirements except for potentially hazardous products such as drugs, weapons, radioactive matter and poisons. At the moment, we have a severe food shortage in Albania and are almost entirely dependent on foreign food aid. Accordingly, we also have some export license requirements, to prevent the reexport of this aid. We view these export license requirements as temporary measures.

The Government of Albania stands ready to cooperate closely with all the GATT contracting parties in the framework of a working party, which we hope can be established at their December meeting.

This application will be considered by the CONTRACTING PARTIES at their Forty-Eighth Session on 2-3 December 1992.