

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON

SR.48/ST/1

23 December 1992

TARIFFS AND TRADE

Limited Distribution

CONTRACTING-PARTIES
Forty-Eighth Session

Original: English

NAMIBIA

Statement by Mr. Tsudao Gurirab Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Trade and Industry of Namibia

On behalf of the Government of Namibia I would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the Director-General of GATT for his cooperation and assistance in facilitating Namibia's efforts in becoming a contracting party to the General Agreement. The speed and efficient manner in which Namibia's application to become a member to the world trade organization was handled and dealt with typifies the seriousness and the business-like approach so characteristic of the Secretariat in their efforts in dealing with the many difficult and often complex issues confronting the present-day world trading system.

As the 105th, and I believe the most recent, member of GATT, I would like to inform you that Namibia's decision to join the world trade surveillance body, that is GATT, was motivated not so much by choice as of necessity. As a trade dependent economy where exports in recent years have accounted for more than 60 per cent of GDP, Namibia's GATT membership is logical since it is testimony of the importance which it attaches to the maintenance of an open and liberal trading system in which all trading nations should be free to compete in markets on the basis of comparative advantage and open markets secured through agreed multilateral rules and disciplines.

The various rounds of trade negotiations conducted under the auspices of the GATT in the past together with on-going efforts to reduce and eliminate tariffs and other barriers to trade have important implications for Namibia. GATT's work in many areas of international trade ranging from market access issues such as tariffs, tropical products and natural resource-based products on the one hand, to agriculture and subsidies on the other, are relevant in the context of Namibia's own efforts to promote the sale of its products in markets abroad.

Namibia's GATT membership, therefore, is a manifestation not only of its determination to enhance its international trade interests but also a recognition that the success or otherwise of its own efforts to promote its economic development is closely linked to the continued expansion of world trade, which in turn largely hinges on GATT's success in its efforts to maintain an open world trading system.

Namibia's GATT membership could not have taken place at a more opportune time. We are now on the threshold of achieving one of the most

./.

important global package of agreements in international trade which, if negotiators are able to muster the will, would benefit all trading nations. All this is happening against the background of negotiations to establish the Multilateral Trade Organization as the successor organization to the GATT and, when set up, the new multilateral trade institution which would be the vehicle for implementing all the results of the Uruguay Round and will provide the forum for future negotiations.

Although we have not been able to follow developments in the GATT, let alone make a contribution to the work of the organization consistent with our level of development, on account of our relatively late entry into the arena, I would like to assure you that Namibia's status as a contracting party to the GATT -- achieved just over two years after its independence -- is testimony of its desire to be more involved in the work and activities of the world trade organization and to this end would be working towards rightfully taking its place in the international community of trading nations.

Finally, I would also like to avail myself of this opportunity to express our profound gratitude to the GATT Secretariat for a speedy response on our request to hosting a National Seminar.