

**GENERAL AGREEMENT  
ON TARIFFS AND TRADE**

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CONTRACTING PARTIES  
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TUNISIA

Statement by H.E. Mr. Mohamed Ennaceur  
Ambassador, Permanent Representative

To begin with, I would like to congratulate you on the clarity and substance of your introductory statement and endorse your perceptive observations on the expected developments in the international trading system.

Today we are gathered here at another session of the CONTRACTING PARTIES; as of next year the bodies provided for under the Final Act of the Uruguay Round are expected to be in place following the inception of the Multilateral Trade Organization and the start of a new era in international trade relations, as you have rightly recalled - an era we hope will be one of prosperity and widespread progress.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay a special tribute to Mr. Peter Sutherland, Director-General of GATT, for the excellent work he has done at the head of our institution since he was appointed to this important post, and in particular, during the final phase of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Arthur Dunkel, the former Director-General of GATT, on his distinguished service during his thirteen years as head of GATT and also on his valuable contribution to the Uruguay Round.

Over forty-six years, GATT has developed, and the number of contracting parties has steadily risen. We appreciate the strength and durability of the mechanisms set up by the founding fathers of this institution, and its growing membership is a source of satisfaction to us. I welcome the new requests for accession and assure the countries concerned of our support and encouragement.

The institutional changes to take place in GATT next year and its metamorphosis into a World Trade Organization require that we step up our efforts to create the best possible environment for the implementation of the results of the Uruguay Round.

As Chairman of the African Group, I wish to stress the importance our countries attach to the implementation of and respect for the commitments undertaken in the Final Act of the Uruguay Round with regard to special and differential treatment for developing countries.

The international community has welcomed the outcome. Let us not dash the hopes raised by the conclusion of the Round, and let us continue to work towards the success of the Marrakesh Ministerial Meeting. For us, holding the closing session and signing the Final Act on African soil fill us with a sense of pride and responsibility towards our peoples and economies.

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The African Continent has the lowest level of participation in international trade. This situation must be remedied as soon as possible. Obviously, the primary responsibility lies with us. All African countries have implemented structural adjustment programmes, taken part in the Uruguay Round and submitted offer lists with regard to market access. It is up to the international community to find the ways and means to ensure that our Continent's trade and exports increase and at the same time that our countries' export earnings improve, so as to underpin our development.

We hope the CONTRACTING PARTIES will take the appropriate measures to preserve the specific advantages and preferential margins granted to African countries in general and the LLDCs in particular, pursuant to the Punta del Este Declaration. For example, the preferential measures applied by various EEC countries in favour of ACP countries must be maintained.

In this connection, I note with satisfaction the inclusion in the Final Act of some of the recommendations made in the declaration adopted by African Ministers of Trade when they met in Tunis last October, inter alia the recommendation on the situation of least-developed countries and net importers of agricultural products, and on the need to ensure exchange-rate stability.

For our region, technical assistance is of particular importance and the African Ministers also recommended that a conference on technical assistance be held in Tunis under the auspices of the Economic Commission for Africa, in cooperation with GATT, to draw up a programme for implementing the result of the Uruguay Round for countries of the African Continent.

Tunisia is currently involved in the delicate task of removing tariff measures so that customs duties can gradually become the basic instrument for protecting domestic production and new branches of industry in particular, thus respecting both the spirit and the letter of the General Agreement.

Against this backdrop, Tunisia submitted two requests to the Council of Representatives.

I am pleased to say that the Council of Representatives at its meeting of 17 December 1993 acceded to our request, and that Tunisia concluded bilateral negotiations with several contracting parties.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our partners for their cooperation and support.