

**GENERAL AGREEMENT
ON TARIFFS AND TRADE**

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SWITZERLAND

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We are well aware that 1993 was a turning point, a historic year for GATT in more than one respect.

First of all, we concluded the Uruguay Round of Negotiations in December. Then, in addition, a new Director-General of GATT took over from Mr. Arthur Dunkel.

I would like to welcome Mr. Peter Sutherland as Director-General on the occasion of "his" first session of the CONTRACTING PARTIES. However, the new Director-General is not really such a "new boy" any more, as there has been no shortage of opportunity for us to be convinced of his exceptional talents. I would also like to take this opportunity to join with those who have paid tribute to the former Director-General, Mr. Arthur Dunkel, who with such intelligence and skill moulded both GATT and the outcome of the Uruguay Round.

I have no intention of going into detail about what has happened since the last session of the CONTRACTING PARTIES. We established an efficient method of work last year in GATT and I would like to adhere to it by focusing my short speech on what my delegation sees as essential at this point in the history of GATT and the Uruguay Round. The trading system had its ups and downs in 1993. However, the track record of the fight against protectionism could have been worse given the difficulties still dogging the world economy.

In this unfavourable economic and political climate, we have surely succeeded in building the best possible defence against protectionism by concluding the most comprehensive negotiations in the history of world trade.

However, despite this unquestionable victory - that we must consolidate once and for all - we must not harbour any illusions. Protectionist pressures remain and some governments could be inclined to give into the enormous temptation: a tangible risk which in some cases has already become reality! It seems that the danger is more present than ever in a situation in which, with the conclusion of the Uruguay Round, the contracting parties are no longer bound by the standstill commitment agreed at Punta del Este and reaffirmed at Montreal. There is a danger that some of our countries may even be tempted now to adopt measures the Uruguay Round negotiations had forced them to forego in the past.

Even though we still may be basking in the glow of our success in December, we are all aware that we have not reached the end of the road yet. We will be there only when all the participants have ratified the Uruguay Round Agreements. In some countries, gaining approval for the Agreements will be a complicated task as it will depend on extremely delicate political and economic balances. Therefore, we all bear a common political responsibility for creating and maintaining a favourable climate so that the process of ratifying and implementing the Agreements can run as smoothly as possible. It is essential that the authorities in each country maintain the strictest discipline and an iron will in the face of protectionist forces. In other words, let us continue with our commitment to the standstill agreed at Punta del Este now and throughout the transitional period leading to the implementation of the results of the Uruguay Round. In so doing, we will be helping not only the other participants but even more ourselves as well, as it will become easier to implement the results of the Uruguay Round at home. In the coming months we must all shoulder this responsibility of self-discipline in a joint effort. In that way, we can ensure that for world trade 1994 enjoys the same degree of success as 1993.