

**GENERAL AGREEMENT
ON TARIFFS AND TRADE**

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FINLAND

Statement by Mr. Mikko Heikinheimo
Director, Ministry for Foreign Affairs
(Speaking on Behalf of the Nordic Countries)

Speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, namely, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Finland, I have asked for the floor to take up some issues we see pertinent at this session of the CONTRACTING PARTIES of the GATT 1947.

This is an historic occasion, and before continuing I want to thank the Director-General and the Secretariat for their tireless endeavours, excellent performance and good co-operation, especially during the past autumn. We are now entering into a period of transition. The results of our seven-year long negotiations, the implementation of the Uruguay Round results and the new organizational framework, the WTO, sparkle in front of us. But we should not be dazzled by the perspectives and the glimmer of our leading star. Our old and well-known GATT requires still our attention.

Many contracting parties have, at various occasions, expressed their frustration over unsettled issues that have been pending on the outcome of the Uruguay Round. We hope these issues, especially in the field of unresolved disputes, can be brought to a conclusion now that the prerequisites are there. I wish to recall, as we often stated before, the importance of equitable rules and the necessity that all contracting parties can feel themselves assured of equal treatment against GATT law. We look forward to seeing ourselves going into the new era of the WTO without carrying over any unsettled business.

The Nordic countries note with satisfaction the progress made under the heading trade and environment. We hope the good co-operation and constructive and open approach will prevail. It has enabled us collectively to proceed on various issues related to this area and increase our understanding on this highly complex topic. We have committed ourselves to continue, albeit under another hat, the work programme that we agreed to have ready for our ministers at Marrakesh. It will guide us onwards first under the interim committee and then as part of the WTO.

Another new area that suffered somewhat because of the changed schedule of last fall was the TPRM Programme. These reviews will probably, and rightfully so, require more of our attention this year in order to catch up with the schedule.

In addition to the residuals of old divergences of views and the new avenues of our work we also have to comply with the ordinary business that we have.

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Last, but not least, I would like to mention one area that manifests the importance of our work here as contracting parties to the General Agreement and the future WTO and the UR-agreements. I am thinking of the large number of negotiations on accession that we have to carry through. The Nordic countries find it most encouraging that with the completion of all the accession negotiations now on the agenda, GATT and the future WTO will cover practically all international trade and all trading nations. We underline the importance we attach to the integration of the economies in transition into the multilateral trading system. There is no room for relaxation in our efforts if we expect a timely completion of these negotiations. This applies naturally also to the acceding parties with whom we have to agree on the conditions. The fact is that GATT and its successor are a set of agreements with not only rights but also obligations.

And it is essential that we all as contracting parties fulfil our contractual obligations, if we want to ensure GATT's rôle also for the future as the cornerstone for the functioning of the international trading system.