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CONTRACTING PARTIES  
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AUSTRALIA

Statement by H.E. Mr. Don Kenyon  
Ambassador, Permanent Representative

We meet at a historic time in the GATT's history, when the Uruguay Round is successfully behind us and the World Trade Organization (WTO) - with its coverage of all the main areas of world trade, and the more global membership that it will have - just a year ahead of us, given our expectation of 1 January 1995 implementation date of the Round and the WTO. This may therefore be the last time we meet in this way as the CONTRACTING PARTIES, and we can do so today with a great and real sense of achievement.

The completion of the Uruguay Round a few weeks ago was a milestone in global co-operation. The trade liberalization and strengthened commitment to rules embodied in the Final Act and country schedules will significantly strengthen the multilateral trading system in the context of growing international co-operation. It will provide substantial and much needed stimulus to world economic growth into the next century and it will contribute to fostering economic growth in all GATT contracting parties. In this respect, I would like to point to the estimate that the GATT Secretariat has already made that world merchandise trade will be about US\$700 billion higher by 2005 than if trade continued at pre-Uruguay Round levels.

Australia is enthusiastic about the Round outcome and optimistic about the "new GATT" that we are building. We played an active rôle across the whole spectrum of the negotiating agenda and made a strong contribution to the outcome, with tariff cuts of over 40 per cent and the binding of almost all tariffs for the first time, with significant and comprehensive initial commitments on Services, and contributing to the historic achievement on Agriculture, whereby rational and equitable GATT rules will apply for the first time to this sector of world trade on which millions of people in the efficient producing countries depend for their livelihood.

While Australia has some outstanding issues with some of its trading partners on agriculture and market access to be resolved in the period up to 15 February, we believe that the outcome overall, especially on export subsidies and strengthened rules, will make a significant contribution to the future stability and reliability of world agriculture markets. Such an outcome on Agriculture was one Australia has long desired and worked for, and in the achievement of which we are proud to have been able to work so closely with the countries of the Cairns Group throughout the seven years of negotiations.

The Round outcome will also contribute to and reinforce the ongoing process of deregulation, reform and reduction of protection in Australia.

When Australia's second Trade Policy Review takes place at the end of next week, contracting parties will see how the Uruguay Round process has helped to reinforce ongoing trade liberalization

and deregulation in Australia, despite a very severe recession over the past two years in particular. In fact, both the Round outcome and Australia's experience over the past decade, in particular, vindicate the view that protection is never the right solution and that a strong open multilateral system and a competitive open domestic economy is always the best way for any country to deal with the economic problems it may face - whether they be ones of cyclical recession or development.

In highlighting the successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round in the activities of the GATT in 1993, Australia would especially like to express its appreciation for the outstanding leadership of Arthur Dunkel and Peter Sutherland. We would also like to register our appreciation for the contribution of Ambassadors Szepesi and Zutshi, who as Chairmen of the GATT Council and CONTRACTING PARTIES, respectively, managed extremely well a very complex agenda of GATT business while the final stages of the Uruguay Round negotiations were being played out. The work done in GATT in 1993, on which we deliberate at this Session, has been vast in scope and complex in nature. The high level of activity, particularly in respect of disputes, the Trade Policy Review Mechanism, Accessions, examination of regional trade arrangements, and trade and environmental issues, reinforces the importance of the GATT and its relevance in the management of the commercial relations of the peoples of the world.

The number of recent new accessions, and those under consideration, is proof of the effectiveness of the GATT in preserving and promoting an international trading system of benefit to all countries. In continuing to expand GATT and with an eye to the future and the WTO, there is a need to maintain the integrity of the GATT and the accession process, particularly through avoiding permanent derogations from important GATT obligations. There is also a pressing need, now that the Round is concluded, to revitalize the examination of regional arrangements in the GATT, to restore biennial reporting procedures and to ensure that regional arrangements that may be concluded in the future are genuinely open and genuinely strengthen and complement the GATT system.

On trade and environment, the challenge remains to ensure that important GATT disciplines are not undermined while ensuring that contracting parties are not impeded from making trade and environment policies mutually supportive in attaining sustainable development.

All these elements of our work in 1993 are also important ones for the future, for building on our collective work up until now. The coming year will be unique, as we make the transition from the GATT - a small quasi-organization salvaged from more ambitious plans in 1947 and built progressively by all of us, year by year and especially over the last seven years - into what will soon be the World Trade Organization, with its greatly expanded set of rules and policy agenda, but with the same basic rules and principles which have served world trade so well over the past forty-five years.

We look to the last year with a great sense of satisfaction and achievement, and to the next year with optimism and a sense of purpose.