

**GENERAL AGREEMENT
ON TARIFFS AND TRADE**

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JAPAN

Statement by H.E. Mr. Minoru Endo
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We are all gathered here today to witness this historic turning point of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

First of all, let me share a piece of good news with you. This morning, at around 5 a.m. Geneva time, the Japanese Diet has approved the conclusion of the WTO Agreement, together with the related domestic legislations for its implementation. In consequence, the way is clear now for the formal acceptance of the Agreement by the Government of Japan, which it intends shortly to do in the near future. We sincerely hope that other countries, who have yet to accept, will complete their necessary domestic procedures as early as possible in order to allow the WTO to be established on as solid a basis as possible.

While the multilateral trading system has been growing, we have been witnessing a rise in regional arrangements both in number and coverage. This trend gives rise to some concern on Japan's part about the effect it may have on the multilateral trading system. We are of the view that strengthened disciplines and specific parameters for such arrangements should be established and that this issue should be taken up in more detail in our future discussions.

I would like to stress that since the WTO only provides a framework for economic development, we need, in order to derive the maximum benefit out of it, to implement fully the agreements and to make the utmost efforts to ensure an effective functioning of the WTO, including the improved dispute settlement mechanism. In this respect, it is imperative that each member refrain from resorting to unilateral actions and from employing trade distorting protective measures such as anti-dumping measures in an arbitrary manner.

International efforts should be effectively buttressed by domestic ones. Japan has already taken a number of steps on the domestic front to contribute to the economic growth in the world, such as measures to expand domestic demand, import promotion packages, deregulation initiatives covering more than 1,000 items, more stringent application of fair competition law, etc. Japan is determined to continue the efforts along these lines with a view to contributing further to the development of world trade.

Japan strongly hopes that the WTO will develop as an effective intergovernmental organization capable also of addressing new challenges appropriately. I would like to reiterate our determination to actively engage ourselves for that objective.