

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

RESTRICTED

W.24/31
24 November 1967

Limited Distribution

CONTRACTING PARTIES
Twenty-Fourth Session

Original: French

PROGRAMME FOR THE EXPANSION OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Statement by the Representative of the Ivory Coast on 16 November 1967

Following the general discussion of the important Item 3 of our agenda, I welcome the opportunity of putting before the CONTRACTING PARTIES my Government's point of view on some of the general principles that should, in its opinion, govern the implementation of our programme for expanding international trade, and hope thus to make our modest contribution to the work of this session.

First, however, I should like to join all the previous speakers who have paid a well-deserved tribute to the Director-General, Mr. Wyndham White, and his collaborators, for their excellent work which has so much simplified our own tasks. My delegation is especially grateful to Mr. Wyndham White for his courage and perspicacity in discerning in his notes and documents the innermost feelings - I nearly said the intimate moods - of each of the contracting parties, and reaching pertinent conclusions from viewpoints that were widely different and sometimes even clashed. The substance of my remarks is to be limited, at this stage in our proceedings, to a few simple ideas that should, in my Government's opinion, be borne in mind during the preparation and execution of our programme.

These principles are simple, well-known, and have often been expounded before, more effectively than I am able to do. I am re-stating them to show you how important my Government feels them to be.

Firstly, we should never forget or ignore the fact that the problems facing us are very complex; contradictory and sometimes directly opposite interests are involved. It follows that any decision or solution based on any single point of view cannot be valid, for it is bound to jeopardize the interests of the other parties.

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Secondly, the developing countries are not all at the same stage of economic growth. If I may make a perhaps over-simple comparison, I would say that some are infants, others in their childhood, others in their adolescence and on the point of emancipation; others that are twenty or even 100 years of age have reached a degree of maturity that in many respects amounts to a state of full development. Any attempt to find single, overall solutions for all these categories will ultimately lead to injustice. This great disparity in the state of our economic development is a major factor in the complexity of problems and their solutions.

Thirdly, it must always be borne in mind that problems relating to the expansion of the developing countries' trade are closely bound up with other aspects of their economic development, and there can be no question of considering them separately in any particular enclosure, even as effective as that of GATT. And so, my delegation is grateful to the Director-General for his proposal - which we unreservedly support - appearing in document L/2906 where it is stated that the trade of the developing countries is to be reviewed within the framework of the United Nations by means of "a special mechanism to make a concentrated attack on these problems on the broadest possible front not confined to the rather technical trade matters which are the proper field of competence of the GATT". Taking due account of this remark, we feel that GATT would provide more effective help to the developing countries if it set up more working parties for the specific study of the special economic problems of individual countries, to find specifically appropriate solutions, as has fortunately been done for Chad.

As for the difficulties encountered by the developing countries in the commercialization of their primary products, my Government considers it of the highest importance that international commodity agreements should be concluded to stabilize their prices at a higher level, to ensure the export earnings indispensable to the orderly development of our economies.

Lastly, I should not wish to omit a mention of the GATT International Trade Centre, now so well-known to us all, and which others better qualified than I have already praised. These are the ideas that I wanted briefly to put before you in the general discussion on Item 3. My delegation will revert to the subject at greater length if necessary, so as to define more precisely some of the ideas put forward above and to develop other topics connected with the same Item.