

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

RESTRICTED

W.24/69

1 December 1967

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CONTRACTING PARTIES
Twenty-Fourth Session

Original: English

REVIEW OF THE WORK OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES AND FUTURE PROGRAMME

Statement by H.E. Mr. Sule Kolo, Ambassador of Nigeria,
on 24 November 1967

On this occasion of the twentieth anniversary of our organization, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, and with our meeting coming as it does so close to the Second United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the whole world awaits, with considerable interest, the outcome of this Ministerial Meeting. It is our hope that our discussions would result in fruitful proposals for the expansion of international trade.

In its twenty years of existence, the GATT has succeeded, among other things, in rescuing world trade from the chaos and disorder that plagued international trade a few decades ago.

In the two decades of its existence, the GATT has successfully conducted six tariff negotiations, the most ambitious and the most successful, so far, being the Kennedy Round of Trade Negotiations recently concluded.

We are all witnesses to the work that has been done by the GATT in the field of trade expansion since the publication of the Haberler Report. We are also all conversant with the work carried out by Committee III and later by the Action Committee, culminating the introduction of Part IV of the General Agreement. These are living testimonies of the success that has attained this organization.

That the GATT has succeeded is due largely, and we make bold to say this, almost solely to the untiring efforts of a devoted and conscientious international civil servant, Mr. Eric Wyndham White, and his small, but efficient secretariat.

I wish, on behalf of the Government of Nigeria, to express our gratitude to Mr. Wyndham White for the devotion with which he has served this organization, for the leadership and the sense of direction he has given to the GATT. He has reason to be proud and satisfied that the labours of twenty years - during which he has served this organization - has been a great success. I would ask him to look around and admire the transformation, particularly in membership that the organization has gone through.

At this juncture, we wish to welcome the accession of Poland to the General Agreement and the participation of Hungary, Bulgaria and Rumania as observers in the work of the GATT.

To look ahead, we see the GATT continuing to play a more important and more dynamic rôle in the field of international trade.

The results of the Kennedy Round of Trade Negotiations has met with varying receptions from various governments. For our part, we feel the negotiations were successful in many respects, but a number of problems remain unsolved. However, we realise that the Kennedy Round was not designed to solve all problems, in particular, the problems of the developing countries. We see the GATT as a machinery for continuous negotiations among governments and we, therefore, urge action on those issues left outstanding in the Kennedy Round.

We see the need for further progress in the field of agriculture. Nigeria, is not directly or substantially interested in this sector of trade, but we are convinced, particularly after hearing the statement of the delegate of New Zealand in the plenary last week, that the producers of agricultural products have a good case. We would support the reactivation of Committee II and would participate in its future work, particularly in view of its broadened terms of reference.

We note with satisfaction, the substantial progress already made in the field of tropical products. We support the proposal that the Special Group on Trade in tropical products should be reactivated with the new terms of reference. We also call on the International Community to co-operate in the negotiation and conclusion of commodity agreements on these products.

Next week in this Palais des Nations would reconvene the United Nations Cocoa Conference. We look forward with hope, nay, confidence that the Conference would reach agreement on cocoa, a commodity so vital to the economies of many developing countries.

The results of tariff reductions could be impressive, but unless governments restrain themselves from introducing other measures which impede the international movement of goods these efforts will amount to nothing. We, therefore, urge that elaborate inventory of non-tariff barriers should be drawn up. We wish to stress once again, that this exercise can only be successful if the industries of the developed countries in particular, co-operate.

We welcome the decision of the CONTRACTING PARTIES to see the joint GATT/UNCTAD Trade Centre begin to operate from 1 January 1968. We would support the proposal of the Director-General himself, that the joint Centre should proceed to study, in detail, the opportunities offered to the developing countries and make recommendations as to how best these countries could take advantage of the new trade openings resulting from the tariff reductions reached in the Kennedy Round.

It is no secret that countries like Nigeria suffered considerably from the Kennedy Round negotiations as a result of the reduction, and in many cases, the elimination of the preferences which we enjoyed in the markets of a number of developed countries. We would urge the secretariat to undertake a study of the situation of countries such as Nigeria, with a view to determining how best to compensate them for the loss of preferences.

I referred earlier, to the Second United Nations Conference on Trade and Development to be held early next year. Let me conclude by saying that it is the hope of my delegation that whatever the outcome of this all important conference the GATT will have a vital rôle to play in the implementation of the conclusion of the conference.