

**MULTILATERAL TRADE
NEGOTIATIONS
THE URUGUAY ROUND**

MTN.TNC/MIN(94)/ST/25
12 April 1994
General Distribution
(UR-94-0140)

Trade Negotiations Committee
Meeting at Ministerial Level
Marrakesh (Morocco), 12-15 April 1994

Original: English

MAURITANIA

Statement by Mr. Ould Cheikh Melainine Chebih
Minister of Trade, Handicrafts and Tourism

I am particularly happy to be with you today in the capital of the Almoravides, this great city of the Kingdom of Morocco, a crossroads of thousand-year-old cultures but also a historic crossroads for trans-Saharan trade: Marrakesh.

Those of us who are visiting this city today cannot fail to express to His Majesty the King and to the Moroccan people, the heir and guarantor of a great tradition of hospitality, our gratitude for the welcome we have received.

The choice of Marrakesh for the signature of the Uruguay Round Agreements honours not only Morocco but the Maghreb and the whole of Africa.

Anywhere else, fear of the consequences of these Agreements would probably have prevailed over the hopes and aspirations held out to us by a new world trade order.

My country, which has just completed a democratic and pluralistic process under conditions of stability and transparency that are known to you, does not reject out of hand any additional clause of a social or humanitarian nature. However, we cannot accept a mere non-speaking role; in this connection we deem it essential to draw the attention of this entire Meeting to our complete and irreversible adherence to the new trade order. That adherence does not preclude a few observations regarding the object and philosophy of the World Trade Organization; it seems to us essential to take into account the experience of the organizations and agencies established nearly 50 years ago in order to escape certain misdeeds and the temptation of the most powerful to establish a hegemony. It would be desirable, and is our desire, that the World Trade Organization should be apolitical. The Organization should avoid any form of exclusion, and to that end we wish that all the countries of the world may be members of it; in particular we consider it important that the People's Republic of China should be a founder Member of the World Trade Organization.

For this reason we ask the Director-General of GATT to speed up the process of China's readmission to that body.

There can be no justification for any discrimination with regard to the accession of one fifth of mankind to the World Trade Organization. The apolitical nature of the Organization would enable us to avoid any form of embargo designed to deprive entire peoples of the right to buy and sell; no morality and no values can justify preventing children and civilian populations from feeding themselves or looking after themselves. As we see it, an embargo is the best way to flout human rights.

./.

A point which some speakers have raised or reiterated has our special attention: that of trade and environment. As a country of the Sahel, Mauritania would wish that, under that heading, particular attention should be paid to the phenomenon of desertification that threatens the Sahel countries.

Mauritania, as a signatory of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a Member of the International Labour Organisation and a pluralistic democracy, fully subscribes to the values of the Social Clause as the European Union and the Ministers of France and Belgium understood it; however, we cannot agree to extending that notion to a levelling of wage costs on a world-wide scale. The difference in wage costs is one of the few advantages which the countries of the South possess.

As to the application of the Uruguay Round Agreements, the transitional stage adopted for the third-world countries would not allow any readjustment of our economies unless, during the stage, aid was increased, debt reduced and certain export stabilization mechanisms adopted, in particular those provided by the Lomé Convention for the ACT countries. In calm and confidence we commit ourselves to the new structure of international trade in the hope of seeing exclusion, discrimination and embargo outlawed forever.

I cannot end this brief statement without expressing my gratitude to the Director-General of GATT and all his team, who have given us their help whenever we wanted it.