

**MULTILATERAL TRADE
NEGOTIATIONS
THE URUGUAY ROUND**

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MYANMAR

Statement by H.E. Brig-Gen D.O. Abel
Minister for National Planning and Economic Development

On behalf of the Government of the Union of Myanmar, I would like to express our heartfelt thanks to His Majesty King Hassan II for his keen interest in this historic meeting and to His Royal Highness the Crown Prince Sidi Mohammed for his presence and thoughtful speech to inaugurate this important meeting.

I would also like to express our deep appreciation and profound thanks to the Government of Morocco and the city of Marrakesh for the warm welcome and cordial reception extended to us and for the excellent arrangements made for this meeting.

At the same time, I wish to thank our Director-General Mr. Peter Sutherland and the GATT Secretariat for their tireless efforts.

We have come to Marrakesh with the objective of re-establishing and revitalizing an open, free and equitable multilateral trading system. In other words, the Final Act of the Uruguay Round and the whole set of agreements will be formally adopted and signed by the participating countries, confirming their commitments made in the process of a seven-year long negotiation for the creation of new trading opportunities.

In this connection, please allow me to say a few words on the current economic reforms that have been undertaken in my country.

We are strongly convinced that trade liberalization is an indispensable part of a global process of economic restructuring through liberal economic policies and deregulation.

This belief in a liberal trading system has been amply demonstrated by the Government of Myanmar during the last few years through the introduction of a number of policy measures.

A series of reforms has been introduced and designed to open up the country to the world. Accordingly, laws, orders, rules, regulations and notifications that have prohibited or restricted the private sector from engaging in economic activities such as export/import business, commercial production were repealed. New legal policy instruments giving the private sector, including foreign investors and entrepreneurs, the right to do business and to make investment in Myanmar were enacted.

Since the changes in economic policy, the private sector participation in economic activities has been very encouraging and on the increasing trend. As a result of the successful implementation

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of the new economic system, 72 per cent of GDP is now in the hands of the private sector. Only 22 per cent and 6 per cent of GDP are shared by the State and the cooperative sectors respectively.

As far as the outcome of the Uruguay Round is concerned, we have to be satisfied with the results that we have achieved under the prevailing circumstances even though they do not come up to our expectations.

Let me speak for a moment about agriculture, trade and the environment.

Agriculture is the very life blood of the Union of Myanmar. It continues and will continue in the future to play a substantial part in our economy. We welcome the removal of access barriers and significant reduction in subsidies affecting agricultural trade. However, as agriculture is a special and politically sensitive sector in most of the countries, the participating countries must strictly follow the multilateral disciplines of the agreement to restore the agricultural trade in good order. With respect to surplus production or over supplies which can create market disruption, a realistic approach, observing the FAO principles of surplus disposal, is needed in this area.

Myanmar is rich in forest resources. Fifty-one per cent of the total land area is covered by forests especially teak and hardwood. Forestry sector occupies an important position in our economy. We depend on our timber exports mostly in the log form for a substantial part of our development resources.

However, we recognize the importance of international trade and environment policies which should be made mutually supportive in favour of sustainable development. Therefore, in order to preserve the forests and to slow the deforestation, log export was banned last year.

The result is a tremendous shortfall in export earnings. But we have to bear the cost of this measure because our good intention is to give proper protection in the border areas where pollution may be spilling over and harming the regional environment.

As an original contracting party to the GATT and one of the participating countries in the Uruguay Round, we strongly believe that the Final Act of the Round will contribute towards a significant liberalization of the world trading system and secure better opportunities for all countries.

In this connection, I would like to share the view expressed by my colleague, H.E. Mr. Shamsul Islam, Minister for Commerce of Bangladesh, for the early resumption of the contracting party status of the People's Republic of China to the GATT. Myanmar is also of the opinion that the applications for the membership of the GATT which will finally be the World Trade Organization should be seriously considered so as to enhance the global membership of the WTO.

In conclusion, I wish to mention our firm belief that all countries, developed and developing, have a strong interest in the preservation, maintenance and strengthening of the multilateral trading system. Therefore, we must be realistic and we must contribute in accordance with our ability. Myanmar is ready and prepared to work for a new era.