

**GENERAL AGREEMENT ON
TARIFFS AND TRADE**

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COTE D'IVOIRE: STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. AMBASSADOR AMADOU TRAORE,
HEAD OF THE DELEGATION, AT THE MEETING OF THE GATT CONTRACTING
PARTIES AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL, 15-19 SEPTEMBER 1986,
PUNTA DEL ESTE, URUGUAY

Permit me, in spite of the limited time available, to convey to you yourself and to the members of the Bureau my warm congratulations on your election as Chairman of this conference.

Your eminent qualities as a skilled diplomat, your rich experience in the field of development and your complete knowledge of the problems of international co-operation, make you, I am sure, the person best suited to conduct the business of this conference effectively. I wish to assure you of the availability and co-operation of my delegation to help you in your task.

I should also like to take this opportunity to convey to the people and Government of Uruguay my delegation's thanks for their warm hospitality and the perfect organization of these meetings.

Allow me, finally, to take this opportunity of conveying my delegation's congratulations to our dynamic Director-General and to all the members of the secretariat for the outstanding work they have accomplished to ensure the success of this meeting.

Since its succession to independence in 1960, Côte d'Ivoire has opted for economic liberalism and opening to the outside world. Having chosen integration into the world market as a means of achieving growth and development, Côte d'Ivoire did not hesitate to accede to the General Agreement and to join in the efforts to liberalize international trade.

My country was also among the developing countries which placed great hopes on the negotiations of the Tokyo Round and which are a little disappointed to find that the rules then drawn up are now being broken by the very countries which have always praised the virtues of liberalism and sponsored the efforts to strengthen it.

This Ministerial meeting of the CONTRACTING PARTIES of GATT is taking place at a time when the international economic situation is not very brilliant, either for the main trading nations or, of course, for the developing countries. The economic recovery announced last year seems not only hesitant and localized, but has been followed by a marked slowing down in the growth of production and world trade. In the industrialized countries, the level of unemployment is still very high in spite of the reduction of inflation.

As to the developing countries, the situation remains disastrous, for in their case the burden of debt service, the reversal of financial flows, the falling trend of raw material prices and the difficulties of access to export markets have slowed economic growth and brought a fall in the purchasing power of populations.

Many developing countries which are heavily in debt and whose export revenue is continually declining, have been forced to reduce their imports of capital goods and sometimes even of foodstuffs, thus reducing the exports of their industrialized partners.

The situation described above teaches us that all the developed and developing contracting parties are in the same boat and that only increased access of developing countries to export markets can increase their capacity to absorb a large volume of products from the industrialized countries. In other words, the industrialized countries and the developing countries must show solidarity and complementarity in order to contribute the mutually beneficial expansion of international trade.

The present economic stagnation could, indeed, have been avoided or would be easy to overcome if the rules of GATT, in particular those adopted on the occasion of the Tokyo Round, or even the recommendations of the Ministerial Conference of November 1982, were complied with.

Unfortunately, the situation prevailing today is of the most paradoxical: while all the contracting parties agree that the free multilateral trading system represented by GATT must be maintained, those same countries do not cease to resort to protectionist measures which are calculated to place GATT in jeopardy.

It also appears to me that the rise of protectionism and the proliferation of bilateral and regional arrangements are the result of the inadequacy of certain provisions of the General Agreement.

The reason why we are meeting at Punta del Este today, is no doubt because all the contracting parties have become aware of the danger represented by the present protectionist tension and of the need for collective action to strengthen multilateral trade relations.

It is therefore a matter of satisfaction for my delegation that this meeting brings today the Ministers responsible for formulating the trade policy of their countries. The present session gives us a unique opportunity of taking appropriate measures to strengthen the multilateral trading system and of creating conditions for a sustained economic recovery.

My delegation hopes that in doing so, this meeting will endeavour to take account of the concerns of all the contracting parties, both developed and developing.

As you know, the main object of this meeting is to determine the themes and modalities of future negotiations. In that regard, my delegation wishes to make the following suggestions:

As regards the traditional themes, it would be desirable to reactivate the Ministerial Declaration of 1982 and, in particular, to make arrangements that will enable the agricultural and tropical products of the developing countries to gain access to the markets of the industrialized countries.

The delegation of Côte d'Ivoire is gravely concerned about the constant deterioration of the prices of its main export products. The result of this state of affairs is not only to reduce the resources necessary for the country's development, but also to weaken its capacity to participate in world trade.

It therefore seems opportune to suggest that the forthcoming negotiations should endeavour to examine all the factors affecting the trade of developing countries and, in particular, the means of stabilizing prices of the primary products which are their sole source of export earnings.

As regards new themes, the proposals regarding the placing of the question of trade in services on the agenda for the forthcoming trade negotiations calls for the following comments on my part:

The decision taken by the CONTRACTING PARTIES in 1982 to undertake national studies on trade in services implies, in my opinion, two things:

- first, the need for multilateral action in this sector, in view of its increasing importance and its place in the national economy of certain countries;
- secondly, the desire for a more comprehensive grasp of the concept of services and the impact which their liberalization might have on national economies.

Thus it is only logical that the inclusion of this question on the agenda for the forthcoming negotiations should be subject to the result of the national studies made. Now it seems to me that the information at present available on the subject relates mainly to the industrialized countries, which fully justifies the argument of the delegations opposed to the inclusion of this question on the agenda.

Nevertheless, my delegation has always supported the idea that an organization such as GATT, whose vocation is to promote international trade and contribute to world economic expansion must be able to remain attentive to the needs of all its members, great and small.

Consequentially, my delegation would have no objection to the question of services being placed on the agenda for the forthcoming multilateral trade negotiations, provided that the developed contracting parties are willing to take account of the special situation of the developing countries, in accordance with the spirit and the letter of the principle of special and differentiated treatment.

To conclude my statement I should like to mention some considerations regarding the organization and conduct of our work, for it seems to me that the success of this conference will depend on the transparency and the firm political will shown by all participants.

For its part, the delegation of Côte d'Ivoire hopes that the countries taking part in the present meetings will show a spirit of conciliation, understanding and collective solidarity, so that of the various draft declarations submitted to us, the choice may fall on those which take account of the aspirations of all the contracting parties.

I need not mention here that any process of negotiation entails mutual concessions in order to reach agreement.

Lastly, knowing the cheerful state of mind of all delegates in the magnificent setting of Punta del Este and the importance we all attach to the expansion and liberalization of international trade, I am convinced that our work will be crowned with success.