

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

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CONGO: STATEMENT BY H.E. ALPHONSE SOUHLATY POATY, MINISTER FOR TRADE,
SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES AND CRAFT INDUSTRIES, AT THE MEETING OF
THE GATT CONTRACTING PARTIES AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL,
15-19 SEPTEMBER 1986, PUNTA DEL ESTE, URUGUAY

On behalf of the Government of the People's Republic of Congo, which I have the honour to represent, I would like to tell you how much importance we Africans, in general, and the Congolese in particular, attach to this session and to the recommendations which will, I am sure, emerge from it.

In deciding on a new series of multilateral trade negotiations, GATT has responded to a wish: the wish to rationalize international trade.

A special and valuable feature of multilateral trade negotiations is that they concern all the contracting parties and all sectors of co-operation and trade between countries, especially trade between developed and developing countries.

Although subjects of world interest, such as quantitative restrictions, barriers to the free movement of goods, the non-regulation of trade in services and exchange rate fluctuations are indeed the concern of the whole international community, the fact remains that Africa especially is tormented by a number of acute current problems. These relate in particular to North-South relations as a whole, seen in the context of the so long-awaited new international economic order.

In this connection, apart from the problems raised by African indebtedness and natural disasters, we must point out that the mechanisms of injustice subsist and are even increasing through the inequality of trade.

Many raw materials from developing countries are bought dirt cheap by developed countries which, in return, sell them so-called finished products at exorbitant prices bearing no relation to their real value.

None of the conferences dealing with the continuing deterioration of the terms of trade have really changed the situation, whether they were international, inter-regional or regional conferences.

In this catastrophic situation, which is voluntarily maintained, the northern countries adhere to the status quo in the international division of labour, which is characteristic of an exacerbated egoism and a scarcely concealed refusal to open up the North-South dialogue.

All the concordant analyses have found that this state of affairs has brought a headlong fall in raw material prices, thus blocking many

development programmes drawn up and put into effect by third world countries, having regard to the preponderance of natural resources in the financing of their economies.

Even the compensatory systems provided for within the framework of STABEX and SYSMIN under the Lomé preferential agreements between Europe and the ACP have proved to be palliatives and not real solutions to the crucial problems of unequal trade, which makes the developing countries a great dumping-ground for manufactures and a vast field for the exploitation of commodities.

Moreover, the special agreements on certain products, where they exist, are only imperfectly applied. This is true in particular, and periodically, of coffee, cocoa, sugar and copper.

Everyone knows that international trade makes for rapprochement and understanding between States, peoples and civilizations. But the fact remains that the trading partners must find a mutual advantage in it. It is here that GATT has a duty to play a greater part in working for the removal of the main barriers to international trade, such as the protectionism that it unanimously denounced by all the developing countries. My country hopes that the present meetings will provide an opportunity of further co-ordination of the positions of the developing countries within the framework of South-South co-operation.

The President of the Organization for African Unity, Comrade Denis Sassou-Nguesso, Chairman of the Central Committee of the Congolese Labour Party, President of the Republic and Head of Government, recently stated, at the meeting of the non-aligned countries at Harare, that:

"The Organization of African Unity is indeed convinced that the solution to the problems of the liberation and development of the African Continent require the rapid deployment of a close and effective South-South co-operation, which the non-aligned countries movement, the Group of 77, most ardently desires."

"South-South co-operation also constitutes an essential instrument for developing a negotiating capacity and a power relationship for the establishment of an international order based on the principles of equality and mutual advantage, and consistent with the objectives of development of the countries of the South in accordance with the aspirations of their peoples."

"In order to attain its objectives, South-South co-operation must not fall into the errors which we deplore today. It must indeed be freed from all vicissitudes such as Malthusian practices, Leonine behaviour and other commercial strategies based on the exploitation of the weakest."

These words undoubtedly express the collective awakening of the peoples of Latin America, Asia and Africa to their claims to live in a just and more secure world and to co-operate, with equal rights and duties, to

establish the moral and physical balance of our planet on the eve of the third millennium.

During the present meetings my country, in accordance with the relevant recommendations of the Organization for African Unity, will be hoping for the harmonization of our positions, the improvement of the institutional framework of those positions, improvement of the existing institutional framework of customs tariffs and international trade and the establishment of effective machinery to accomplish the great work to be undertaken with a view to the adoption of a code of good behaviour in the sphere of trade.

In conclusion I wish to thank the Government and people of Uruguay for the warm welcome which my delegation and I have received since our arrival in their beautiful country.