

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

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Unacceptable levels of unemployment, the debt burdens of developing countries, and significant imbalances between major economies constitute serious problems to be solved in the world today. The solutions require an active policy within all countries, but that is not enough.

World economic interdependence necessitates collective and coherent management with necessary links between organizations dealing with different aspects of economic life. The success of our individual efforts to achieve sustained economic growth depends on our ability to co-operate.

International trade relations represent one of the most direct and reliable indicators of that ability. The decision taken at this meeting is thus bound to have immediate and far-reaching effects, far beyond the field of trade policy. It will be perceived by the world community as a signal of whether or not there exists sufficient political will to further the process of economic co-operation. Therefore it is our task to enable GATT - as an institution and as the cornerstone of the multilateral trading system - to meet the present challenge. To do so, we have but one viable option, namely to launch a new GATT Round.

Launching the Round does not in itself provide for any solutions. It represents, however, the best means by which concrete results can be sought. The GATT history includes ample evidence of the important rôle previous Rounds of negotiations have played in the reduction or elimination of trade barriers, as well as in adapting and further developing the rules governing world trade. The time is now ripe to revitalize that formula.

During the preparatory process a wide variety of issues have been proposed as subject matters for the negotiations. I see that as a healthy sign. To be successful, the Round must comprise issues of priority to all participants. Firstly, it must include negotiations to improve market access. Secondly, it must include negotiations to improve and clarify parts of the current set of GATT provisions. Thirdly, it must include negotiations on important issues and areas of trade which until now have not been subject to multilateral rules and disciplines. A proper blend of these three categories of issues is necessary in order to establish a balanced negotiating platform attractive to all participants. In short, to remain viable GATT must improve, adapt, and expand.

I should like to illustrate these general observations by addressing briefly a few issues to which particular attention has been attributed.

Norway has been among those countries which have stressed the importance of a strong and credible standstill and rollback commitment in the New Round. This commitment is not only of relevance to the preservation and expansion of market access, but also to the entire negotiating climate. The way we succeed in curbing protectionism will to a large extent be decisive for the prospects of the negotiations. The implementation of the standstill and rollback commitment will reflect how well we succeed in that respect.

Trade in agriculture has become a major bone of contention in international trade. The current situation, characterized by severe market imbalances and a lack of adequate multilateral disciplines, constitutes a threat to the multilateral trading system as such. In order to come to grips with these problems, new or improved rules and disciplines for this sector must cover all aspects of agricultural trade. Norway, being basically an importer of agricultural products, is willing to participate in constructive negotiations on this comprehensive basis. Due account must, however, be taken of the specific characteristics and problems in agriculture and of the need to look at disciplines in the broad sense - including disciplines related to production control.

GATT stands for trade and multilateralism. When new issues or areas of growing importance to world trade emerge, it would therefore be in the best GATT traditions to deal with such topics in a multilateral context. Only in so doing will it be possible to take care of the interests of all countries. For small trading nations this is of particular significance. It is for that very reason Norway has lent her support to the inclusion of trade in services in the New Round. The negotiations should aim at establishing a multilateral framework within GATT for services upon which efforts to liberalize trade in this sector could be based. Obviously, for the time being we are in the early stages of a long and complex exercise where account must be taken of the special nature of services, national objectives, and the growth and development concerns of developing countries. The new GATT Round offers a possibility to pursue that exercise in a constructive manner.

To the extent that the general objectives of the New Round are met, the results will be of benefit to every participant. Still, securing and expanding the trading opportunities of the developing countries should receive particular attention within the overall negotiations, especially so in respect of the least developed among them. In this context Norway supports the proposal that tropical products receive special attention. Furthermore, I recognize the importance of textile trade for the developing countries, and the need to ensure progressive liberalization of trade in

this sector. For her part, Norway will contribute to such a development within the framework of MFA IV.

Finally, Norway was among the many countries that participated in the elaboration of the draft Ministerial Declaration contained in document Prep.Com.(86)/W/47/Rev.2. I consider this draft as a sound and balanced basis for negotiations. Bearing in mind GATT's reputation as a business-like and pragmatic institution, I am confident that during this meeting a consensus decision on the launching of the Uruguay Round of Trade Negotiations can be reached.