

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON  
TARIFFS AND TRADE

MIN(86)/ST/46  
17 September 1986  
Special Distribution

---

Original: English

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO: STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR WILFRED S. NAIMOL,  
HEAD OF THE DELEGATION, AT THE MEETING  
OF THE GATT CONTRACTING PARTIES AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL,  
15-19 SEPTEMBER 1986, PUNTA DEL ESTE, URUGUAY

At a previous Ministerial meeting of the GATT in 1982, in Geneva, I referred to what I considered to be the relentless incursions of the strong into the depleted territories of the deprived as, and I quote, "the assaults of power on the fragile defences of the weak".

Today, in this place, in the light of unfolding events and of indications of the conviction that the time has come for remedial action, for the compromise of conflicting positions, I am tempted to reconsider.

This meeting is, in a way, our moment of truth. Some of our illusions have been shattered, bubbles have burst and the realities protrude like defleshed bones. There is, I think, a stirring of conscience, which must be translated into immediate action. I trust that I have not sensed wrongly and that from this present sorry scheme of things entire we can together build, with discipline and understanding, a society whose institutions, whose instruments and mechanisms reflect, in their use, that quality of candour and justice that remove distrust, discontent and crushing inequity.

In this society, the GATT, the major institution charged with the regulation of world trade, will have, as it has had, a sensitive and critical rôle which it must discharge positively and in keeping with its principles. We recognise, of course, the elementary truth that the GATT is the creature of its members and that it cannot achieve what its members do not want. The burden of restoring sanity to our commercial, financial and monetary practices, therefore, even though it might fall more on some than on others, rests with each and every one of us, developed and developing.

There has been an abundance of erudite disquisitions on the issues which beset us and with which we continue to exert ourselves. I would not wish to be pointlessly repetitive on subjects such as protectionism in its many galling and frustrating forms, the mercurial and damaging quality of exchange rates, the decline in standards of living. However, I trust you will permit me to make brief reference to two or three points of the many which intimately concern my country.

./.

In Trinidad and Tobago, there has been a steady decline in revenue and in economic activity. Among other things, our debt burden has increased and, concomitantly, the demand for external funding. We have been graduated from two of the major financial institutions, the IBRD and IDA which lend at concessionary rates. This means we shall be compelled to borrow from the commercial markets where the terms and conditions of borrowing can be prohibitive. It is imperative that the criteria for graduation be reassessed. Arbitrary, academic decisions informed by isolated socio-economic indices cannot be accepted. It is therefore essential that the new round of negotiations examine graduation criteria both in our financial and in our trading organizations much more closely as well as the bludgeoning impact of graduation on countries like my own.

On the question of safeguards, my delegation shares the view that the safeguard system should be reformed, that the reforms must include a clearer and more precise definition of critical terms and that an international body to supervise all safeguard action should be set up.

Moreover, some formula will have to be found to compensate for the inability of some developing countries to take retaliatory action when the occasion clearly warrants it. Further, while we understand the view that selective safeguards are undesirable, there will be instances, when used on a global basis, that small countries with very limited exports will find themselves being disproportionately penalized for injury for which they are not responsible. I think that these two latter points deserve our most serious consideration.

Kindly permit me now to touch upon the subject of participation in the New Round of the MTN simply by recalling the desire of some CARICOM and other countries non-contracting parties of the GATT, but applying the GATT de facto, to participate in the New Round without the constraint of signifying intention to accede to the GATT by 31 October 1986. This constraint is, after all, relatively new. My delegation would prefer to see its removal, a circumstance which could hardly create consequences of a serious nature. At least, I consider that the countries to which I have referred may be permitted an extension of the time limit to 30 April 1987.

My delegation would wish to respect the limit set upon its speaking time. But, always with your kind permission, I am prepared to exceed it for the most worthy of causes. In the first place, I congratulate you warmly on your election as Chairman. The chair, any chair, is enhanced by your presence, your easy charm, the distinction of your person.

In the second place, I wish to thank, through you, the Government and people of this beautiful country for their warmth and hospitality, which at one and the same time is so characteristically Latin American and so refreshingly Uruguayan.