

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON

TARIFFS AND TRADE

SR.43/ST/39

6 January 1988

Limited Distribution

CONTRACTING PARTIES
Forty-Third Session

Original: English

TANZANIA

Statement by H.E. Mr. Amir Habib Jamal Ambassador, Permanent Representative

As almost the last speaker in the general debate in this significant meeting of the Forty-Third Session of the GATT CONTRACTING PARTIES, permit me to pay the warm tributes of my delegation to you for the most constructive and congenial manner in which you have presided over the conduct of the CONTRACTING PARTIES' affairs. No less appreciation is due to the Director-General and the tireless members of the Secretariat staff who have been bearing increasing burdens placed upon them by the exigencies of our times. I should also like to convey, through you, my delegation's appreciation to the Chairman of the GATT Council for his manifestly arduous contribution to the conduct of the affairs of the Council.

If the proportion of Tanzania's trade to the volume and worth of world trade is infinitesimal, the proportion of Tanzania's gross national product to that of the world product is even more so.

At the same time the value of our exports and imports as a proportion of our gross domestic product is significant at around 40 to 45 per cent, depending, among other things, on how world prices and financial charges perform in both directions. With eight countries plus the Indian Ocean bordering us and with the external trade profile being what it is, the only viable option for us is to become increasingly connected with the international system of trade and exchange. As the distinguished New Zealand Minister put it so clearly, for a small developing country it is a strong, predictable, multilateral trading system which is an absolute necessity.

As we share the hope expressed by the distinguished Ambassador of Jamaica that we may be able to look at this occasion as a time when life at the GATT began at forty, we ourselves have no inhibition that, having inherited GATT membership in the colonial context, life for Tanzania in the GATT began at twenty-five, even if it was during the teenage of my country that I went to the Tokyo Round as its representative.

After all, twenty-five years ago we started with no university, with 1,000 pupils coming out annually from the secondary school system, with 15 per cent literacy in a near-subsistence peasant society. The situation today is rather different.

./.

The international economic environment, too, is dramatically different from what prevailed when we started out as a political entity.

Today the GATT, as one sees it, offers the only framework in which predictability in conducting international trade can be ensured by means of clearly observed rules of the game, if the contracting parties so wish, in accordance with their capability.

We have increasingly shared the concerns of many that even as tariffs steadily became a less significant tool of international trade policy, the GATT quite visibly commenced its slide on the slippery slope of increasingly manifest lack of enforceable surveillance and discipline. So, the Punta del Este round of negotiations with the expressed concern for agriculture, tropical products and safeguarding the developing countries' interests, appeared to us to provide motivation for endeavours by all concerned to work for a durable and predictable global international trading system.

For developing countries such as Tanzania, it is as if history was at last giving us an opportunity to become part of a process which would safeguard our tomorrow, which would help loosen the strait-jacket in which we have found ourselves in an environment of mounting unilateral and bilateral pressures or selectively-premised special interest arrangements, and which would enable us, together with other contracting parties, to shape our tomorrow, realizing only too painfully that our constraining today took shape out of a not-too-edifying yesterday.

That is why the Head of my Government joined other Heads of Government of the Commonwealth in committing themselves to work for the strengthening of the GATT. This is why we attach great significance to the GATT, to what the Uruguay Round does to it -- and to what it refrains from doing to it -- and to how the key financial and monetary managers of the global economy respond to the cumulative consequences of commission and omission which now surfeit the global environment. For us, the simple sole criterion has to be whether we shall be allowed to breathe in order to grow.

The GATT pronounces prominently and visibly for all of us to see that it helps the world grow. The 24 million of Tanzania, a small part of the over 3 billion of the world, are looking towards doing just that.

With this anticipation, we look forward to a speedy conclusion of the process that will enable China to play its critical rôle as a GATT contracting party.