

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

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REVIEW OF THE WORK OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES AND FUTURE PROGRAMME

Statement by M. F. Alves Machado,
Secretary of State for Commerce of Portugal,
on 23 November 1967

We are now celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and I should like, in my capacity as a member of the Government of Portugal, to pay my tribute to the work so far accomplished in this organization.

The General Agreement has made an effective contribution to the growth of world trade and this expansion has resulted, as was hoped, in the development of co-operation in other spheres.

The CONTRACTING PARTIES have endeavoured in their own field of activity to find solutions to the special problems of the participating countries, including the problems created by different degrees of economic development and different economic characteristics.

Part IV has been incorporated in the General Agreement, a Committee on Trade and Development set up, an International Training Centre established and access to the General Agreement has been opened for the consideration of the special cases of countries with centralized planning.

I do not wish to linger over references to every one of the achievements of the past twenty years and will here mention only the Kennedy Round; in which connexion I would not wish to omit by tribute to the happy inspiration which set on foot these negotiations, or my respects to the memory of the man whose inspiration it was and with whose name it is linked.

Neither would I forget to associate with the immense achievements of the General Agreement, the distinguished personality who has from the very beginning been their central inspiration and the instrument of their implementation. Mr. Wyndham White has unfailingly placed his vigorous intellect, his well-directed energy and profound human understanding at the service of the objectives we have set ourselves. His qualities have enabled him to retain remarkable poise and (allow me to say) to display an unshakeable confidence that has often counter-balanced a widespread pessimism which might have jeopardized the realization of our fundamental aims.

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I believe that on this solemn occasion it is not out of place to dwell a little on the appreciation of the work so far accomplished; our faith in the General Agreement should be reasserted, for we rely on that faith for our future guidance and its best justification is what has been accomplished in the past and now constitutes the present.

Without abandoning independence or going beyond the economic frontiers traced in the General Agreement, we must now draw up a programme of activity that will guarantee the continuity of present achievements and future progress in fields not yet fully explored.

In this connexion, it is my opinion that very special attention should be given to the problems involved in the expansion of trade in agricultural products, on which some national economies are heavily dependent. The selective sectoral approach seems the best suited for identification and analysis of these difficulties.

However, we must in some way create an opportunity for giving the necessary attention to commodities admittedly not of decisive influence in world trade but of fundamental importance in the economies of a number of countries.

We must also remember, while remaining faithful to GATT's vocation and the healthy pragmatism of its methods, that the GATT has at the same time evolved a philosophy of action well suited in both its fundamental concepts and in its procedures to consideration of the different stages of development and individual problems and situations of participating countries and groups of countries. For instance, the concept of partial reciprocity, more or less satisfactorily applied during recent tariff negotiations, has helped to introduce the principle of equity into multilateral trade relations.

We should like to see this principle guide the future development of the General Agreement, which should give more and more help to the growth of the less-developed economic structures, while never losing sight of their necessarily individual and irreversible features, and sometimes complementary relationship to other economies of different and equally irreversible character.