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REVIEW OF THE WORK OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES
AND FUTURE PROGRAMME

Statement by H.E. Dr. Gros Espiell,
Ambassador of Uruguay,
on 23 November 1967

The delegation of Uruguay is taking the floor for the second time in this Meeting of Ministers which continues the twenty-fourth session of the CONTRACTING PARTIES, to give a brief account of some questions which it thinks to be of special importance for the future work of GATT.

It will not give its opinion on the merits or demerits of the activities of the organization over the last twenty years, which, incidentally, has been done during the general discussion of point 3 of the agenda; it will merely envisage what, in its opinion, should be the future of GATT in direct and exclusive relation with the real necessities of its trade and the findings which emerge from existing relations in world trade exchanges. For all other questions, my delegation feels that, for the sake of brevity, it will be sufficient to refer to what has already been expressed in this session of the CONTRACTING PARTIES.

The delegation of Uruguay considers that the empirical, pragmatic, practical and effective character of the activities of GATT - which is not incompatible with a general conception of what international trade should be today as a factor of development, riches and peace - should continue to be the criterion which has to guide the action of our organization. In this connexion, we must state that the future of GATT cannot be envisaged through the mere carrying out of studies, as we have heard today with some concern. On the contrary, future action should be planned on the basis of concrete decisions, in sectors which, like agriculture for example, require urgent measures.

From this standpoint, we believe that the plan of work should be determined by prior consideration of the points which, for various reasons, the Kennedy Round could not solve.

The question thus posed, it is clear that, for Uruguay, by conviction and by direct interest, attention should primarily be given to the agricultural sector. The delegation of Uruguay is hoping that action will be taken on its proposal for the CONTRACTING PARTIES, acknowledging the total lack of positive results in the agricultural sector, to give their full support to the idea, which has been suggested and repeated throughout this session of the CONTRACTING PARTIES, that an Agricultural Committee should be set up to begin effective consultations, with priority for the meat and dairy produce sectors.

At the same time, my delegation, as a consequence of what has previously been said, would like to state that it is prepared to collaborate with the contracting parties involved in the solution of problems which arise as a result of the agricultural policies practised by certain countries which are highly industrialized and which are traditional markets for Uruguay, in an endeavour to reach mutually satisfactory solutions which will guarantee reasonable access and the stabilization of prices to afford fair income to efficient producers such as Uruguay.

This is an objective that cannot fail to be of great concern to the CONTRACTING PARTIES. The problems arising in the sectors mentioned are so serious that they require immediate solution.

The CONTRACTING PARTIES must be well aware of the tremendous difficulty implied by the present crises in the international wool market for Uruguay, whose dependence on trade in this product in world markets is well-known. This is why we also think that a review of the wool position deserves serious attention and a prior place in any future programme of activity of GATT in the agricultural sector.

My delegation has referred chiefly to problems in the agricultural sector, but this does not mean that we are forgetting or turning aside from other aspects of the work to be done.

We agree that the progress already achieved in respect of tariff reductions must be consolidated and asserted, we share the idea that non-tariff obstacles or barriers should be listed and classified as a first step to their elimination and we also agree that studies should be made towards the suppression of some existing tariffs which are now without interest or meaning.

Before closing, we should like to say that, in order to save time, we shall not enter into the other sectors to which the action of GATT may be directed. Not because we do not recognize the urgency and the seriousness of the problems which exist in these sectors but because we think that other contracting parties have exhaustively dealt with these questions and that our duty is to be clear and concrete as regards our respective problems. (But this does not prevent us from heartily supporting the expressions of concern that have been put forward by other developing countries.

One aspect which, we feel, cannot be set aside and which will be worthy of particular and very serious attention in the future activities of GATT is the idea put forward by our distinguished Director-General concerning the necessity of studying broader standards of integration than those which now exist, to be based on realities and similarities in production and trade. Because of these realities and similarities certain countries are bound to be involved in the desire for a solution of many of the problems confronting States which, for example, are efficient producers in the temperate zone.