

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

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Thirty-Ninth Session

CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING REMARKS

1. In his closing remarks, the CHAIRMAN (Ambassador Bhagirath Lal DAS of India) paid tribute to the delegations and to the efficient functioning of the GATT Council, as well as to the rôle of the secretariat, which had enabled work to proceed smoothly during the Session. He thanked the Director-General and all the officers and other staff of the secretariat for the support that they gave to the CONTRACTING PARTIES during the year.
2. He said that although the General Agreement provided for decision by voting, the traditional efforts in the Council to reach consensus, sometimes by means of intense consultations, had proved most useful. He welcomed and encouraged the increasing participation of a large number of developing countries in GATT's work, particularly in the Council. This improved the transparency and the utility of GATT, and helped to build confidence in GATT as an institution.
3. He said that in the light of past experience and in anticipation of problems lying ahead, great effort had to be made to spot points of strain in the Council's activities and to try to nip them in the bud. The work of the MTN Committees and Councils had an important rôle to play in this regard; the harmonious functioning of those bodies, along with the Council itself, which was GATT's chief executive body, was vital.
4. The Chairman said that the statements made during the Session had shown how difficult the next year was going to be. While certain information had been collected and some analyses made, the real work of review, analysis and decision-making would come in 1984. This would involve much formal and informal negotiations. The Council, the secretariat and delegations would be very busy on these matters during the whole year.
5. Referring to the increasing work in GATT since 1979, he said that many GATT delegations might be well advised to have additional staff and improved technical back-up so as to be able to meet GATT's current and future challenges and work-load. It had to be appreciated that GATT was the principal focus of the contractual aspects of international trade; in order to use it fully, it had to be strengthened and improved wherever necessary. This had to be done to ensure that countries operated inside rather than outside the GATT trading system, and to create conditions so that the legitimate expectations of countries, whether large or small, were respected.

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6. He said that 1984 should be a year of confidence-building and conciliation in GATT. This would require intense deliberations, as well as formal and informal consultations and negotiations. The effort should be not to reject outright the many proposals, ideas and positions put forward by delegations, but to consider them coolly and with full understanding so as to arrive at logical solutions undistorted by emotion, force or pre-conceived ideas. Just as it was necessary to respect those proposals, ideas and positions, it was also necessary to respect the fears and apprehensions they might evoke. The necessary reconciliation of all these aspects needed a constructive, imaginative, patient and bold approach. National interests, which were of course the brief of all negotiators, could in almost all cases be better served and secured in an atmosphere of peace and mutual confidence. This was as true for economic issues as it was for political issues.

7. The Chairman concluded by re-emphasizing that 1984 should be a year of conciliation and of building confidence in GATT as an institution, and among the trading nations themselves, so as to promote the well-being and prosperity of the world's peoples.