

**MULTILATERAL TRADE
NEGOTIATIONS
THE URUGUAY ROUND**

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NIGERIA

Statement by Mr. T.A. Anumudu
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I wish to express to you, on behalf of the Nigerian delegation, our delight and satisfaction with your election as the Chairman of this crucial review meeting on the progress of negotiations mid-way through the life-span of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations. I recall with pleasure the fact that since the launching of the Round in September 1986, in Uruguay, your country and officials have always demonstrated interest in seeing that negotiations move towards a fruitful outcome. The honour done to you by your election is, therefore, well deserved. I also wish to congratulate the Government and people of Canada for their excellent arrangements for this meeting and the warm welcome extended to my delegation since its arrival in the city of Montreal. It is my fervent hope that all the efforts put into preparation for this meeting will be rewarded by concrete achievements.

Before I touch on some of the core issues of interest to my delegation and the developing countries in general, it is imperative to mention that the fundamental rationale for embarking on the present round of trade negotiations which is to achieve greater trade liberalization has not been met. We are particularly concerned about the proliferation of protectionist measures that circumvent or violate GATT rules and principles, increasing recourse to bilateralism and application of coercive measures in some instances. All these developments undermine the very credibility of the multilateral trading system, and above all, the Uruguay Round. I make these observations to emphasize the tremendous need to have the Punta del Este spirit rekindled in clear terms.

Of all the items under negotiation within the Uruguay Round, tropical products is clearly the least controversial and the most important to the developing countries. Tropical products is the only item on which there is broad consensus on the need for an early result. In spite of this, trade in tropical products and agriculture continues to be hampered by all sorts of obstacles, tariffs and non-tariff barriers, quantitative restrictions and other quasi barriers, all of which have severely restricted market access for tropical and agricultural products. Similarly, trade in these areas is still threatened with rigid insistence on cross-linkages, conditionalities and reciprocity, all of which continue to aggravate an already deteriorating situation.

As you are aware, Africa has vital interest in tropical products and can ill-afford any diversionary tactics which links progress in this area to concessions in other areas. Such procedural tactics can only worsen rather than improve the African international trading position. Recent statistics have confirmed that Africa's share of world trade is less than 4 per cent. Consequently, any concession on the part of African contracting parties resulting in a further decline in its gross domestic product would further worsen their already deteriorating trade position and put their living standards in jeopardy. A further search for a solution to the current world economic crisis would require an integrated strategy that would inter alia, hold in high priority the debt crisis and its incidental effects in developing countries together with the peculiar predicament of the least developed among them.

My delegation would, in consideration of the pivotal rôle of agriculture to all economies, like to emphasize the need for a substantive agreement at the end of this mid-term session, and in this regard, the developed countries hold the key to the negotiations. Their farm support policies, for example, have given rise to the imbalances in this sector. As against this, developing countries have increasingly adopted market liberalization policies in the field of agriculture. In Nigeria, for example, virtually all officially acknowledged agricultural support measures have been abolished under our on-going structural adjustment programme.

Farmers in Africa and other developing countries are the victims of the agricultural-support programmes of several industrialized nations. Earnings of farmers in several developing countries have been driven to low levels because of subsidy wars. This meeting should focus its decision on crop payments, agricultural export subsidies and several non-tariff barriers imposed on the agricultural trade. With regard to non-tariff barriers, this meeting must resolve that immediate action be taken by the industrialized nations to eliminate quotas, all forms of restrictions, administrative taxes and unnecessary health and sanitary regulations. As a first step the meeting should identify the protectionist measures which should be phased out over a time-frame to free the agricultural trade. The meeting should in addition adopt guidelines on the modalities for phasing out the protectionist measures which inhibit liberalization of the agricultural trade.

Realism dictates that we should not and cannot expect to record uniform progress in all areas of negotiation at Montreal. Items of negotiations in the so-called "new areas" fall under the category of issues in which this meeting will be obliged to note progress so far made and give clear directives on practical steps towards more concrete results in the remaining half of the round. Considering the complexities of these issues, especially in such areas as trade in services, TRIPS and TRIMS, Nigeria considers it imperative to underline the need for the GATT and related international organizations to improve and expand their technical assistance programmes to developing countries with a view to enhancing understanding of the issues involved thereby increasing their level of

participation in negotiations on the basis of comparative advantage. However, negotiations in this area must not be at the expense of the sovereign rights of nations to regulate and protect their natural endowments.

In the area of standstill and rollback, the situation is still foggy and uncertain. As you would all recall, the Punta del Este Declaration was barely adopted when initial efforts were made by some participants to re-interpret the consensus which they had so recently applauded. Current developments, such as the super-funds legislation, tariff increases in oil seeds, and recent declarations that ACP countries should be prepared to accept the inevitable, suggests that the Uruguay Round could easily fail to live up to its expectations. Partial or temporary "solutions" to the problems will equally be unfruitful. This is not an outcome in which we should acquiesce.

Finally, I want to suggest that this meeting, which is a major land-mark in the Uruguay Round negotiations, takes due cognizance of my delegation's recent proposal to bring what we regard as the undesirable trade in domestically prohibited goods under some form of GATT discipline. This is a phenomenon which has already produced serious damaging effects on the economies of some developing countries, including mine. The sooner the developing trend is regulated, the better for the world trading system. A declaration on the issue in Montreal would be a good starting point.

I have so far attempted to share with you some of our thoughts in combating protectionism in all its ramifications. In so doing, Nigeria earnestly urges all present to co-operate and ensure the reaffirmation of the Punta del Este Declaration so as to give a fresh impetus to international trade for global prosperity. I must emphasize that unless developing countries are able to gain something tangible, this mid-term review may well turn out to be a giant conference heralded by an impressive array of trumpeters, but ending on a sorry note with participants walking with grim looks under-scoring their overwhelming disappointment. For developed countries, Nigeria urges them to make the requisite gesture to ensure that the scenario I just described does not take place.