

**MULTILATERAL TRADE
NEGOTIATIONS
THE URUGUAY ROUND**

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BANGLADESH

Statement by Mr. K.M. Rabbani
Secretary, Ministry of Commerce

I join the distinguished delegates preceding me in extending to you, Mr. Chairman, our warmest felicitations on your election to this high office of the Trade Negotiations Committee. We are confident that your wisdom and vast experience would enable you to guide our deliberations to a fruitful outcome.

I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to convey, through you, to the Government and the people of Canada our thanks for the excellent arrangements and meticulous care with which the hospitable people of Canada have ensured our comfort in this beautiful city of Montreal.

My delegation likes to put on record its deepest appreciation for the Prime Minister of Canada, His Excellency, Mr. Brian Mulroney, for his illuminating inaugural address. The address is not only characterized by pertinent observations but also has aptly brought into focus issues of paramount concern which are going to dominate our deliberations in the next couple of days. His call for putting our best and concerted efforts to make the Round a success and, thus, contribute to bringing about a strengthened and improved GATT is timely and should serve to set the mood and course of our deliberations. Indeed, the need of the hour is for an open, predictable, comprehensive, and equitable international trading system, with built-in provisions to support the development of the developing countries.

My delegations is of the view that recent years of continued growth and trade expansion in fortunate parts of the world should have catalysed positively the implementation of commitments on standstill and rollback. But, it is reported that the Surveillance Body has received an unusually large number of communications alleging breaches of standstill commitments. In the area of rollback, consultations on specific requests are yet to lead to any concrete undertaking of rollback. It is disconcerting that despite the commitment on standstill and rollback, the protectionist pressures by way of discriminatory unilateral and bilateral measures, protectionist laws and increasing recourse to grey area measures, continue to erode the GATT rules and disciplines. These carry the risk of undermining the principles of the Punta del Este Declaration and the negotiating process launched by it.

Despite the resultant social costs, Bangladesh has been on the path of far reaching structural adjustments since 1982. She has been implementing a wide range of policies which include, inter alia, unilateral liberalization of her import régime, including drastic reduction in tariffs, pricing at the dictates of market, and flexible exchange rates.

Bangladesh has introduced liberal industrial and fiscal policies, with improved institutional arrangements with a view to encouraging the private sector trade and industry, promoting foreign investments and diversifying her narrow production and export base. These favourable policy environments, coupled with the comparative advantage, have led to a modest growth, entirely in the private sector, of a few non-traditional industries, notably textiles and clothing industry. But imposition of restraints by some major markets not only halted further growth, but also led to a closure of many of these textiles and clothing factories. Historically textiles and clothing have been playing a pioneering rôle in the process of economic development and growth. We would, therefore, urge for complete elimination of all restraints on this sector within the shortest possible time.

An issue which is of great concern to my delegation relates to the least-developed countries. In the past much has been done to identify the specific structural obstacles facing these countries. The Punta del Este Declaration has rightly emphasized the problems of the developing countries in general and the special problems of the least-developed countries in particular. It has underscored the need for expeditious implementation of the relevant provisions of the 1982 Ministerial Declaration concerning the least-developed countries. It is in this context that my delegation, on behalf of the least-developed countries, submitted a communication containing some proposals for consideration of various Negotiating Groups. Through these proposals we urge this meeting to take concrete steps for complete elimination of all tariff and non-tariff barriers against products of export interest to the least-developed countries, with explicit provisions for advanced and accelerated pace of implementations. We do hope that the proposals will be dealt with as a priority item in the negotiations.

My delegation is gratified to note the appreciation and understanding that the world community has of the particular economic situation and problems of the least-developed countries which stand out as a distinctly disadvantaged group amongst the developing countries. Here, my delegation notes with satisfaction the European Community's announcement yesterday of a special programme for the least-developed countries and looks forward to its early complementation to yield tangible benefits to these countries.

We appreciate that the Uruguay Round, which is qualitatively different from earlier multilateral trade negotiations, is an attempt to reorganize the world economy and economic relations for the nineties and beyond. The challenge confronting all of us is to use the opportunity to build a stable base for free and more equitable world trade for decades to come - as the

original contracting parties attempted to do forty years ago. It is my delegation's fervent hope that as we shall be returning home by the weekend, we should be able to tell our governments and peoples that we did our best here in Montreal to boost the momentum of the process of negotiations through the injection of the necessary political will into it for achieving the objectives established by the Punta del Este Declaration.

Before I conclude, I should like to record our deep appreciation for Mr. Arthur Dunkel, Director-General of GATT and the GATT secretariat for unstinted support and co-operation extended to my delegation as well as for the training facilities made available to Bangladesh under GATT Technical Assistance.