

**MULTILATERAL TRADE
NEGOTIATIONS
THE URUGUAY ROUND**

MTN.TNC/MIN(88)/ST/45
6 December 1988
Special Distribution

Trade Negotiations Committee
Meeting at Ministerial Level
Montreal (Canada), December 1988

Original: French

CAMEROON

Statement by H.E. Mr. François Xavier Ngoubeyou
Ambassador, Permanent Representative to the
United Nations Office at Geneva

The Delegation of Cameroon, which I have the honour to lead, gladly associates itself with the well-deserved congratulations addressed to the Canadian Government in general and the Montreal authorities in particular which are hosting this last meeting in 1988 of the Trade Negotiations Committee.

We greatly appreciate the warm welcome extended to us and the delicate attentions that have been addressed to my delegation and myself since our arrival in this beautiful city of Montreal.

My country shares many cultural features with Canada and enjoys excellent and fruitful relations of co-operation between our two countries. It is therefore a real pleasure for me to convey to the Canadian Government the friendly greetings of the Government of the Republic of Cameroon and its wishes for success in our work here.

My delegation also associates itself with the congratulations addressed to you, Mr. Chairman, and assures you of its entire co-operation.

My task has been made easier by some eminent speakers who have preceded me and have outlined the history of the Uruguay Round, setting the context for this meeting. I would simply add that at a time when there is a real easing of tension in international relations in the political area, at a time when the international community is experiencing a wave of hope for peace - an essential requirement for the economic, social and cultural development of our countries - the present meeting of the Trade Negotiations Committee is of particular importance, in the view of my delegation.

In the course of our work it will be necessary not only to maintain and strengthen the effort launched at Punta del Este in 1986, but above all to impart a new dynamic force to the negotiations. My delegation is ready to participate in this collective reflection and to pledge its full co-operation.

In our view, the Trade Negotiations Committee is the ideal forum for defining guidelines and objectives for the coming negotiations. Indeed, the quality and level of representation of delegations to this meeting are clear evidence of the importance attached to the Trade Negotiations Committee.

The principal objective of the Uruguay Round is to bring about expansion of international trade and progressive liberalization of markets through a series of courageous, realistic and concrete corrective measures. I should like to reaffirm that my country subscribes to that objective which, on the one hand, corresponds to our own development option and, on the other hand, is conducive to mutual benefits. Nevertheless, in the gloomy international economic context that we are currently experiencing, account must be taken of the specific economic situation of the developing countries and of the many constraints with which their governments are faced, often in conditions of extreme poverty and shortage.

Among the many and important issues before us, and in order to take account of time considerations, I shall mention only three subjects to which my delegation, which moreover supports the substance and the spirit of the statement made this morning by the spokesman for the African group, will be giving particular attention. They are:

- (i) the concessions expected from developing contracting parties;
- (ii) the status of negotiations on tropical products;
- (iii) the status of negotiations on agriculture.

As regards the contributions expected from developing contracting parties, my delegation does not reject the principle; but it supports the lucid and unequivocal solution adopted by the Ministers at Punta del Este, when they recognized the undeniable imbalances existing in the respective levels of development of the contracting parties to GATT - imbalances that adversely affect the negotiating position of developing countries and gave rise to the spirit and the letter of paragraph (v) in Part B of the Ministerial Declaration, which states:

"The developed countries do not expect the developing countries, in the course of trade negotiations, to make contributions which are inconsistent with their individual development, financial and trade needs ... Less-developed contracting parties [shall not] be required to make concessions that are inconsistent with [their] development, financial and trade needs."

That provision, like the principle of differential and more favourable treatment, also written into the Declaration, is designed to correct those imbalances. My delegation notes, with interest that, in a commendably positive spirit, certain less-developed contracting parties are nevertheless disposed to make contributions in the course of these negotiations. Furthermore, with a view to overcoming the economic crisis,

a number of governments of developing countries have already established or are in the process of establishing, often in painful conditions, structural adjustment programmes focussed on economic liberalization.

We believe that such measures should be considered as contributions by less developed contracting parties and be taken into account in the course of the present negotiations, for, whether directly or indirectly, they operate in favour of liberalization of international trade. This approach to the problem is the reason why my delegation is feeling some apprehension regarding the contributions expected from the ACP States in the framework of the Negotiating Group on Tropical Products. Such contributions, presented as a mechanical exercise, would have the effect of eroding preferences which these States enjoy under the EEC - ACP Convention. Even if we reserve the right to examine this matter more closely with our traditional partner, in a more appropriate framework, one may rightly expect that any such erosion would bring an entitlement to adequate compensatory measures in the form of technical assistance designed to make our products more competitive, for otherwise the opening of new markets would remain a purely theoretical compensation.

Still as regards tropical products, and notwithstanding the priority and increased interest attached to them, one is bound to recognize, with regret, that the negotiations as a whole have not yielded encouraging results. Not only are the preferences accruing to certain States being eroded, but above all the principle of differential and more favourable treatment seems to be brought into question. In the view of my delegation it therefore seems urgent to secure strict observance of the general principles set forth in Section B of the Ministerial Declaration of Punta del Este.

As regards the work of the Negotiating Group on Agriculture, much remains to be done. At this level too, we have some misgivings regarding application of the principle of differential and more favourable treatment, which has been recognized as constituting an integral part of the trade negotiations. The question of subsidies and other support measures - a focal point in the negotiations - is having adverse effects for our domestic production. Subsidies are placing developing country producers, in particular African ones, in a marginal position and can ultimately result in complete disappearance of our agriculture and increased poverty for us.

Accordingly, any measures to be taken in this sector, whether short-term or emergency measures or a global support measure, must take account of the preponderant rôle of agriculture in our respective economies, of the legitimate interests of net exporters and importers of agricultural products, particular care being taken not to aggravate the dependency of the net importers.

My delegation considers that an agreement is highly desirable in regard to sanitary and phytosanitary regulations which are unfortunately used as protectionist measures to hamper market access for some of our

products. Far from limiting the national sovereignty of States in regard to import control, such an agreement would afford greater transparency in transactions and would eliminate other inhibiting factors that constitute non-tariff barriers.

Lastly, I must mention a topical matter that affects us closely - that of exports of prohibited products. In this regard, my delegation notes that GATT is not being asked to act in place of United Nations specialized agencies which are already giving attention to this matter. It must be recognized, however, that the existing regulations are not very stringent. Supplementary efforts at the level of GATT are therefore desirable to prohibit the export of these products which constitute a grave danger for the health and the life of the Third World peoples. In the absence of appropriate national legislation, my delegation would associate itself with any decision by this organization to pursue the consultations already launched.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to thank the GATT secretariat, in particular the Technical Co-operation Division, for the assistance it has been receiving since the start of the Uruguay Round.

It is our hope that, as 1988 draws to its end, the developed world will not take an indifferent and detached attitude in regard to the dramatic degradation of the developing countries, as it did four decades ago.

On the contrary, the development of well perceived reciprocal interests, the tremendous upsurge of yesterday's small nations, the inevitable interdependence of small and large countries, whether poor or rich ones - all these should constitute so many realities of today, condemning egoism and fostering more solidarity and complementary practices.

My delegation hopes firmly that the outcome of the Uruguay Round of trade negotiations, the reason for our meeting here today in this wonderful city of Montreal, will be more auspicious and more beneficial mutually to all the GATT contracting parties than the seven earlier rounds have been.

This could be achieved without too much difficulty, in particular if the political will of all the contracting parties is focussed on the same objective of effective liberalization, so that the products of export interest to developing countries can be better treated and less resisted or disadvantaged subtly through discriminatory trade restrictions or any other practices hampering the development process. There is our hope, there lies the key to success, well within our reach.