

**MULTILATERAL TRADE
NEGOTIATIONS
THE URUGUAY ROUND**

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Trade Negotiations Committee

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Meeting at Ministerial Level
Montreal (Canada), December 1988

OPENING ADDRESS BY MR. RICARDO ZERBINO,
MINISTER OF ECONOMY AND FINANCE OF URUGUAY,
CHAIRMAN OF THE TRADE NEGOTIATIONS COMMITTEE AT
MINISTERIAL LEVEL

First of all, I should like to thank the Minister for International Trade of Canada, Mr. John Crosbie, for his kind words of introduction and, through him, the Canadian Government for the friendly welcome they have extended to all participants in this Meeting and also for the fine effort they have made in organizing it in such excellent fashion.

In his eloquent speech the Prime Minister of Canada, Mr. Brian Mulroney, has already made clear the importance of this Conference, whose results can and must constitute an important milestone for the development and final success of the Uruguay Round. I am sure that all delegations present here will take up this constructive approach and be guided by it in the discussions we are beginning today.

It is a source of great pleasure for me to have heard the views of my friend and predecessor in this post, Enrique Iglesias, whose wisdom and ability were certainly a fundamental factor in the launching and initial progress of this Round.

I feel very honoured to have been singled out by the countries represented here to preside over the work of the Trade Negotiations Committee. I am deeply grateful for this honour, which I take as an acknowledgement of the commitment made by Uruguay to contribute to the reorganization and liberalization of world trade. That commitment has taken concrete form in many ways since this Round was first planned: its launching at Punta del Este; our active participation since then; the fact that our country's name has been linked with this multilateral effort, on the kind initiative of Japan; and also the personal participation of our President, Dr. Julio Maria Sanguinetti, in the Punta del Este meeting and more recently when visiting GATT in March this year.

I wish to assure you at the outset that this Committee will continue to be chaired in an impartial and transparent manner, and with a deep commitment to achieving substantive and balanced results in our work.

The better to discharge these responsibilities, I have the benefit of the extensive and clear-sighted co-operation of my friend, the Director-General of GATT, Arthur Dunkel, and his colleagues, for which I now wish to express my gratitude here.

GATT SECRETARIAT
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The world economic situation continues to have its good points and its bad points. The developed countries have improved their economic policy co-ordination, but developing countries, especially the indebted countries, still face serious problems.

International trade has recently been expanding - GATT economists forecast over 5 per cent growth this year - and we have seen an encouraging number of countries, including developing countries, adopt autonomous trade liberalization measures. However, persisting protectionist trends are evidence that the multilateral trading system remains vulnerable, and the lack of progress in this area jeopardizes the possibilities of future development.

Our task here in Montreal is therefore particularly important. It will be our responsibility, through the results of this Meeting, to send out the signals to show that, by their resolve and action, those responsible for the multilateral trading system will help to strengthen and develop world economic activity.

These signals will be interpreted by traders throughout the world, by those responsible for money and finance and by the specialized press, who will want to see whether or not, through this Round, the resolve and action of those responsible for trade policy can be expected to give a positive boost to a world economy that is still at risk.

That audience will not be content with ambiguous statements or mere wishful thinking, and will be able to discern quite clearly any real progress and concrete results.

Consequently, our discussions and their outcome will have an impact not merely within the narrower field of the international trading system but also on economic activity as a whole.

We therefore have two reasons for finding constructive and harmonious solutions and for giving unmistakable signs of progress and meaningful results. Moreover, those results must be balanced, so as to take into account the many negotiating areas and so that each participant in the negotiations can in due course feel that his interests have not been overlooked or deferred.

Of course, this Meeting is not the final one of the Round and must be weighed up accordingly. Its results will therefore also have to provide guidance and inspiration for the negotiating stages that lie ahead until the conclusion of the Round.

The task before us is certainly not an easy one, and on it hang the future of a healthy and renewed multilateral trading system, as well as the possibility of contributing to a strengthened and more balanced world economy.

This Ministerial Meeting is an enormous challenge and a great opportunity for us all. Ministers will be responsible for the decisions that are taken and for those that are not taken.

As Chairman, I give you my pledge to be a factor of co-operation for arriving at substantial and balanced results, and to guide the work of this Meeting efficiently and transparently.

I trust that you are ready and determined to shoulder your responsibility so that together we can complete our undertaking successfully.

With this pledge in mind, it is an honour for me officially to declare this Ministerial Meeting open.