

**MULTILATERAL TRADE  
NEGOTIATIONS  
THE URUGUAY ROUND**

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COLOMBIA

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Four years ago, the governments here represented gathered at Punta del Este to launch the most ambitious multilateral trade negotiations project in recent history. After long discussions, we arrived at a balanced negotiating agenda, whose spirit was incorporated in the Declaration that opened the Uruguay Round, for whose completion we are assembled today.

Basically, the Declaration laid down two principles: integrality and special treatment. The principle of integrality required that there were to be agreements on all the subjects for negotiation: agricultural products, textiles, natural resource-based products, services, trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights and trade-related investment measures. The principle of special treatment sought to grant developing countries differential consideration as regards their capacity to adjust to the new scheme. Unlike the situation in other forums and other occasions, we developing countries came not to ask for aid but for trade - trade to modernize our economies, trade to improve the well-being of our peoples.

Today, however, the draft final act embodying the present state of the negotiations far from reflects the spirit and aspirations of Punta del Este. The imbalance between what we are giving and what we might be getting is obvious. As yet, we do not have a two-way agreement.

In the group of Tropical Products, despite the commitment made at Montreal to grant them priority treatment, the offers of the developed countries are very far from seeking to facilitate the access of these products to international markets. What is more, some of the major trading partners did not even present independent proposals in this area.

The negotiations on agriculture haunt, like a ghost, the possibilities of success in this Round. The offers presented differ radically as regards range of products covered, magnitude of targets and procedures proposed for

implementation. For Colombia as for the other members of the Cairns Group, the results of the Round are unacceptable if the industrialized countries do not commit themselves to reducing the numerous subsidies they now grant agricultural exports, which have dramatically depressed the international prices for the products of the sector.

Nor has there been progress in matters such as tariff dismantlement or tariffication of non-tariff barriers. On the contrary, recent years have have seen a dangerous form of para-tariff protectionism developing that is threatening to replace tariff protection, which is precisely what we are trying to reduce. Phytosanitary measures, customs restrictions, bureaucratic requirements, quality control, have been proliferating to the point of cancelling out the possible positive effects of duty reductions.

While all this happening, Colombia convinced of the merits of economic internationalization, like many other developing countries present here, has undertaken a process of liberalization which includes total elimination of its import licensing, consolidation of its tariffs to the point of reducing them to half the levels existing at the time the Round started and flexibilization of its foreign-exchange, financial and labour markets to adjust their levels of international competitiveness. This effort of my country, like many others, has not received, in the course of this Round's negotiations, the credit and recognition agreed at Punta del Este.

For all of these circumstances, we find ourselves in the end caught in a terrible paradox: what was designed to bring about an easier and gradual access of developing countries to the world market is turning into a limitation of their possibilities of access to the industrial market. Although all of us agree on the need for integrating the concept of the market in goods with that in services, technology and capital, negotiations on the factors of production that are not accompanied by substantial reductions in the conditions of access to the markets of the industrial countries are bound to place developing economies in a dangerous situation of production stagnation.

There is still time to save the Round. If we undertake to seek an outcome for the agricultural negotiations that would involve substantial reductions in the subsidies for export products and frontier barriers, that would bring about the tariffication of impediments to access and would consider the adjustment capacity of developing countries, the road to definitive negotiations will be facilitated. The Government of President Cesar Gaviria is resolutely determined to contribute to the success of the Uruguay Round. We know that if the Round were to fail, protectionism would return and we would go back to the law of the jungle, where everyone would defend himself from the others as best he could. The industrialized countries would lose as much as the developing countries in any failure of these negotiations. For many years now we have been seeking

a scenario that would enable us - all the countries of the world - to deal peacefully with our differences and achieve our individual aspirations for change and progress. Free, transparent and organized trade is that democratic scenario which we have been seeking.

All we need to save the Round is political will. The technicians and negotiators have done their job well. Our governments need to understand that there are no negotiations without sacrifice. To save the Round we must think less about what each one of us hopes to gain from others and more about what each of us is prepared to offer others.