

**MULTILATERAL TRADE
NEGOTIATIONS
THE URUGUAY ROUND**

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AFRICAN COUNTRIES

Statement by H.E. Mr. Georges Solofoson
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1. The African countries subscribed at Punta del Este to the objectives and general principles of the Punta del Este Declaration, and have for four years endeavoured to fulfil their commitment. At Punta del Este and at Montreal in 1988, they emphasized their situation and put forward proposals as to how their special concerns could be met. Jointly with other developing countries, they have made specific submissions in various negotiating groups. However, the results as they appear in the present draft of the Final Act now before us indicate that these objectives and general principles are far from being met. Unless major changes are made in the current proposals, it will be difficult to envisage a universally satisfactory overall outcome.
2. Improved market access is vital for African countries. However, the proposals on market access contained in the draft Final Act are likely to lead to losses which exceed the gains, due to the erosion of existing preference margins and the conditionality of all the offers on tariff concessions. Furthermore, the reciprocal concessions they are being asked to make do not take account of the liberalization measures they have already undertaken, for which appropriate credit should be given.
3. Agricultural production and exports of certain agricultural products under preferential agreements are essential to the development of African countries and provide the livelihood of a large sector of their populations. On the other hand, higher prices for imported foodstuffs are exacerbating the balance-of-payments situation of net food-importing countries. In textiles and clothing, the present proposal may well worsen the restrictions imposed on African exports to their main markets.
4. The negotiations on institutional aspects indicate an imbalance between rights and obligations. The African countries are therefore opposed to any attempt to withdraw their rights under Article XVIII B to protect their balance of payments.

5. In the case of TRIPS the results could have a negative effect not only on their development prospects but also on the health and welfare of their populations. With regard to TRIMS, their outright elimination may well deprive them of a key instrument for guiding development policies. In services, they are being asked to make commitments to open their markets, while the developed countries refuse to liberalize one mode of delivery of interest to African countries, namely, movement of labour, and are reluctant to accept specific commitments aimed at strengthening the service sectors in African countries.

6. Efforts to include concrete provisions to take account of the special situation of African countries, the majority of which are least-developed countries, have not so far produced meaningful results. The credibility of the trading system rests upon the reduction of barriers to trade, the end of protectionism: the Uruguay Round provides a unique opportunity for doing so. The credibility of the system also depends on its ability to provide benefits for all trading partners. Thus, it is of the utmost importance that special attention be paid to the problems of African countries, and the current Ministerial Meeting of the Trade Negotiations Committee is the last opportunity for finding appropriate solutions.

7. The results currently before us would therefore be more acceptable to our countries if:

- (a) all developed countries would significantly improve access to markets for products of interest to African countries, including preferential access so as to compensate them for the erosion of existing preferences;
- (b) the transitional mechanism on textiles and clothing could ensure that no new restrictions would be imposed on African countries and that existing restrictions and restraints under the MFA would be phased out before the expiry of the transitional period;
- (c) the results in agriculture would provide differential and more favourable treatment to enable African countries to continue their programmes to encourage agricultural development, while obtaining preferential access to world markets in general and certain markets for specific products subject to trade agreements, in particular, and also to compensate for any negative effects on net food importers;
- (d) on pre-shipment inspection, any agreement calling into question the objective of the programme would be unacceptable;
- (e) the negotiations would lead to the acceptance of strict disciplines on exports of domestically prohibited goods;

- (f) special and differential treatment were established to allow small African suppliers to be exempted from safeguard measures and countervailing and anti-dumping duties;
- (g) there were provisions in the agreement on intellectual property rights which would exempt African countries from any higher obligations with respect to norms and standards, in view of their low level of economic development, or would allow them to adopt measures deemed necessary to alleviate poverty, to protect public health, and to promote public interest in sectors of vital importance to their socio-economic and technological development;
- (h) any agreement on TRIMS would not limit the right of African countries to promote development objectives or to counter restrictive business practices through the use of appropriate measures so long as they did not have trade-restrictive effects;
- (i) any commitment on liberalization under a multilateral framework agreement on trade in services would aim at strengthening their service sector while providing technical assistance and effective means of access to the markets of developed countries, a commitment of this kind by African countries should not hinder their efforts of regional and sub-regional integration;
- (j) provisions would ensure free and unrestricted access to markets for goods and services from the least-developed countries without any reciprocity.

8. The extremely difficult economic situation of African countries is well known to all. Those countries have placed great expectations on the Uruguay Round as a means of assisting them to extricate themselves from this situation through more effective participation in world trade and in the international trading system. They reiterate their commitment to making a positive contribution to the present negotiations, and expect their trading partners to take specific steps to enable them to join in a consensus on mutually beneficial results.

9. The African countries reaffirm the fundamental link between the mechanisms for the expansion of international trade and the need for a solution to the debt crisis which curbs their development and trade and has led to a serious reversal of financial flows with grave economic and social consequences.

10. In this connection, the African countries note with interest the statements to the effect that only a global approach to these problems could provide acceptable and credible results.

11. The African countries wish to be further involved in the final phase of the negotiations of which the implementation, it should be recalled, should be in conformity with the provisions of Parts I and II of the Punta del Este Declaration. In this connection, they consider that the "single undertaking" concerns only Part I of the Declaration, which refers to trade in goods. On the other hand, trade in services and intellectual property will be dealt with separately by governments without necessarily taking account of the decisions on trade in goods.

12. Proposals for the creation of a new trade institution should be studied thoroughly, at the appropriate time, in co-operation with the other bodies of the United Nations system, and in accordance with the Havana Charter, of which some provisions of interest for development countries have been neglected over the last forty years.

13. The objective we are pursuing is not to set up a selective trade institution but rather an organization that can boost international trade while taking account of the development dimension.

14. In addition to the draft Final Act, the African countries wish to reiterate the importance they attach to the results of the Working Group on Export of Domestically Prohibited Goods and Other Hazardous Substances. The necessary steps should therefore be taken to ensure that the draft decision and the Chairman's report can be submitted to and approved by the CONTRACTING PARTIES at their next meeting.