

**MULTILATERAL TRADE  
NEGOTIATIONS  
THE URUGUAY ROUND**

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Trade Negotiations Committee

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Meeting at Ministerial Level  
Brussels, December 1990

URUGUAY

Statement by Mr. Alvaro Ramos,  
Minister for Livestock, Agriculture and Fisheries

Firstly, as Chairman of the VI Consultation and Co-Ordination Meeting of the Latin American Economic System (SELA), I should like to read out the following Decision:

"Decision Taken by Latin American and Caribbean Ministers within the Framework of the VI Consultation and Co-Ordination Meeting of SELA, Meeting in Brussels on the Occasion of the Meeting of the Trade Negotiations Committee at Ministerial Level under the Uruguay Round

Meeting in Brussels, in accordance with Decision No. 300 of SELA, Latin American and Caribbean Ministers on the occasion of the Ministerial meeting of the Uruguay Round:

1. Consider that negotiations in the Uruguay Round so far have led to unbalanced and incomplete results that are totally unsatisfactory for Latin America and the Caribbean;
2. Take note of the evaluation on the situation of the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations prepared by the Latin American and Caribbean countries as of 23 November 1990. (Distributed as document MTN.TNC/W/41);
3. Declare that a set of partial and limited results that do not take into account the vital interests of countries in the region are not acceptable, therefore, the present situation must be substantially changed;
4. Reaffirm their commitment to contribute effectively to the success of the Uruguay Round;
5. Endorse the conclusions of the evaluation and adopt it as the Latin American position."

I shall now present the point of view of the Government of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay.

A little over four years ago, Ministers and representatives of the governments meeting today in Brussels approved the "Punta del Este Declaration", which initiated the Round of multilateral trade negotiations that bears my country's name.

Governments and the international press welcomed the launching of the Uruguay Round with enthusiasm and hope. Expressions such as "an historic event", "the most ambitious undertaking ever initiated in the field of international trade", "lays down the rules for global trade in the twenty-first century", were repeatedly used by the global press, auguring the success of the negotiations. In the euphoria of the launching of the Round, reference was made to the "Punta del Este spirit", meaning the efforts and desire for compromise that had been shown in those far-off days of intense negotiation at Punta del Este.

Today, the situation is very different. Let us be clear and direct: the Uruguay Round is on the brink of total failure.

We have before us a voluminous text that still contains many areas where there are important differences.

In our view, however, the critical point of the negotiations is the failure to achieve agreement on agriculture.

Many people said that the Uruguay Round would be the Round that would integrate the so-called "new areas" in GATT. Others stated that the main achievement of the Uruguay Round would be to incorporate agriculture in GATT, since its rules and disciplines had not been dealt with during the forty years of the General Agreement's implementation.

At Punta del Este, together we outlined an ambitious goal: "To achieve greater liberalization of trade in agriculture and bring all measures affecting import access and export competition under strengthened and more operationally-effective GATT rules and disciplines ...". We ratified and further developed this goal at the negotiations in Montreal in 1988 and in Geneva at the beginning of 1989. At the latter, we decided to initiate a process of reform to establish an equitable and market-oriented system of trade in agriculture.

At the meeting of the Trade Negotiations Committee held in July of this year - only four months ago - our respective negotiators agreed that the negotiating framework proposed by the Chairman of the Group of Negotiations on Agriculture, Mr. Aart de Zeeuw, constituted a means of strengthening negotiations, and on this basis the great majority of participants in the Uruguay Round agreed to pursue negotiations through the submission of lists by country and offers in the agricultural field.

Nevertheless, the agricultural negotiating process stopped there, even though a large number of countries provided the information and made the

offers envisaged in the said document. This happened because other countries - of vital importance for the implementation of genuine negotiation - had made proposals outside the framework of the proposed negotiation, or had considerably delayed the submission of offers which, when finally made, justified the expression "too little, too late". We come from a small country, whose agriculture constitutes the fundamental basis for its economy and the cornerstone of its existence. A country whose agricultural producers are faced every day with the challenge of surviving through their own efforts, productivity and competitive capacity vis-à-vis other countries. A country that is prepared to engage in fair competition on the international market with other producers of powerful countries; but what we cannot do, Mr. Chairman, is compete with powerful treasuries.

Uruguay is engaged in a far-reaching and arduous process of economic liberalization. A process of fostering competitiveness and excellence, based on the ethics of entrepreneurial and personal risk as an agreed value among economic agents.

We are not prepared passively to accept any double-talk of economic liberalism on the one hand, and trade protectionism on the other.

As a liberal nation, in the broadest sense of the term, we feel morally well-placed to call for liberalization of world trade, since we are doing just that in our own economy, more particularly in our agricultural trade.

Our agricultural producers are calling on us to continue along this course, and we have their support.

I should like to underline that agriculture is not a negotiation issue solely of interest to the more developed countries of the Northern hemisphere.

Quite on the contrary, the reality is otherwise, for the present and the future of many developing countries - including Uruguay - depend entirely on a successful outcome of the agricultural negotiation, since injury caused by the protectionist powers adversely affects our economic situation by holding up or pushing back our development process and generating deplorable social tensions.

The economic and social development of Uruguay depends on liberalization of agricultural trade and on the binding of rules that can assure transparent conditions of competition.

We are prepared to meet the challenge of fair competition. But we are not prepared to accept that the Uruguay Round should be an occasion for legitimizing, in the future, unlawful practices in agricultural trade such as export subsidies, domestic production support measures, erosion of conditions of access through unacceptable proposals such as "rebalancing", and the application of non-tariff barriers of any kind.

The Uruguay Round is for us an opportunity to revitalize the world trading system, to achieve a further multilateral reduction of tariffs, and to roll back non-tariff barriers. It is an opportunity to enlarge the multilateral framework and extend its coverage to sectors of rapid growth such as services. The Uruguay Round constitutes a real opportunity to formulate new and fairer rules to govern world trade from now to the next century.

We must, however, state once more that the Uruguay Round cannot and will not reach a conclusion, whether entirely or in part, unless a substantial result is attained in the area of agriculture.

It is necessary, therefore, to start out immediately, this very day, without losing any time, on the task of defining for the end of this Ministerial meeting fundamental parameters to set in motion a far-reaching, substantial and irreversible reform of the existing conditions of international agricultural trade.

We have come to Brussels imbued with the "spirit of Punta del Este", confident and resolved that through our joint efforts we shall succeed in formulating the "spirit of Brussels" which will lead to the true success of this Round of multilateral trade negotiations. But for this to be possible it is necessary that we all face up to the challenge before us today, that we all take on the responsibility incumbent on us individually and collectively. Here and now, the responsibility for success or failure lies with us, and with each of the delegations here present.