

**MULTILATERAL TRADE
NEGOTIATIONS
THE URUGUAY ROUND**

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Trade Negotiations Committee

Meeting at Ministerial Level
Brussels, December 1990

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Statement by Dr. Sahadeo Basdeo,
Minister of External Affairs and International Trade

First, it is my pleasure to congratulate you Mr. Chairman, and to thank the Government of Belgium and the European Economic Communities for their decision to act as hosts for the Trade Negotiations Committee Ministerial meeting at which we are scheduled to end the process which we began four years ago at Punta del Este.

The Director-General and the GATT secretariat also deserve our thanks. They have done all they could to ensure that the Round is concluded successfully, as have our technicians and negotiators. We must do the rest. Ministers must now take the political decisions only they can take.

Every speaker preceding me has indicated the willingness to take those difficult decisions. But unfortunately, there are very few indications that any decisive action has yet been taken.

My delegation was one of those which at the Mid-Term Review in Montreal in 1988 took the view that "the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations constituted a positive and healthy re-definition of the GATT system, a return to the original objectives enshrined in the text of the General Agreement itself".

At that time we were all hopeful that this could have been accomplished to the benefit of all trading nations - large and small, developed and developing.

As we approach the end of this process, my country, like many others, especially those of the developing world, cannot help but express our extreme anxiety and concern at the position which we face today.

For example, agricultural trade is no closer today to being appropriately integrated within the GATT system than it has ever been. Offers are on the table but the participants remain far apart. As a result the measures needed to take account of the special situation of developing countries are yet to be even discussed. As a consequence we face a veritable deadlock which has cast a shadow over all other areas of the multilateral trade negotiations.

In a similar vein, if the offers at present on the table in the negotiating group on textiles and clothing, a sector most crucial for the industrial development of developing countries are not improved, we could perhaps be forgiven if fifteen years hence we were to be heard reminiscing about the good old days of the MFA. Serious attention must be paid to ensure that genuinely improved access results from the integration of this sector into the GATT system.

Trinidad and Tobago as a developing country is prepared to liberalize progressively and in accordance with our development priorities, access to our services sectors such as they are. But we are not willing to subscribe to any system which derogates from the fundamental principle on which the GATT is based - most-favoured-nation treatment.

Our decisions here today must be structured in such a way that the services sector can be fully integrated into the mainstream of these new opportunities for trade expansion that we are seeking to create virtually in the final hours of this Uruguay Round. These decisions must also be fair, and in this regard my delegation strongly supports the inclusion of labour mobility since this service should not be denied the opportunity to contribute to the growth in world trade.

For the system to be fair - and acceptable - the GATT rules and disciplines and their implementation call emphatically for a clear recognition of the needs of the developing countries. In this regard there must be no selectivity in the application of safeguards as this too strikes at the very heart of the most-favoured-nation principle.

It is clear that if we are to reach agreement on anything by Friday - "ground zero" - we must first of all divest ourselves of the notion that the strong need additional means to protect themselves from the weak!

The status of debt burdens of developing countries is well documented; therefore one of our most legitimate areas of concern relates to the need to be able to take action to combat the perennial problem of balance-of-payments disequilibria. Fairness demands that any new system which is agreed upon fully incorporates the mechanisms which currently exist to enable contracting parties to deal with this serious problem.

By the same token one needs to focus on the manner in which anti-dumping measures are currently applied. We must surely import stronger disciplines into any new schemes for trade liberalization on which we agree today in order to reduce the seemingly unilateral freedom of action which now prevails and which encourages protectionist tendencies at the expense of countries least able to afford the consequent loss of markets and export earnings.

This Round is about increased trade for the benefit of all! We are painfully aware that in this process some of us face more difficulties than others in making the necessary adjustments which the adoption of new rules

and procedures would render necessary. Trinidad and Tobago remains willing to contribute to this goal with the sole and not unreasonable proviso that the system is fair, that a balance of interests is maintained.

May the spirit of enterprise which so clearly marked the Punta del Este undertaking be now matched by the spirit of compromise for which Brussels is renowned throughout the international community.