

**MULTILATERAL TRADE
NEGOTIATIONS
THE URUGUAY ROUND**

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SPAIN

Statement by H.E. Mr. Apolonio Ruiz Ligeró,
Secretary of State for Trade

First of all, I would like to express my thanks to the Belgian people and authorities for their warm welcome, and the excellent organization that has made this Conference possible.

Like all my colleagues who have taken the floor before me, I want to emphasize the importance of this Round of multilateral trade negotiations, which is the most ambitious of all those with which GATT has been concerned since its inception. If it concludes by attaining all the objectives set by the CONTRACTING PARTIES at the beginning of the Round in Punta del Este, we shall be laying the bases of a new international economic order.

At this time, when we are threatened by economic recession, it would undoubtedly be dangerous to return to unilateral or bilateral trade practices and ultimately to the protectionism which has existed in periods of depression and which exacerbated the consequences, duration and scope of such economic crises.

In reviewing the multilateral negotiations of the Uruguay Round, in these final days and after four years of intensive work, we believe that the time is past to voice academic considerations that are interesting but sometimes unrealistic, and that we must now seek practical objectives that are consistent with the target that we have set ourselves, always provided that these are feasible. Let us therefore be pragmatic and realistic; let us set aside statements of unrealistic programmes and negotiate within the limits of what is possible. At the same time let us begin the work of carrying through the negotiations and open a door so as to be able to continue the dialogue and, in the not too distant future, come closer to the theoretical ideal of a world without borders for trade.

The conviction that free and multilateral world trade is the only way to improve the level of well-being has led us in my country, since its accession to and integration in the European Communities in 1986, to strive for trade liberalization, with the result that we have the third largest balance-of-payments deficit on current account in the world, in absolute terms. Yet we do not regard this as a failure of economic and trade policy but as an opportunity cost which, over the short and medium term, is the inevitable corollary to any process of liberalization and adaptation to international competition.

I firmly believe that every economic development process has to go through the stages of opening to the world and becoming more international in its approach in order to pave the way for structural adjustment to the world economic scene and to enhance the advantages of the international division of labour.

Nevertheless, I should like to draw attention to two basic principles for the success of any multilateral trade negotiation.

In the first place, we must bear in mind the principle of "globality" established in the Declaration of Punta del Este. The Uruguay Round is the most ambitious of all those that have taken place and its success entails the achievement of agreements in each and all of the negotiating groups. We must not forget that this Round seeks to incorporate into GATT discipline new issues of such importance as agriculture, services, intellectual property rights and measures of investment control. Because of this, the idea of a partial agreement that would exclude one of the negotiating groups from the final conclusions cannot be entertained.

Secondly, it is a sine qua non for the successful conclusion of any multilateral negotiation that the principle of balance should be pursued and attained. It is clear that we must all make sacrifices to obtain counterpart benefits and by now all of us are aware what the interests of each contracting party are. Nevertheless it is essential to achieve balanced results in the negotiation to prevent the emergence of "victors and vanquished". An unjust peace is bound to give rise to a new war.

The division of the negotiation into groups (market access, rules and disciplines and new sectors), although always subject to the basic principle of globality, is a method of work that has been accepted by all participants. We must I think weigh the comparative importance of each negotiating group and of each objective in relation to the future international trade order.

In this sense I firmly believe that our ultimate objective should be to develop a juridico-economic body of rules and disciplines that will govern international trade in both goods and services. If we succeed in establishing a universal body of rules, not only will we protect those relations legally and in practice by regulating them but we shall make trade transactions more secure, since economic agents will know in advance the rules of the game for the trade transactions in which they are the protagonists.