

**MULTILATERAL TRADE
NEGOTIATIONS
THE URUGUAY ROUND**

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COMMUNICATION FROM FINLAND

In a communication dated 24 September 1991, the Permanent Mission of Finland has requested that the following statement on the Uruguay Round, agreed by the trade ministers of the EFTA-countries at their meeting held in Helsinki on 9 September 1991, be brought to the attention of the Uruguay Round participants.

EFTA Ministers call for the urgent and successful completion of the Uruguay Round before the end of the year in particular in order to:

- support the profound economic reforms under way in developing countries as well as in Central and Eastern European countries;
- provide a global multilateral framework to fully integrate regional arrangements for international economic co-operation (in line with expanding needs);
- utilize to the maximum the potential of international trade as a vital means to enhance the economic growth and development both in developing countries as well as in Central and Eastern European countries.

Against this background, attention is drawn to the following observations concerning the Uruguay Round negotiations on GATT rules and the current state of the GATT dispute settlement system:

1. Among the principal motivations behind the launching of the Uruguay Round was the need to strengthen GATT rules and disciplines in order to encompass the changing circumstances in international trade. There was widespread disappointment with the way the multilateral trading system had been able to adapt to the increasing globalization of trade.

2. The GATT, as the cornerstone of the multilateral trading system, has been increasingly recognized, as witnessed by the number of recent accessions and by the active participation of the developing countries in the negotiations.

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3. The need for improvements in the rules area is clearly highlighted by the present stalemate in the GATT dispute settlement system. Adoption and/or implementation of panel reports is being blocked, and the whole system is fragmented. Dispute settlement is at the very core of a rules-based system, and strengthened disciplines in this area will make contracting parties more willing to take on new commitments in other parts of the negotiations.

4. Strengthened rules and disciplines will weigh heavily in the EFTA countries' evaluation of the final package emerging from the Round. Their acceptance cannot be taken for granted without the final result ensuring an equitable, unambiguous and predictable framework for international trade which removes the threat of unilateral interpretation and application of multilaterally agreed rules.

5. We confirm the great importance we attach to our joint initiative to start a thorough discussion of the inter-relationship of international trade and environment within GATT.

We underline our desire to see the 1971 Working Group on environmental measures and international trade convened in September 1991, as already requested by our delegations several times.