

**MULTILATERAL TRADE
NEGOTIATIONS
THE URUGUAY ROUND**

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Trade Negotiations Committee
Meeting at Ministerial Level
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BANGLADESH

Statement by H.E. Mr. M. Shamsul Islam, Minister for Commerce
(Speaking on behalf of the least-developed countries)

On behalf of the least-developed countries (LLDCs), I would like to express our sincere gratitude to His Majesty King Hassan II and to the people and the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco for hosting this Ministerial Meeting in this great historical city of Marrakesh and for the excellent facilities provided for it and the warm hospitality extended to us, making our stay in Marrakesh pleasant and comfortable. We pay our deep tribute to His Royal Highness Crown Prince Sidi Mohamed for honouring us by his gracious presence in the inaugural session and for his very thoughtful address.

Let me take this opportunity to reiterate our confidence and trust in your able leadership to guide our deliberations to a successful conclusion. The name of your country will be remembered for its association with the launching of the most ambitious round of trade negotiations.

We extend our warm congratulations to Mr. Peter Sutherland, the Director-General of GATT for this untiring efforts in bringing the Round to a successful conclusion as well as for his contribution to the success of this meeting.

More than seven years ago, Ministers met in the city of Punta del Este, Uruguay to launch the most ambitious round of multilateral trade negotiations ever held. In every sense, the Uruguay Round has been a global negotiation with a global result. For the first time, the negotiations under the auspices of GATT have covered virtually every sector of world trade. Participation in this negotiation has also been global. We are pleased that the Uruguay Round has been a success. It is our hope that this will give a boost to investment, job creation, sustainable development, economic reform and will reinforce the rules and disciplines for free and fair competition at the international level.

The Punta del Este Declaration had given the LLDCs high hopes but the concerns of the LLDCs have not been adequately reflected in the Final Act. Nevertheless, the LLDCs have extended full support and cooperation to the successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round. Let us assure you that the LLDCs will continue to remain active participants in the Multilateral Trading System. It is our earnest hope that in the implementation of the Uruguay Round Agreements, the international community will be more responsive to the needs of the most disadvantaged group of nations. We feel that a comprehensive assessment of the results of the Round is necessary and any imbalances in the results of the Round will need to be redressed through appropriate action including additional trade preferences, development assistance and debt relief.

Per capita income of the least-developed countries as a whole has declined each year since the adoption of the Programme of Action for the LLDCs for the 1990s. The share of LLDCs in world trade has declined to 0.3 per cent in 1992 as against 0.6 per cent in 1980. The ratio of their exports

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to GDP fell from 14.4 per cent to 7.0 per cent and of their imports to GDP from 22.5 per cent to 12 per cent. We, therefore, call upon the contracting parties to improve the trading opportunities of these countries and fully implement the provisions for special and differential treatment.

We wish to reiterate that LLDCs will need substantial technical assistance for implementation of the results of the Round. The complexity of the new rules and the implementation of the decisions demand that a separate unit should be established in the WTO Secretariat to watch implementation of the decisions and to monitor the progress of special treatment of LLDCs.

We take note of the need for coordination among the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization in the fields of trade, money and finance. We hope that such collaboration will contribute positively to the development of our economies and not lead to increased conditionalities.

We are well aware of the importance of work on trade and environment. But we hope that work in this area will not result in enhanced obligations to be borne by the LLDCs. There must be consensus in dealing with the linkages between trade and environment. International cooperation is needed for adoption of a concerted global strategy on environment and to assist developing countries in implementing plans aimed at sustainable development.

It goes without saying that the living and working conditions in poor countries will improve only if their economic well-being is improved through appropriate domestic policies and adequate external support. Therefore, the linking of workers' rights and new labour standards with trade may not serve any useful purpose.

The Final Act contains a decision on the movement of natural persons. In our view, the relationship between movement of natural persons and international trade should be examined and considered within the Preparatory Committee process and in the future WTO.

The question of membership of China to GATT has been under consideration for a long time. We feel that China's admission in GATT will strengthen the multilateral trading system and are, therefore, in favour of an early completion of the process.

I would now like to make some remarks about the trade policy of the Government of Bangladesh. The Government has been steadily liberalizing its trade regime and significant progress has been achieved in recent years in reducing non-tariff restrictions on trade, rationalizing tariff rates and improving export incentives. Most of our imports are subject to customs duty. The average rate of customs duty currently stands at 36 per cent. The number of products subject to import ban has been progressively reduced. Procedures have also been streamlined and liberalized. Customs duty on capital machinery imports for export-oriented industries has been withdrawn. This has created a favourable climate for investment in export-oriented industries. An export development strategy for 1992-2000 has been formulated. An action plan has also been prepared to implement the export strategy. A National Committee under the Chairmanship of the Honourable Prime Minister has been constituted for solving outstanding problems in the export sector.

It is our sincere hope that the signing of the Final Act and the Agreement establishing the WTO will augur well for world trade. We join others in celebrating this memorable event. We will carry with us the fond memories of Marrakesh and look forward to a better future for our countries. I thank you for your kind attention.