

**MULTILATERAL TRADE
NEGOTIATIONS
THE URUGUAY ROUND**

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Trade Negotiations Committee
at Ministerial Level
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OPENING REMARKS BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE TRADE NEGOTIATIONS COMMITTEE
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MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE EASTERN REPUBLIC OF URUGUAY

It is a great honour to open the final meeting of the Trade Negotiations Committee at ministerial level. This meeting marks the close of the most important round of international trade negotiations which have taken place since the beginning of the century.

The honour is a special one because I have had the great responsibility of following three distinguished fellow-countrymen who have had the honour to chair the Round at different stages.

I am referring to Ministers Enrique Iglesias, Ricardo Zerbino and Hector Gros Espiell, who devoted their utmost efforts to achieving the success of the enterprise which we are concluding today.

At every opportunity, they reaffirmed Uruguay's resolute and steadfast commitment to the principles of multilateralism and free trade, just as I am doing today.

I believe I am expressing the feeling of all those present when stating that it is a particular pleasure to be holding the final Ministerial Meeting in the magnificent city of Marrakesh, a historic site at the foot of the Atlas Mountains and at the crossroads of the ancient trade routes from the West, North and South of the African continent.

On behalf of all participants, I should like to express our gratitude to our hosts, His Majesty King Hassan II, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Sidi Mohamed and the Government and people of Morocco, for their generous hospitality and the facilities placed at our disposal.

There have been important results in the area of tariff and non-tariff measures, as well as in the adoption of substantive agreements on trade in goods, services and intellectual property. But above all, the Uruguay Round has led to the strengthening of the institutional framework of the international trading system, through the creation of a World Trade Organization and the establishment of an integrated system for the settlement of disputes.

Our main objective was to create a freer, more equitable and stronger international trade system which would lead to higher standards of living for future generations, especially for those in the less privileged countries in the world.

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For an accurate assessment of the work carried out over these seven years, I believe it is important to bear in mind that though the objective was ambitious, it was even more ambitious to fulfil it in the context of radical political change at the global level and constant threat to the international economy.

The fluctuations of the economic cycle, unemployment which is a scourge in many of our countries, the fluctuations of the monetary system, together with the dramatic situation of extreme poverty, indebtedness and food insufficiency affecting a large number of countries, have formed the context in which these negotiations have taken place.

The results achieved should not in any way incite us to complacency. We all know that they are not sufficient and that the World Trade Organization is a young and therefore fragile organization.

The objectives for the future should be to continue developing the series of rules and disciplines governing international trade and in particular to continue strengthening the institutional framework.

It will also be necessary to recognize that the real effectiveness of the rules will not depend on anything other than the political will of States. We must therefore strengthen our determination to honour the commitments which we will assume with the signature of the Final Act.

Behind each signature, there are millions of workers, farmers, industrialists, professionals and businessmen who harbour the hope that the results of the Round will create new horizons for trade, employment and investment and offer better possibilities of tackling poverty and recession, thus paving the way for the economic and social development of nations.

There are also millions of consumers throughout the world, whose freedom of choice will from now on be better protected in world markets.

At this opening ceremony, as Chairman of the Uruguay Round, I wish to express particular appreciation to two especially important people. The first is Mr. Peter Sutherland, the current Chairman of the Trade Negotiations Committee at delegation level, who provided the final but so necessary impetus for concluding the Round in December last year. The second is Mr. Arthur Dunkel, the former Chairman, who tirelessly conducted the work of the participants from 1986 until June 1993.

At the crucial stages of the negotiations, they took the helm with diplomacy, ability, courage, persistence and responsibility. Our thanks must go to them in the first place, and also to the GATT Secretariat which provided invaluable technical support for the success of the Round.

Finally, I believe that as we reflect broadly today upon the results of the Round, we should all raise our sights and ensure that the agreements we have achieved will represent a qualitative step forward in comparison with the previous system.

In this context, it is my personal belief that the intensive and difficult process of trade negotiations of the Uruguay Round has not been in vain.

We who have come to Marrakesh, representing over 120 countries - the majority already full members of GATT and others rightfully aspiring to join shortly - ought to be aware of the challenges we faced throughout the Uruguay Round. We ought to be pleased to be here today, rounding off these negotiations and opening the doors to a new era in international trade relations.