

**MULTILATERAL TRADE
NEGOTIATIONS
THE URUGUAY ROUND**

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HONDURAS

Statement by H.E. Mr. Delmer Urbizo Panting
Minister of the Economy and Trade

We have gathered here in the beautiful and historic city of Marrakesh, the capital of the ancient Almohad Empire, in response to the generous invitation of His Majesty King Hassan II and the Government and people of Morocco, to finalize the most ambitious and complex undertaking ever embarked upon by the international community, aimed at substantially liberalizing world trade "to the benefit of all countries, especially the less-developed participants", within a legal framework of reliable, stable and predictable standards.

For my country, there is a particular importance attached to its participation in this historic event at ministerial level. On the one hand, thanks to the generous support we received from the contracting parties, today is the very day on which we celebrate our entry into the GATT as a fully-fledged member. On the other hand, on 15 April 1994, by signing the Final Act embodying the results of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations, the Agreement establishing the World Trade Organization, and the relevant multilateral agreements and legal instruments making up that Agreement, we will achieve the status of an original member.

These honourable rewards are fair and worthy recognition of my country's seriousness about fulfilling its international commitments and its active participation in the Uruguay Round since the very outset of the negotiations, in addition to the ambitious and continual efforts it has made at the domestic level to expand and modernize the basis of its productive structure through applying the strict criteria of efficiency and social justice, thereby making it a more integral part of the flow of trade and investment in the world economy.

The launching of the Uruguay Round through the Ministerial Declaration in Punta del Este marked the collective desire of the international community to face up to the problems and tensions which were increasingly eroding the multilateral trade system.

In these circumstances, the central aim of the Round was to reverse growing protectionism characterized by the widespread use of unilateral and often discriminatory measures by the main trading partners against the exports of developing countries.

By this, we do not wish to imply that we are no longer at the mercy of moves toward protectionism or discriminatory unilateral measures which, through greater State intervention and/or under the guise of concepts which are not universally shared, could jeopardize or distort what we have now agreed upon, bringing a host of new difficulties in their wake.

In this regard, we would like to make it completely clear that we welcome the inclusion on the agenda of the new World Trade Organization, as already agreed by Ministerial Decision, of the questions of the relationship between trade and the environment and of the effective protection of the

labour rights of workers in the process of creation and distribution of wealth, as long as they do not become euphemisms or further excuses for adopting new protectionist measures which violate the principle of the international division of labour based on dynamic comparative advantage.

Above all, we must not lose sight of the fact that this historic world event heralding a turning point in trade relations between sovereign States comes just as this century is drawing to a close and that the structure and validity of the new institutions and the trade, financial and technological policies to be adopted in the next few years will have to make a decisive impact on the world situation in the year 2000 and beyond.

In this regard, we should bear in mind the fact that the countries currently in the best position to profit from the foreseeable growth in world trade in coming years are, in fact, those in the forefront of or well advanced in the rapidly developing world revolution in international finance, information technology and communications, robotics, biotechnology, and the retraining and accelerated training of human resources. Last but not least, there are the questions of the provision of capital and the increased expansion and globalization of transnational enterprises which currently control approximately 65 per cent of world trade.

The achievements of South-East Asia and Latin America in the past 10 years allow us to look to the future with some degree of confidence, if these trends persist, but for the rest of the developing world prospects look bleak and uncertain.

Honduras is a founding member of the Central American Common Market and the new Central American Integration System (SICA) and by cooperating closely with the other countries in the area is consolidating the progress made and giving new impetus to efforts aimed at integration.

Similarly, Honduras, together with other Central American countries, has launched plurilateral trade negotiations with Mexico, Colombia and Venezuela. We are confident that before long we will have the opportunity to negotiate and enjoy the benefits of NAFTA's achievements, through its expansion to include Central American countries.

In this regard, I would like to emphasize that Central America is today a geographic area with great economic and trade potential, in an excellent location, and one which with the processes of pacification and democratization, now firmly implanted, enthusiastically embraces the agreements and instruments to come out of this Ministerial Meeting and the implementation of the programme of work of the new World Trade Organization.

In particular, my country hopes that the Marrakesh Agreements will lead to:

- greater access, under predictable and reliable conditions, for its main exports to the markets of its major trade partners;
- the prohibition of all market-sharing agreements or administered trade in infringement of the multilaterally agreed standards;
- the prohibition of any form of discriminatory unilateral action outside the legal framework of the new World Trade Organization; and
- the maintenance of a fully effective and stronger system for the settlement of disputes.

To conclude, Honduras would like to present its profound respects and gratitude to His Majesty King Hassan II of Morocco for the excellent organization of this supremely important event and the cordial hospitality offered to us.

I would also like to express my deeply felt gratitude and appreciation to Mr. Arthur Dunkel, the former Director-General of GATT who was at the helm of the negotiations for so long, and to Mr. Peter Sutherland, the current Director-General of GATT, for his extraordinary leadership and outstanding efforts to ensure the ultimate success of this historic meeting.

I could not conclude my statement without expressing my warmest thanks to the excellent staff of the GATT Secretariat who have worked alongside us throughout the process.