

**MULTILATERAL TRADE
NEGOTIATIONS
THE URUGUAY ROUND**

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SPAIN

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

Let me start by thanking the Government of Morocco for the excellent arrangement of this GATT Ministerial Meeting, as well as for the warm hospitality that we have all received.

After seven years of negotiations, the Uruguay Round has concluded in much more difficult circumstances than when it began.

From an economic standpoint, many countries are undergoing the most serious recession since the Great Depression in the 1930s: from a political point of view, the profound changes which have taken place in Central and Eastern European countries and the former USSR have radically changed the international scene and also pose new economic challenges.

The fact that a final agreement has been reached under these circumstances is in itself satisfactory, but in addition the agreement reached is sufficiently comprehensive and balanced to enable it to be considered a success.

Trade in agricultural products has been incorporated into the GATT multilateral system, following the conversion into customs duties of the non-tariff barriers which restricted international trade. Trade in textiles, which until now was subject to the restrictions of the Multifibre Arrangement, has also been reintegrated into the multilateral system.

For the first time, trade in services has been addressed and is now subject to the rules of a framework agreement and the initial market access and national treatment commitments already offered by many countries. Some sectors in which we expect important results are still pending. The agreement reached is only a first step which should bring about greater liberalization in this area in the future.

The new agreement on intellectual property rights makes a large number of rights and obligations which already formed part of the domestic legal system in many countries into multilateral rights and obligations.

Moreover, the multilateral rules and disciplines have been strengthened and formulated more precisely by means of the Understandings and Agreements which implement the corresponding articles of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade relative to anti-dumping, subsidies, safeguards and technical barriers, etc., thereby substantially enhancing the results obtained in previous Rounds concerning these matters.

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At the same time, the needs of developing countries, and particularly the least-developed countries, continue to receive special consideration, so that the liberalization of international trade will not impede their legitimate aspirations to higher levels of well-being and economic growth.

All these agreements will be managed within a new institutional framework which we deem to be perhaps one of the greatest achievements of the Uruguay Round: the establishment of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Understanding on Rules and Procedures Governing the Settlement of Disputes constitute, in our opinion, the kingpin which will allow for the consolidation of the multilateral trading system and the end of recourse to unilateral measures.

In short, we must congratulate ourselves on the wide range of issues negotiated, the extent of trade liberalization, and the setting up of an institutional framework which, together, should constitute a solid basis for the improved development of world trade in coming years. However, our satisfaction at this great liberalization of trade must not allow us to forget that there are issues related to trade which are of great concern to public opinion, and that they either received only cursory attention at the Uruguay Round or were simply not addressed at all.

Among the issues only briefly touched on were, first of all, the relationship between trade and environment. We are convinced that the Committee on Trade and Environment and its work programme, which we decided to establish with a view to examining this question, will lead to results that are satisfactory to all the WTO signatories in the medium term.

In the second place, the link between trade and monetary aspects. The growing globalization of the economy imposes the need for coherence in the formulation of economic policies, especially with regard to achieving greater stability in exchange rates as a means of expanding trade flows, thereby stimulating growth and development.

Among the matters which were not discussed during the Uruguay Round, allow me to mention the relationship between trade and social rights. We must ensure that the improvements in levels of income and well-being as a result of the liberalization of international trade can be enjoyed by the whole population, which is easier in a society that effectively applies the rights recognized by the International Labour Organization. Moreover, awareness of respect for these rights will remove any justification for protectionist pressures which, in the medium term, would be impossible to reject without these guarantees.

Indeed, if this matter is not solved in the future, it will be increasingly unlikely that the efforts required by trade liberalization will be accepted by public opinion.

Thus, major tasks remain to be tackled in the future. Nevertheless, the results already obtained will encourage the growth of the world economy and the well-being of all countries as of the entry into force of the WTO. This process will make progressive strides as the different deadlines for application of the agreements are met. We can expect that during the first few years of the 21st century the state of the economy of all our countries will be much better than it is at present - to a large degree thanks to the success of our negotiations in the Uruguay Round.