

**MULTILATERAL TRADE
NEGOTIATIONS
THE URUGUAY ROUND**

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SAINT LUCIA

Statement by H.E. Mr. Edwin Laurent
Ambassador, Permanent Representative to GATT¹

I wish to extend sincere thanks to the Government of Morocco both for the splendid organization of this historic conference and the graciousness and warmth of its reception in this ancient city of Marrakesh. I wish also to convey my Government's gratitude to Mr. Peter Sutherland, his predecessor Mr. Arthur Dunkel and the efficient staff of the GATT Secretariat for steering to a successful conclusion this most ambitious and complex set of trade negotiations ever undertaken.

There is so much which can be claimed for the Uruguay Round of negotiations. Its achievements have in so many instances exceeded the targets set seven years ago in Punta del Este. What was accomplished has been due not just to the far-sightedness and imagination of the negotiators, but the sacrifices of participating countries both in the developing and the developed worlds.

Saint Lucia accepts the conclusions of the Round as well as the creation of the WTO. As a small island developing nation with one of the most open and vulnerable economies in the world, we understand the value of a strengthened and ruled-based multilateral system. But we also have high expectations for the WTO, hoping that it will pay real attention to the economic and social concerns and interests of its members. We expect that its stronger and clearer legal mandate will permit it to advance not just free competition, but the promotion of the principles of fairness and justice in trade among nations.

My Government expects the WTO to facilitate the participation of the weakest and of the least-developed countries in world trade. Over the last decade we have seen both a dramatic reduction of the already minuscule share of those countries in international commerce and their distressing marginalization in the international economy. Pious declarations calling for "special and differential treatment" are not enough; alone they will not sell one more box of bananas or bag of cocoa. To be credible, the WTO and the international community at large will have to move beyond rhetoric to take concrete actions in support of the trading interests of these weakest participants should they be threatened or should opportunities arise to enhance their access to markets or their fuller participation in world trade. Unless such a changed approach is adopted, there will surely be no reversal of the inexorable trend of recent years of the continuing marginalization and impoverishment of the weakest trading nations. The high-minded sentiments and ideals which are being expressed this week and the commendable ideals of the WTO will, for these countries, be just mocking and shallow platitudes unless they are followed by concrete action.

¹Written statement only.

For Saint Lucia, though it is not all blind faith, we perceive some indications of real promise. We were particularly encouraged by the agreement reached in the final days of the Uruguay Round which guaranteed the equitable sharing of the European Union's import market for bananas among traditional supplies both from Central America and the ACP. This agreement was welcomed not only by Saint Lucia, but the other suppliers of bananas in the region who are completely dependent for a livelihood on the export of bananas to the European Union made possible by the special trading regime of the Lomé Convention.

The agreement, which was finally reached only last month, we trust will have brought to an end the bitter and damaging dispute for the control of the European Union market in which the vulnerable side was the ACP, particularly the Windward Islands, which faced the prospect of ruin and destitution if their export trade could not be assured. We welcomed that agreement since it guarantees the legitimate right of my country as a party to the General Agreement to share in international trade. The negotiations have achieved that objective not by a blind and mechanical application of the rules, as some self-serving pundits have advocated, but rather by ensuring that trade will not only be free but also fair and recognizing that competition will only be truly equal when it is just. This accord has demanded painful sacrifices from us, but like many others, we have agreed to make them because that has been the only way to obtain the security of effective market access without which our aspirations for sustainable development would be placed in grave jeopardy. That agreement, annexed to the Final Act, has reassured my country that the international community can muster the political will to find just and equitable solutions to the intractable problems which arise from time to time.

Vulnerable and powerless as we are, we face the future reassured and hopeful that the new global trading system will not be a jungle with the unrelenting assault by the stronger on the weaker, but one in which nations can trade peacefully within a predictable, transparent and equitable regulatory system. Our resources are few and our constraints numerous, but Saint Lucia intends to participate fully in the new global system which is being ushered in by this conference. We intend, for ourselves and for those who follow, to make our fullest possible contribution to the new WTO which we hope will be the most just global trade regulatory institution the world has ever seen.