

**MULTILATERAL TRADE
NEGOTIATIONS
THE URUGUAY ROUND**

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MAURITANIA

Statement by Mr. Ould Cheikh Melainine Chebih
Minister of Trade, Handicrafts and Tourism

I am particularly happy to be with you today in the capital of the Almoravides, this great city of the Kingdom of Morocco, a crossroads of thousand-year-old cultures but also a historic crossroads for trans-Saharan trade: Marrakesh.

I and the Delegation I head cannot fail to express to His Majesty the King and to the Moroccan people, the heir and guarantor of a great tradition of hospitality, our gratitude for the welcome we have received and for the excellent organization of this Meeting.

The choice of Marrakesh for the signature of the Uruguay Round Agreements honours not only Morocco but the Maghreb and the whole of Africa.

Anywhere else, fear of the consequences of these Agreements would probably have prevailed over the hopes and aspirations held out to us by a new world trade order.

The World Trade Organization, whose mission will be to liberalize and monitor international trade, will undoubtedly have an institutional role such as that of the Bretton Woods institutions, but it will be powerless if the results of this revival are unevenly shared.

The majority of the underdeveloped countries are likely to grow even poorer to the benefit of the richer countries.

Because there is particularly low elasticity of demand for the few products they export and because they lack adequate means of production and financial resources, those countries are unable to benefit in the medium term from the broadening of markets.

Most of them are carrying out adjustment programmes to reduce the involvement of the State in favour of the private sector, hence of international trade operators, and are still in a situation which requires not only an adaptation phase as provided for in the Agreement but an assistance programme to lighten their burden.

In Mauritania, after the customary negotiations with the Bretton Woods Institutions and other fund providers, the Government is resolutely engaged in stabilizing the country's finances and reducing the participation of the State through systematic privatization of all State monopolies.

Mauritania, which has just completed a democratic and pluralistic process under conditions of stability and transparency that are known to you, does not reject out of hand any additional clause

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of a social or humanitarian nature. However, we cannot accept a mere non-speaking role; in this connection we deem it essential to draw the attention of this entire Meeting to our complete and irreversible adherence to the new trade order.

That adherence does not preclude a few observations regarding the object and philosophy of the World Trade Organization. It seems to us essential to take into account the experience of the organizations and agencies established nearly 50 years ago in order to escape certain misdeeds and the temptation of the most powerful to establish a hegemony. It would be desirable, and is our desire, that the World Trade Organization should be apolitical. It should avoid any form of exclusion or discrimination.

To that end we wish that all the countries of the world may be members of it; in particular we consider it important that China should not only resume its place in the GATT, but be a founder member of the World Trade Organization.

In our view, there can be no justification for any discrimination with regard to the accession of one fifth of mankind to the World Trade Organization.

The apolitical nature of the Organization would enable us to avoid any form of embargo designed to deprive entire peoples of the right to buy and sell; no morality and no values can justify preventing children and civilian populations from feeding themselves or looking after themselves. As we see it, an embargo is the best way to flout human rights.

A point which some speakers have raised has our special attention: that of trade and environment. As a country of the Sahel, Mauritania would wish that, under that heading, particular attention should be paid to the phenomenon of desertification that threatens our country and the whole of the continent.

Mauritania, as a signatory of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a Member of the International Labour Organisation and a pluralistic democracy, fully subscribes to the values of the social clause as the European Union and the Ministers of France and Belgium understood it; however, we cannot agree to extending that notion to a levelling of wage costs on a worldwide scale. The difference in wage costs is one of the few advantages which the countries of the South possess.

As to the application of the Uruguay Round Agreements, the transitional phase adopted for the third-world countries would not allow any readjustment of our economies unless, during that stage, aid was increased, debt reduced and certain export stabilization mechanisms adopted, in particular those provided by the Lomé Convention for the ACP countries.

With calm and confidence we commit ourselves to the new structure of international trade in the hope of seeing exclusion, discrimination and embargo outlawed forever.

I cannot end this brief statement without expressing all my gratitude to the Director-General of GATT and all his team, who have given us their help whenever we wanted it.