

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON

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TARIFFS AND TRADE

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TRADE AND ENVIRONMENT

Statement by the Delegation of Cameroon

Since the meeting opened yesterday, we have been exposed to the risk of an "overdose" of trade and environment in what is termed a "structured debate". My delegation has listened attentively to all the statements but is still not clear as to the meaning that should be given to the word "structure". In fact, in the light of all we have heard, it would be advisable to restructure the various elements contained in document Spec(91)21.

Since our debate is supposed to clarify the relationship between trade and environment, in our view Point I of the document should be our conclusion. My delegation considers that Points V and IV should be our priority, since the present exercise is taking place within GATT and we are here to examine the legal framework constituted by the General Agreement and the relevant international instruments.

I should like now to take up a question asked by the Austrian Ambassador in his statement, namely, what is the environment? He said "We are all constantly talking about the "environment", are we all talking about the same thing?" We are all aware that the General Agreement itself does not refer to environment explicitly, in contrast to the Standards Code. Can the reference to Art. XX to "human, animal or plant life and health" and to "the conservation of exhaustible natural resources" be understood to mean environment?" The definition of environment is of importance in the GATT context and therefore warrants a thorough discussion".

From the foregoing and from all we have heard, my delegation has concluded that, in most cases, it is above all the physical environment that has been referred to. But to the physical environment must be added the human environment; i.e. the environment must be given a human dimension. In other words, environment policies have two aspects: on the one hand, the depletion of the ozone layer and the pollution of the air and the oceans and, on the other hand, the issues linked to development, which in our view remain the priority.

The second question we might ask is: has GATT already had to deal with issues linked to the environment? The answer is that it has, and we refer in this connection to the working group on Export of Domestically Prohibited Goods and other Hazardous Substances.

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It has to be recognized that the creation of that working group was one of the CONTRACTING PARTIES' main contributions during their work on trade and environment. For our part, we consider that the early adoption of the draft decision drawn up by that group would be a step towards achieving the objective sought, which is to bring discipline to the trade policies governing such hazardous products and waste, which are exported essentially to African countries. We therefore hope that the group's work will be completed on schedule, that is by the end of June this year.

But, at a general level, we might also ask who should be responsible for establishing rules and regulations on the environment.

In the view of my delegation, establishing rules and regulations on the environment is not one of GATT's responsibilities, which concern only trade and development. My delegation therefore endorses the suggestion made by Malaysia on behalf of the ASEAN countries that the secretariat should be asked to prepare a factual paper on the subject, which should be submitted to the Council. At the same time, my delegation is not opposed, in principle, to the revival of the 1971 working group.

The question of whether GATT, in view of its mandate and its contractual nature, would be the right body at the moment to examine trade and development must be carefully analyzed. My delegation is, at the very least, sceptical as to the advisability of such an undertaking. We also doubt that GATT's rule-making procedure is in itself sufficient to meet the particular concerns and needs of developing countries.

As matters stand, my delegation is prepared to examine the advisability of resuming discussions on trade and environment in GATT if the contracting parties recognize that, in order to strengthen our countries' capacity to promote sustainable development through the expansion of trade, it is necessary to ensure that, at the same time, measures are taken to:

- (i) stabilize commodity prices at sufficiently remunerative levels;
- (ii) eliminate the tariff escalation and other tariff and non-tariff barriers applying to their trade in other markets;
- (iii) transfer new and additional financial resources to our countries so that they can bear the additional costs arising from the use of eco-technologies and take measures to preserve their natural resources;
- (iv) ensure that all contracting parties undertake to complete the work on the export of domestically prohibited goods by the scheduled date, i.e. the end of June 1991.

In conclusion, I wish to point out that the position of our group was expressed clearly by Ambassador Jamal and my delegation concurs fully with his statement.