

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON

RESTRICTED

TARIFFS AND TRADE

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TRADE AND ENVIRONMENT

Statement by the Delegation of Nigeria

My delegation wishes to commend the efforts of the Chairman of the CONTRACTING PARTIES for the extensive consultations he has carried out on this important subject and to thank him for the outline he has proposed on trade and environment. We also wish to share the statement made by Ambassador Jamal of the United Republic of Tanzania on behalf of the African Group. I have very little to add except to complement and emphasize the points raised in his statement which we fully subscribed to.

My delegation has no objection to reviving the 1971 Working Group which was set up at that time to deal with specific environmental issues relevant to trade policy. Fortunately there was nothing to warrant the Working Group to meet and deliberate over it since 1971 and we expect that there will not be any case to warrant the group to meet over it now or in the near future.

We are amazed at the interest shown for reviving the 1971 Working Group which is legally existing and could meet any time. The membership is still the countries present at this Council and nothing should stop them from convening a meeting, even this afternoon. The only problem is the subject they will discuss.

You will recall that when this matter was raised by EFTA countries this year, my delegation stated unequivocally that the responsibility for standards and rules in the environmental field should rest with the international organizations such as UNEP and WMO which have competence and responsibility in those fields and we emphasized that GATT should not absolve these rôles for setting rules and standards in environmental matters. GATT has competence only in the field of trade and development. The problem facing our continent is poverty alleviation which is the major cause of environmental degradation and is our primary preoccupation and this can only be solved through a concerted effort globally. We believe that the main cause of our poverty is due to the deterioration and instability of commodities prices and lack of market access in developed countries.

Environmental consideration seems to have replaced economic development on the international agenda with a growing trend to use trade-restrictive measures to achieve environmental objective which are inconsistent with the basic GATT principles and rules. Can the world seek an agreement for limited land-use, being the main cause of pollution and environmental degradation without tackling the main cause - poverty in the

third world in general and Africa in particular? We like to be reassured that the development objective of trade, which is one of the main preoccupations of developing countries, in GATT is given more attention by the work on trade and environment.

My delegation is prepared to discuss this subject further on the condition that the contracting parties would ensure that simultaneous action is taken by them for the alleviation of poverty, heavy debt and the debt service burden through improved terms of trade for our commodities prices, removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers to products of export interest to developing countries, new and additional financial and technical assistance to enable us to cope with the higher costs of attempting to adopt environmentally-friendly technologies.

We wish that the subject matter should be clearly defined to remove any ambiguity in our mind. Are we considering the effects of trade-related matters on environment or the effects of environment-related matters on trade? The two are not one and the same thing and there is the need for a clearer definition of what we are striving at.

My delegation is not against sustainable development, but sustainable development does not mean the present generation should not have the barest minimum of basic needs, such as food, for the sake of future generations. And this is why we are insisting that there is the need to tackle the problem from its roots. Simply stated, if developed countries pay the right price for our products then we cannot cut down trees or over-fish our waters. If they cancel our debt and give us technical and additional financial assistance then we cannot over-use the land to pay them. If they stop exporting toxic and hazardous substances they domestically banned in their territories to us due to their affluent consumption, knowing fully well that we are incapable of disposing of them, forcing us to acquire technologies not relevant to our level of development and at prices beyond our capability to deal with this, and pushing us into more indebtedness than the vicious cycle of over-exploitation of our natural resources cannot stop.

To assist less-developed contracting parties in pursuing sustainable development in both the agricultural and industrial policies, the international community should be in a position to transfer relevant technology to them at affordable prices by taking into account their trade and financial needs.

Nigeria has all along been supportive of the question related to environmental matters of specific interest to developing countries and we commend the contracting parties in establishing the Working Group on Exports of Domestically Prohibited Goods and Other Hazardous Substances. We hope that the deadline of 30 June for completing the Group's work should be adhered to.

To sum up, my delegation is of the view that:

- (a) The 1971 Working Group exists and could start work any time there is something to discuss within its mandate.
- (b) GATT is not the right forum to discuss trade and environment at this point in time.
- (c) Further discussions in GATT on trade and environment should be based on the principle that action should simultaneously be taken for the alleviation of poverty in the spirit of Article 38, 1 and 2(a) of the General Agreement which calls on the contracting parties to take joint action for ensuring stable, equitable and remunerative prices for products of export interest to less-developed contracting parties.
- (d) All contracting parties should be committed to complete and adopt the work on export of domestically prohibited goods and other hazardous substances.