

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON

TARIFFS AND TRADE

SR.43/ST/21
23 December 1987
Limited Distribution

CONTRACTING PARTIES
Forty-Third Session

Original: English

POLAND

Statement by Mr. Janusz Kaczurba Special Representative of the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations

Yesterday we celebrated the 40th anniversary of the creation of the GATT. Our General Agreement has proved its vitality over the years of its existence. In fact, it has become a principal factor in international trade relations in the post-war period.

Even though the tasks facing the GATT and the international trading community are still enormous, there are some encouraging things which allow for a certain degree of optimism and which point to the existence of a political will in GATT countries to restore and strengthen confidence in the multilateral trading system. With the launching of the new round of negotiations, governments in many countries have acquired additional arguments for resisting protectionist tendencies coming from various sectors of their economy.

My delegation appreciates the progress already made in the initial phase of the Uruguay Round. In all negotiating groups, a very useful exchange of views on modalities and on the factual basis for negotiations has taken place. Many interesting proposals have been put forward. They are being examined now and, though further discussions and consultations are still needed in order to reconcile them, at least in certain areas of negotiations some convergence of views appears to have been reached.

It is the responsibility of each participating country, and especially of the big trading powers, to ensure that the momentum is not lost and that this pace is maintained in the negotiating phase as well.

One of the prerequisites indispensable for attaining this objective is the strict and full adherence by all countries to the standstill and rollback commitments undertaken under the Ministerial Declaration. The success of the Uruguay Round will also depend on full respect for the interest of all, not only the major trading powers, in the course of negotiations. The political determination to liberalize world trade is therefore required in all participating countries.

In this context, the postponement of deliberations on the Omnibus Trade Bill in the United States Congress may be noted as an encouraging sign that the creation of new barriers to trade is not necessarily a foregone conclusion.

Poland looks forward to substantial progress and positive results in all areas of negotiations and especially in the field of access to markets, agriculture, dispute settlement and a comprehensive agreement on safeguards.

This, however, cannot be just a wait-and-see attitude. International trade relations are made in our respective homes. We are thus firmly convinced that the Uruguay Round will be effective only if and when the positive results of the negotiations are translated into specific domestic policy measures of individual GATT countries, aimed at assuring consistency between such policies and external commitments. This approach has been taken by my Government. It is reflected in such developments as an extensive liberalization of trade-related activities by public and private enterprises, a gradual phasing out of various subsidy practices, improved transparency of the legislation affecting trade, and better access to the domestic market for foreign goods and companies. A thorough revision of the customs tariff is about to be completed with a view to achieving full conformity with the standards set for the Harmonized System. Those who are responsible for drafting and implementing such policies have the text of the General Agreement on their desks and - more important - in their minds.

Taking into account the interlinkage existing nowadays between economies of all countries, we are deeply convinced that only by common efforts in the course of negotiations can we overcome difficulties arising in the world economy and ensure the further development of international trade.

Poland, being vitally interested in the development of trade relations with all her foreign partners, therefore, attaches great importance to the activities of the GATT and to the multilateral trade negotiations in the Uruguay Round. We share the opinion that the deadline of four years for this round, as established in Punta del Este, should be met and that a mid-term review would be useful in 1988.

We note with satisfaction that in most of the proposals presented by major countries in the initial phase, the situation of smaller participants in world trade seems to have been taken into account, and we hope that this attitude will materialize into actual results in the negotiating phase. It would be the best testimony of the attachment to the idea which became the cornerstone of the GATT forty years ago.