

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON

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Statement by H.E. Mr. Alioune Sene Ambassador, Permanent Representative

Through the application of the rule of law, GATT has certainly helped to ensure the stability of tariffs, as far as is possible, by thus giving a broader legal dimension to the international trading system as a whole. But beyond the national interests which each contracting party defends here, what is basically at stake, and what we must keep in mind, is the strengthening of the multilateral machinery which governs us under the legal authority and within the sphere of competence of the General Agreement. As regards the Uruguay Round, the aim must therefore be to work out constructive measures by moving forwards, perhaps slowly but nevertheless significantly, on specific points where market-economy factors can be made more stable and above all more predictable; for predictability is an essential condition for economic security and stability of international economic relations. In that connection, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organizations of African Unity, when examining the critical economic situation in Africa in 1985 at summit level, already expressed their desire to play a greater part in the major negotiations on world economic and trade issues in the light of a prospective analysis based on the Lagos Plan of Action up to the year 2000.

To that end, the African Heads of State had considered the prospects of the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations, reviewing the question of agricultural products, preferences enjoyed by the countries in the European Economic Community, South-South co-operation with the establishment of a generalized system of trade preferences among developing countries, sectoral data networks, and Southern banks, to mention but a few.

It is in this light that my delegation would like to approach the mid-term review of the Uruguay Round negotiations, and with a view to the Montreal Conference which will play a key rôle in the subsequent negotiating process. We believe that at Montreal the emphasis will thus be placed on the interdependence of policies in the fields of trade, money, finance and development. That interdependence is today crucially important, and thus raises the question of the complementarity of the rôles of the GATT, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, it being understood that each of them, while remaining in its specific sphere of competence, can provide the others with useful information for the elaboration of future policies.

Likewise, as the African Heads of State stressed, problems relating to trade in services and to trade-related aspects of intellectual property and investment must not be overlooked, since they are also part of the world economy and need to be examined in the mutual interest of all parties. All the issues on the negotiating table must indeed be considered, but in a balanced and positive manner, avoiding deadlocks and more than ever taking account of the situation of the weakest.

However, for the developing countries, which have embarked on structural adjustment programmes designed to promote their economic growth through the liberalization of their domestic economic channels and of their foreign trade and the stimulation of production, the negotiations must pay greater attention to their situation and their difficulties.

The facts and figures paint a depressing picture for Africa, which accounts for 4 per cent of world trade, as the distinguished representative of Nigeria stressed a moment ago. And yet that is not a reason to leave this continent on the sidelines, relegate it to the periphery, as a region lost to development; in Africa the potential for growth of development does exist, and may be exploited by increasing flows of resources and significantly improving export possibilities, and by the introduction of technological know-how and upgrading of human resources.

However, not only is the macro-economic environment far from stable, but the developing countries undergoing structural adjustment still see falling world prices for their and protectionist barriers raised by the very countries which, elsewhere, preach the gospel of free trade. We know that the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade is not only a constant bulwark against protectionist pressures but also the place where a multilateral trading system is being forged - a system which we would like to be more open, more credible, more dynamic and more efficient, so as to respond better to the contemporary realities of the evolution of the world economy.

That in any case is our hope as regards the Montreal meeting, at which we hope that emphasis will be placed more than ever on the fact that a multilateral system of stable trade, in which international trade may be conducted efficiently, would generate economic growth as well as essential factors for reducing structural rigidities and uncertainties and fostering a suitable climate for employment-creating investment.