

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON

TARIFFS AND TRADE

SR.45/ST/15
19 December 1989
Limited Distribution

CONTRACTING PARTIES
Forty-Fifth Session

Original: Spanish

VENEZUELA

Statement by H.E. Mr. Oscar R. De Rojas
Ambassador, Deputy Permanent Representative
(Speaking as an Observer)

Our delegation wishes to take this opportunity to re-emphasize the importance that Venezuela attaches to the process for its accession to the General Agreement; I refer here to document L/6603, paragraph 17(h). As we have pointed out on numerous occasions, our joining GATT is an integral part of the economic reform programme our Government is carrying out.

The trade component of this reform programme calls for the gradual opening of the Venezuelan economy in order to stimulate the efficiency and competitiveness of our industry, and for the development of a vigorous export policy designed to change, both qualitatively and quantitatively, Venezuela's participation in the world economy.

It is against this background that we measure the importance of our membership in GATT. We are convinced that Venezuela's involvement in the multilateral trading system will offer it a more stable and predictable framework for conducting its international trade relations.

Ever since Venezuela formally applied for accession to the General Agreement, in May 1989, we have been making serious efforts to ensure that the process is carried out within a reasonable period of time. In early September 1989, we submitted for the consideration of the contracting parties our Memorandum on the Foreign Trade Régime, and just over two weeks ago we replied to the questionnaire transmitted to us by the GATT secretariat. We have also expressed our readiness to initiate tariff negotiations with interested contracting parties and are making preparations to participate in the first meeting of the Working Party on the Accession of Venezuela, scheduled for 15 December 1989.

Carrying out these tasks in such a short period of time has by no means been easy, but the process has been facilitated by the broad support of contracting parties and the GATT secretariat's extremely useful and prompt co-operation. I should like to express Venezuela's thanks for this support.

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We should also like to express our satisfaction at the appointment of Ambassador Hans Ewerlöf as Chairman of the Working Party on the Accession of Venezuela. Ambassador Ewerlöf's personal qualities and diplomatic experience, his expertise in GATT matters and his friendship with Venezuela, place him in an ideal position to perform this function well.

Finally, I wish to reiterate Venezuela's request to participate in the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations. We feel that our desire to become involved in these negotiations as soon as possible is a legitimate one. We wish to participate in the GATT of the future, in the GATT which is now being shaped in the negotiations of the Uruguay Round. In this connection, we hope that the consultations carried out by the Director-General, to whom we convey our sincere thanks for his efforts and his desire to arrive at an arrangement that will be acceptable to all, will facilitate the adoption of a decision in favour of the Venezuelan request at the forthcoming meeting of the Trade Negotiations Committee.