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Once again we find ourselves at a session of the CONTRACTING PARTIES where a new tendency to assess the slight improvements in the developed countries' economies as beneficial to the international trading system is coming up in statements we have heard both yesterday and today. However, in my country's view, such improvements have occurred only in part of the world, and in order for the international system really to improve, the interests of all the world's nations must be taken into account.

I beg to differ with those who make the incomplete assessment I have just mentioned. What is the real economic picture today, when the economic crisis continues to have a devastating effect on the economies of developing countries?

We are witnessing an excessive growth in the external debt of developing countries as a direct result, inter alia, of a rise in the already high bank interest rates and a drop in export earnings. Regrettably, in their efforts to fulfil their financial commitments or obtain additional monetary resources, governments, in most cases, have to impose a heavy burden on their peoples and economies.

I recently read a report of high statistical quality on the current economic situation in Africa, and I have to ask if the situation on that continent is not considered to be part of our planet's global economic picture.

Why leave it out? Is it because some analyses still draw from the well-spring of anachronistic colonial viewpoints, which give pride of place only to their own situation and ignore the others?

One factor that continues to have an adverse impact on the trade environment is the rise in protectionism on the part of industrialized countries, which sometimes apply unfair trade practices such as subsidies and anti-dumping measures, which make the situation worse, particularly when protectionist measures linking economic aid to specific political stances are also applied, and even used as a means of political coercion.

Inequality in trade is worsening, and the gap in development levels between industrialized and developing countries continues to widen into a chasm.

For three years we have been engaged in an arduous and complex process within the Uruguay Round of negotiations aimed at shaping what is often called a "new GATT".

In this task, all countries, but mainly the developing countries, have focused their hopes on the Round's helping to solve some of the above-mentioned problems faced by their weakened economies.

Unfortunately, just the opposite is happening in the multilateral trading system: the multilateral commitments on standstill and rollback are being violated through the application of unilateral measures that are contrary to the letter and the spirit of the General Agreement and undermine the climate of security which we are all working so hard to achieve.

Bilateral and sectoral agreements detrimental to international trade are being drawn up among the major developed countries and signed by them alone.

It is precisely the countries which, in other areas of international relations, wish to impose approaches that flout the national sovereignty of third world countries, that arrogate to themselves, in the area of international trade, the right of omnipotence in applying their domestic law without regard for the opinions of the international community.

Over the past twelve months, in the framework of the Uruguay Round, we have taken important decisions to improve the procedures for dispute settlement and trade policy review, but we cannot take these as proof of progress in our work. Although, in April 1989, the vast majority of participants worked to arrive at balanced results and to extract the Round from the deadlock it had reached, there has since been absolutely no progress on subjects of vital importance to the developing countries, such as the negotiating groups on access, and the guidelines laid down by Ministers in specific areas at the Mid-Term Review have remained dead letters.

A clear example can be seen in respect of tropical goods, where progress is slow and uneven. We wish to recall once again that these negotiations must take into account the commitments undertaken by Ministers at Punta del Este, in which they accorded priority to the topic in view of the well-known importance for developing countries of trade in tropical goods.

There is no need for me to dwell on the developing countries' participation in and contribution to the negotiating process, for this is clearly set out in the Ministerial Declaration.

Finally, I wish to reiterate my country's readiness to continue working constructively within this process so as to achieve a true liberalization of trade in 1990 that will be equitable and in conformity with the fundamental principles of the General Agreement, and under which the terms and conditions of trade will be better than those imposed up to now on the countries of the third world.