

G A T T**41st SESSION OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES *****Green light for preparation of programme for multilateral trade negotiations**

The 41st Session of the Contracting Parties, held from 25 to 28 November, focussed mainly on the future. Faced with deterioration in the credibility of the legal framework of the international trading system, with the pressures to which the system is being subjected and with a slowdown in the growth of trade, the members of GATT decided to move forward and demonstrated their desire to cooperate multilaterally within GATT in meeting these challenges.

"We have taken a critical step forward in GATT this week, and we have demonstrated to that very large community whose future is bound up with the health of international trade that GATT can and will meet the challenges that face the international trading system", said Mr. Felipe Jaramillo, Chairman of the Contracting Parties, at the end of the Session. "We have succeeded", he added, "in a spirit of cooperation in reaching a consensus decision of high importance. We have established a Preparatory Committee charged with determining the objectives, subject matter and modalities for, and participation in, a new round of multilateral trade negotiations. We have clarified certain concerns. And we have agreed to set for the Preparatory Committee a deadline for reaching agreement on its recommendations that ensures that the critically important issues set before it receive the urgent attention they require". At the same time, he noted that "the way ahead will not be easy. Many questions remain to be answered before the new round of negotiations can be launched. But the necessary mechanism for answering them has been established, and the necessary determination and goodwill on the part of governments has been demonstrated here".

"The Contracting Parties decide that:

1. The Preparatory Committee is established to determine the objectives, subject matter, modalities for and participation in the multilateral trade negotiations, taking into account the elements of the 1982 Ministerial Work Programme and the views expressed in the Group of Senior Officials;
2. The Preparatory Committee is open to any contracting party or country which has acceded provisionally to the GATT;
3. The Preparatory Committee will prepare by mid-July 1986 recommendations for the programme of negotiations for adoption at a Ministerial Meeting to be held in September 1986."

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The Chairman made the following remarks after the adoption of the decision establishing the Preparatory Committee:

"It has emerged from the debate that the questions of standstill and rollback, treatment of developing countries and safeguards should constitute important issues for the work of the Preparatory Committee."

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The Chairman made the following clarifying statement on the question of participation in the Preparatory Committee:

"It is the Chairman's understanding that countries which are negotiating for accession to GATT may also attend the Committee as observers. Countries which have already formally requested accession will thus be able to attend the first meeting of the Committee."

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In addition, the following decision was reached on the question of GATT work related to trade in services:

"The Contracting Parties,

In pursuance of the 1982 Ministerial Decision on Services, and

In accordance with the agreed conclusions adopted by the Contracting Parties on 30 November 1984,

Decide to invite contracting parties to continue the exchange of information undertaken in pursuance of the agreed conclusions of 30 November 1984, and to prepare recommendations for consideration by the Contracting Parties at their next session."

* [The above extract taken from GATT Newsletter Focus of December 1985, January 1986 No. 37, refers to a decision to establish a Preparatory Committee for new multilateral trade negotiations.]