

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON
TARIFFS AND TRADE

ACCORD GÉNÉRAL SUR
LES TARIFS DOUANIERS ET LE COMMERCE

MEETING OF MINISTERS
16-21 May 1963

GATT/785
20 May 1963

STATEMENT MADE BY MR. O.C. GUNDERSEN,
MINISTER OF TRADE AND SHIPPING, NORWAY,
ON 20 MAY 1963

Item II: Arrangements for the Reduction or Elimination of Tariffs and Other Barriers to Trade, and Related Matters

Item III: Measures for Access to Markets for Agricultural and Other Primary Products

It is in accordance with the basic interest of Norway to support actions that may lead to an expansion of world trade. The dismantling of tariffs and other trade barriers is one means by which we can contribute to this end. This is the purpose of this gathering of the Contracting Parties at Geneva today. But as I have said the dismantling of tariffs is but one, although maybe the principle means, for the liberalization of world trade. There are also other means which in the view of the Norwegian Government should be taken into consideration. Bearing in mind that it falls outside our programme of work at this conference, I nevertheless feel that it would be appropriate in this context to draw your attention to the intimate relationship between international trade and international services. And by services I have in mind above all shipping services. I cannot help feeling that there is a lack of consistency when we now bend our efforts to liberalize world trade, when at the same time we seem to be unable to make any progress in other international organs to stop the trend of increasing protectionism in the field of shipping.

Having said this I do want to make it clear that we wholeheartedly welcome a new round of trade negotiations, hoping that it may lead to a wider liberalization of all activities which have to do with world trade. The movements of goods ought to be free in all respects.

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In our view it is difficult to over-estimate the importance of the initiative taken by the United States to make a major effort to liberalize world trade and to play its part as one of the world's leading trading nations. The Trade Expansion Act is a challenge to which it is our duty to give a positive response. We must do our utmost to enable the President of the United States to make full use of the powers vested in him by this Act. If this can be achieved I feel sure that the first step may have been taken towards a rapidly expanding world trade.

During the forthcoming negotiations the Norwegian Government is principally interested in supporting measures which will lead to a maximum reduction of all barriers to trade.

In line with this attitude we shall fully endorse the basic principles embodied in the recommendations made by the Working Party. As far as exceptions from the tariff reduction plan are concerned we would like to see them limited to the bare minimum. I may recall that we made certain proposals to this end during the discussions in the Working Party.

I should now, with your permission Mr. Chairman, like to turn to some problems to which the Norwegian Government attaches particular importance. Fish and fish products count for one-sixth of Norway's total export earnings. I want to say that it is our understanding that these products which today meet tariff barriers in many countries will be subject to the across-the-board approach which is supposed to be the basis of this new round of tariff negotiations. In our view this is necessary to achieve adequate reciprocity for Norway in her part in the trade liberalization process.

As far as agricultural products are concerned we acknowledge that they have to be included in these negotiations in order to find appropriate solutions to all the problems arising in this important field of international trade.

We for our part have to import about half of our food consumption. This of course is an indication of our dependence on the import of food. On the other hand Norwegian agriculture employs about 18 per cent of the country's total working population. To this I also should add that farming in Norway is subject to very special climatic and topographical conditions. You will therefore understand that we have listened with sympathy and interest to those statements which have stressed the importance of taking into account the particular conditions of the national farming industries during the coming negotiations.

Needless to say the problems which we have to solve in order to find adequate and just solutions to all the contracting parties of the GATT are very considerable indeed. I submit that we can only solve them by being reasonable and by avoiding being perfectionists. I should like to conclude this short statement by expressing the hope that reasonableness will prevail and that the door will be kept open for serious negotiations between the principle parties during the months which are now lying ahead of us.

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