



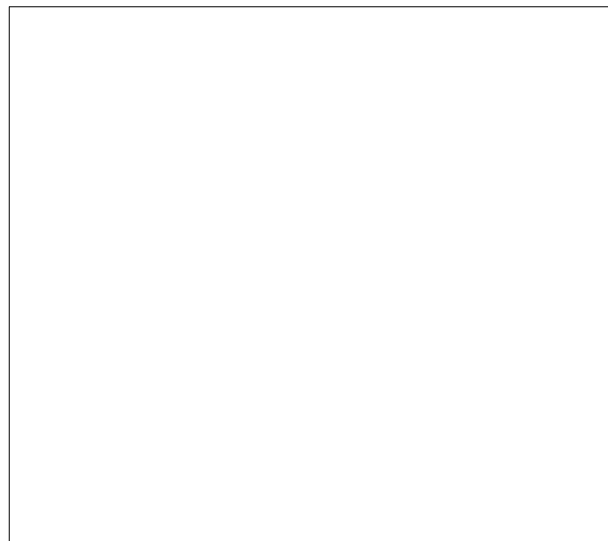
World leaders salute 50 years of GATT/WTO. *World leaders joined trade ministers in commemorating the 50th anniversary of the multilateral trading system on 18-19 May. WTO Director-General Renato Ruggiero and Swiss President Flavio Cotti, centre, are flanked by (from left), Prime Minister Daniel Kablan Duncan of Côte d'Ivoire, Crown Prince Sidi Mohammed of Morocco, Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik of Norway, Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom, President Fernando Henrique Cardoso of Brazil, Premier Romano Prodi of Italy, President Nelson Mandela of South Africa, President Fidel Castro of Cuba, Prime Minister Janez Drnovšek of Slovenia, Prime Minister Edison C. James of Dominica, and Prime Minister Ivan Kostov of Bulgaria. Below, US President Bill Clinton was the first head of state to speak on 18 May. (Lightmotif-Blatt)*

Trade Ministers launch preparations for third Ministerial, standstill agreed on electronic commerce

The Second WTO Ministerial Conference, held in Geneva on 18 and 20 May, launched a work programme to develop recommendations regarding implementation of existing WTO Agreements and the organization's future negotiating agenda. These recommendations will be submitted to the Third Ministerial, which the Ministers agreed would be held in the United States.

The Ministers also declared that members will con-

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Preparations

(Continued from page 1)

tinue their current practice of not imposing customs duties on electronic transmissions, and established a comprehensive work programme in the WTO on global electronic commerce. The Third Ministerial will review the extension of this declaration as well as consider any recommendations for action arising from the work programme.

The Ministerial Declaration, adopted on 20 May, instructed the General Council to hold a special session in September 1998 to start a process "to ensure full and faithful implementation of existing agreements, and to prepare for the Third Session of the Ministerial Conference".

The General Council will also develop recommendations on "further liberalization sufficiently broad-based to respond to the range of interests and concerns of all Members, within the WTO framework".

In the work programme agreed by the Ministers, the General Council is to develop, among others, recommendations on ensuring that negotiations mandated under existing agreements, such as on agriculture and on trade in services, begin on schedule. It will also discuss possible future work on the subjects agreed for study at the first Ministerial in Singapore: the relationship between trade and investment, the interaction between trade and competition policy, transparency in government procurement, and trade facilitation. Other matters raised by members will also be considered by the General Council.

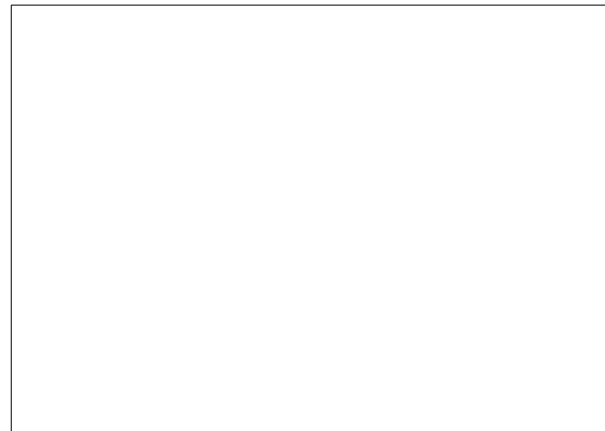
In a separate Declaration, the Ministers instructed the General Council to establish a comprehensive work programme to "examine all trade-related issues relating to global electronic commerce". This work programme will take account of the needs of developing countries and the ongoing work in other international organizations.

"A point of transition"

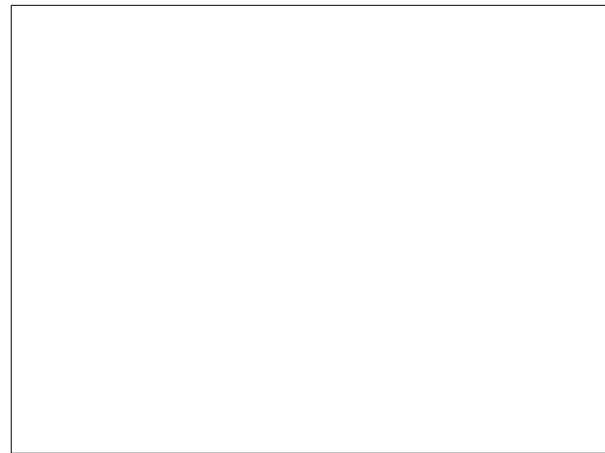
The Chairman, Switzerland's Minister for Public Economy Pascal Couchepin, in opening the Second Ministerial Conference on 18 May noted that the Ministers meet at "a point of transition—after the First Ministerial Meeting in Singapore, but before the negotiations scheduled at the turn-of-the-century and the decisions that will need to be addressed at our next Ministerial". Ministers are thus free of the constraints of negotiating positions and timetables, which "encourages us to remove the blinkers of narrow sectoral or national interests and to focus on the greater good of the trading community".

Mr. Couchepin said the two themes of the Conference—implementation and future activities—are not unrelated for "how successfully we implement our existing commitments and obligations—according to the spirit as well as the letter of our Uruguay Round undertakings—will be the clearest possible signal of the system's capacity for wider and deeper undertakings".

The Chairman reminded Ministers that trade liberalization "is not an end in itself but as an essential means to far more important ends". He said that "behind each line of the 20,000 pages of the WTO Agreements are millions of workers and farmers, entrepreneurs and professionals who want greater health and security for their families, freedom



The Chairman, Swiss Minister for Public Economy Pascal Couchepin (right), opens the Conference. With him is Director-General Renato Ruggiero. (Photo by Tania Tang/WTO)



The Ministers held extensive discussions on implementation and on future activities at the newly-built Council Room adjoining the WTO building. (Photo by Tania Tang/WTO)

from the shadow of unemployment, and a better future for their children".

The WTO Director-General, Mr. Renato Ruggiero, reported that since the Singapore Ministerial held in December 1996, the WTO has achieved many successes, including the conclusion of agreements on basic telecommunications and on financial services, and the implementation of the information technology agreement. "Their combined value equates to a new Round—the finance and technology Round for the 21st century," he said.

Mr. Ruggiero added that the WTO dispute-settlement system "is functioning well, and increasingly used by a wide range of the membership". As part of continuing dialogue with the wider community, he said that the WTO had organized successful seminars on trade and environment, and on trade facilitation.

The Director-General pointed to the "growing pressure on the multilateral trading system to give answers to issues which are very real public concerns, but whose solution cannot rely on the trading system alone". These issues, he said, include financial instability, development, marginalization, protection of the environment, social conditions, employment, public health and cultural diversity. Mr. Ruggiero said that after the Conference, he would "try to im-

Record 131 NGOs at the Geneva Ministerial

The presence of many non-governmental organiza-

prove information and dialogue with the civil society, taking into account the point of view of all the WTO members, and the rules which you have given to me”.

The Chairman of the General Council, Ambassador John Weekes (Canada), presented the body's report on the work of the WTO since the Singapore Ministerial. He said that “much work has been undertaken and accomplished in the 36 standing bodies of the Organization and the 31 Working Parties created to negotiate the accession of new members”. Ambassador Weekes paid tribute the contribution of the Director-General, who “had played a key role in preparing for this Ministerial Conference, including in particular in the consultations to prepare the Draft Declaration for consideration by Ministers”.

Ambassador Weekes noted that delegations had reached agreement on the text of the Draft Declaration for consideration by Ministers. “This should allow all Members to make full use of the working sessions of the Ministerial Conference to exchange views on the important issues on the WTO agenda,” he said.

Working Session on Implementation

The Ministerial Declaration underlined that “full and faithful implementation of the WTO Agreement and Ministerial Decisions is imperative for the credibility of the multilateral trading system and indispensable for maintaining the momentum for expanding global trade, fostering job-creation and raising living standards in all parts of the world”.

The Ministers agreed that at the Third Ministerial, they would continue the evaluation of the individual WTO agreements, including “the problems encountered in implementation and the consequent impact on the trade and development prospects of Members”.

At the Ministerial Conference's session on implementation, held on 18 and 20 May, many Ministers expressed satisfaction with progress in the implementation of WTO

agreements. The success of the WTO dispute-settlement mechanism was cited in particular, with Ministers noting its active use by members.

Ministers from developing countries called for a more equitable distribution of trade benefits resulting from the Uruguay Round.

Senegal said that it was essential “to ensure that the developing countries enjoyed a large enough share of international trade in order to meet their economic development needs”, adding that that WTO provisions for special and differential treatment for developing countries should be fully respected. Ghana said members should be concerned that the trade performance of African countries “continued to deteriorate”. It emphasized that “an economically viable Africa performing its role in the multilateral trading system would be beneficial to all and would serve to boost global trade”. Uganda said the key issue in implementation was that the agreements “be supportive of developing countries' strategy for national economic development, and in particular the role played by trade”.

A number of delegations expressed concern over the implementation of certain WTO agreements. The ASEAN countries, Bangladesh, Colombia, Costa Rica, India, Kenya, Pakistan, and Peru were among those who called for more commercially meaningful implementation of the Agreement on Textiles and Clothing. Egypt, Mauritius and Tunisia were among those who highlighted the need for full implementation of the Marrakesh Ministerial Decision on net foot-importing countries.

*Follow-up to the High-Level Meeting on LDCs***Ruggiero reiterates call for zero tariffs on LDC exports**

Director-General Renato Ruggiero, in his report on the WTO High-Level Meeting on Integrated Initiatives for Least-Developed Countries' Trade Development held in October 1997, again urged members to consider eliminating trade barriers to LDC exports and suggested that this matter be a priority issue in the preparations for the Third Ministerial. He underlined that LDCs account for only 0.4 per cent of world exports—"a figure which points both to the problem of marginalization of these countries in the world economy and to the insignificance of the competitive threat..."

On the High-Level Meeting, which was an outcome of the Singapore Ministerial, Mr. Ruggiero said that the WTO and the five other agencies involved (IMF, International Trade Centre, UNCTAD, UNDP and the World Bank) along with the LDCs who are the "owners" of the exercise have focused on the design and implementation of integrated programmes of technical assistance launched at the High Level Meeting for Least-Developed Countries (LDCs) in October 1997. He said that so far 39 LDCs are participating in this exercise: Angola, Bangladesh, Benin, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Democratic Republic of

Concerns were also expressed about anti-dumping, safeguard and countervailing measures as barriers to developing-country exports. Kenya said that the unwarranted use of sanitary and phytosanitary measures and other technical barriers to trade had resulted in market access problems.

Many Ministers welcomed the outcome and follow-up to the WTO High-Level Meeting for LDCs held in October 1997. Bangladesh said that a major trade problem of LDCs was their dependence on a few export products. It urged more technical assistance to promote export diversification in LDCs as called for in the WTO Action Plan for LDCs.

Many developing countries underscored their efforts to implement the WTO agreements despite various difficulties.

Côte d'Ivoire said that like most members, it was working hard to implement its WTO commitments, including the undertaking of substantial institutional, regulatory and legislative reforms. Thailand said that it remained fully committed to a fair and open trading system in spite of the ongoing economic crisis in the region. Senegal said that its constitution stipulated that WTO rules superseded national agreements in the event of a conflict between the two. Venezuela said that "trade liberalization was a necessary component of economic reform programmes carried out by developing and least-developed countries".

A number of Ministers cited the difficulties their countries have encountered in implementing their WTO commitments. Papua New Guinea said that when it joined the WTO, it had not been aware that there would be such a large number of agreements to understand and comply with. It stressed that "small developing countries simply did not have the institutional capacity to deal with all these agreements".

Ghana said that complex obligations arising from the

Uruguay Round had resulted in additional stress on the already limited resources of African countries. Burkina Faso said that least-developed countries have encountered enormous difficulties in the implementation of the WTO agreements and called for more technical cooperation in this regard. Zambia said that lack of resources and technical capacity had led to it forfeiting certain important rights under the WTO.

Hungary cited the dispute-settlement mechanism as one of the "cornerstones of the WTO", and that its operation had "significantly strengthened the credibility and image of the organization". Regarding the dispute-settlement mechanism, the Philippines said that "the pursuit of a legalistic approach, to the exclusion of other considerations, in resolving implementation was not necessarily the best option especially if it involved developing countries". It called for developed countries to "act with circumspection and due restraint when calling to task developing country members in connection with the performance of their obligations".

New Zealand said that "most members had been taking their implementation responsibilities quite seriously". It suggested that "issues that had emerged as problems during implementation should be identified and addressed in the future work agenda," and not try to "unpick" what had been negotiated in the Uruguay Round.

Several members expressed readiness to provide technical assistance. Japan said that its trade ministry could provide assistance in the implementation of agreements, such as training of intellectual property officials. Hong Kong, China said it was contributing to increased technical assistance in the WTO.

With respect to market access, Norway said that developed countries as well as the more advanced developing

countries “should go as far as possible” to accommodate the request by the WTO Director-General for the elimination of all tariffs on least-developed country products. Switzerland announced that it had eliminated duties on industrial and most agricultural imports from LDCs, and that it was contributing SWF 1.5 million towards financing technical cooperation activities in the WTO, particularly for LDCs. Turkey said it had put into effect at the beginning of the year a preferential tariff regime for the LDCs. Canada said it would continue to find ways to improve its already liberal access for LDC exports, with a view to expanding

MINISTERIAL DECLARATION

Adopted on 20 May 1998

1. This Second Session of the Ministerial Conference of the WTO is taking place at a particularly significant time for the multilateral trading system, when the fiftieth anniversary of its establishment is being commemorated. On this occasion we pay tribute to the system's important contribution over the past half-century to growth, employment

schedules for reviews, negotiations and other work to which we have already agreed.

9. We recall that the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization states that the WTO shall provide the forum for negotiations among its Members concerning their multilateral trade relations in matters dealt with under the agreements in the Annexes to the Agreement, and that it may also provide a forum for further negotiations among its Members concerning their multilateral trade relations, and a framework for the implementation of the results of such negotiations, as may be decided by the Ministerial Conference. In the light of paragraphs 1-8 above, we decide that a process will be established under the direction of the General Council to ensure full and faithful implementation of existing agreements, and to prepare for the Third Session of the Ministerial Conference. This process shall enable the General Council to submit recommendations regarding the WTO's work programme, including further liberalization sufficiently broad-based to respond to the range of interests and concerns of all Members, within the WTO framework, that will enable us to take decisions at the Third Session of the Ministerial Conference. In this regard, the General Council will meet in special session in September 1998 and periodically thereafter to ensure full and timely completion of its work, fully respecting the principle of decision-making by consensus. The General Council's work programme shall encompass the following:

- (a) recommendations concerning:
 - (i) the issues, including those brought forward by Members, relating to implementation of existing agreements and decisions;
 - (ii) the negotiations already mandated at Marrakesh, to ensure that such negotiations begin on schedule;
 - (iii) future work already provided for under other existing agreements and decisions taken at Marrakesh;
- (b) recommendations concerning other possible future work on the basis of the work programme initiated at Singapore;
- (c) recommendations on the follow-up to the High-Level Meeting on Least-Developed Countries;
- (d) recommendations arising from consideration of other matters proposed and agreed to by Members concerning their multilateral trade relations.

10. The General Council will also submit to the Third Session of the Ministerial Conference, on the basis of consensus, recommendations for decision concerning the further organization and management of the work programme arising from the above, including the scope, structure and time-frames, that will ensure that the work programme is begun and concluded expeditiously.

11. The above work programme shall be aimed at achieving overall balance of interests of all Members.

DECLARATION ON GLOBAL ELECTRONIC COMMERCE
Adopted on 20 May 1998

Ministers,

Recognizing that global electronic commerce is growing and creating new opportunities for trade,

Declare that:

The General Council shall, by its next meeting in special session, establish a comprehensive work programme to

World leaders commemorate the 50th anniversary of the multilateral trading system

A dozen world leaders joined trade ministers in commemorating the 50th anniversary of the multilateral trading system held on 18-19 May at the Palais des Nations. They paid tribute to GATT's contribution to world economic growth, and gave their respective visions of the trading system's future.

The WTO Director-General, Mr. Renato Ruggiero, told the heads of state that "your presence here sends a powerful and much-needed message of confidence and commitment to the future within a system which truly belongs to us all."

In opening the commemoration, Swiss President Flavio Cotti said that from GATT, the world became aware that "open borders and non-discriminatory trade can be a force for international stability and peace, as well as prosperity". He added that "like our predecessors, whose vision and determination we are commemorating today, we need to look to the future—and to explain this future to the present."

US President Bill Clinton was the first head of state to speak on the evening of 18 May. He was followed on 19 May by Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik of Norway; Prime Minister Ivan Kostov of Bulgaria; President Fidel Castro of

The secret of GATT's success

Since its creation, the multilateral system has helped trade expand more than twice as fast as production, and the system itself has expanded along with it. From the GATT's original 23 contracting parties there are now 132 WTO Members, and 31 candidates for membership—an impressive vote of confidence. And all the candidates are developing or transition economies, as are 80 per cent of the Members.

What has been the secret of the system's success?

First of all, by lowering barriers to trade it has also helped to lower barriers between nations and peoples, contributing to the growing interdependence that is such a feature of our present world. It is often called globalization, but this term does less than justice to what is in reality a process of growing inclusiveness, whether of countries, of peoples—or of problems. It has a technological dimension, through the new communications and information technologies which are shrinking time and space. Recent WTO agreements opening up access to these essential elements of the 21st century infrastructure will release enormous energy for future

mental and consumer groups can speak out and help guide the further evolution of the WTO. When this body convenes again, I believe that the world's trade ministers should sit down with representatives of the broad public to begin this discussion.

Third, we must do more to harmonize our goal of increasing trade with our goal of improving the environment and working conditions.

Enhanced trade can and should enhance—not undercut—the protection of the environment. Indeed, the WTO Agreement in its preamble explicitly adopts sustainable development as an objective of open trade, including a commitment to preserve the environment and to increase the capacity of doing so. Therefore, international trade rules must permit sovereign nations to exercise their right to set protective standards for health, safety and the environment and biodiversity. Nations have a right to pursue those protections — even when they are stronger than international norms. I am asking that a high-level meeting be convened, to bring together trade and environmental ministers, to provide strong direction and new energy to the WTO's environmental efforts in the years to come, as has been suggested by the European Commission.

Likewise, the WTO and the International Labour Organization should commit to work together, to make certain that open trade lifts living conditions, and respects the core labour standards that are essential not only to workers rights, but to human rights everywhere. I ask the two organizations' Secretariats to convene at a high level to discuss these issues.

Fourth, we must modernize the WTO by opening its doors to the scrutiny and participation of the public.

The WTO should take every feasible step to bring open-

Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik of Norway

Building consensus on globalization issues

Looking back, I believe it is fair to say that the provisions and principles of the GATT—and later of the WTO—have made a decisive contribution to the progress large parts of the world have witnessed during the latter part of this century. I am not speaking of economic growth alone, but just as much of the social achievements, employment and political stability which prosperity generates. These are fundamental values. The multilateral trading system of today thus constitutes an important part of a global framework that fosters stability and peaceful relations.

As we approach universal WTO-Membership it is increasingly difficult, and important, to find a balance of Members' interests. In particular I am concerned about the current situation of the least-developed countries. Together these 48 countries account for a mere 0.4 per cent of world trade. Half of them are not members of WTO. Their exportable products often meet market access barriers. This marginalization of the poorest countries must be countered. Trade-related technical assistance programmes should be further developed and international coordination of such activities should be improved. Market access should be

widened. WTO's ability to bring the benefits of increased trade to all the peoples of the world will be a fundamental criterion for future assessment of its success.

Globalization has become a frequently used expression. The process of globalization is transforming our world and economic structures in an unprecedented manner and speed. It is a revolutionary process. For some this is seen as a positive development, creating closer ties and interdependence between countries and peoples around the globe. Others have a different and more skeptical perception of the globalization: They question the effects of trade and investment liberalization and free capital flows. They fear that our democratic institutions are losing control of the international economic forces and that environmental and social costs will be high. These are legitimate concerns related to fundamental issues regarding the well being of mankind. If

enhance its dynamism and to ensure that all trading partners can benefit from it.

Another important task for the future of the WTO is its expansion through the accession of new members in order to become a truly global and universal organization. Many of the countries now acceding to the WTO are important

trading partners for Bulgaria and therefore for us it is essential that these countries be brought as soon as possible within the system. With the countries which have been traditional trading partners of Bulgaria we will seek to further develop our trade relations and expand the access of goods and services to their markets. □

President Fidel Castro Ruz of Cuba

The struggle for a more just and better world

An amazing and shrewd manoeuvre had allowed the United States to leave the dock at the WTO and undertake to laying down new rules in international law within the framework of the OECD in an attempt to retroactively insert in the Multilateral Agreement on Investments the supposed illegality of the nationalizations conducted in the late 1950s—a date exactly coinciding with the triumph of the Revolution in Cuba—a principle that can also be applied to nationalizations carried out in other countries after 1959, the intention being to internationalize the principles of the infamous Helms-Burton Act under the umbrella of a multilateral agreement. That Act, which has not been amended at all, has arbitrarily turned people who were Cuban citizens at the time of the expropriations into expropriated Americans.

Actually, the extraterritorial principle of the blockade had been in force long before that shameful Act came into existence. The United States Administration prevents every American company, whatever the country where it is based, from trading with Cuba. That constitutes a violation of

of that economy—unquestionable the strongest in the world—cannot be sustained. In similar situations history is not known to have made exceptions. The problem is that now a big crisis would go global and have unforeseeable consequences. Not even the adversaries of the prevailing

system could wish that to happen.

It would be worthwhile for the WTO to assess these risks and include among the so-called “new themes” another one: “Global Economic Crisis. What to do?” □

Jacques Santer, President of the Commission of the European Communities

Towards a “Millennium Round”

On the strictly commercial front, it is a recognized fact that the creation of the single market has also contributed to opening up the European market to imports from third countries. In other words, Europe of the Fifteen is a successful example of integration in GATT terms. It is an integration which, far from introducing new barriers between its integrated space and the rest of the world, is paving the way to greater liberalization of world trade.

The trade relations of the Community with third countries take account of the pre-eminence to the multilateral system. Our main objective is multilateral action and the WTO must remain the principal driving force behind global liberalization.

Strengthening of the democratic legitimacy of the international trading system

Formerly known mainly by governments, administrations and academic circles, the work of the WTO is arousing growing interest in the business community and in many non-governmental organizations. This is good, because the decisions taken in Geneva will have a direct impact on the lives of citizens in a world that is becoming less and less fragmented.

However, to be fully understood and accepted, the global integration movement must be better grasped by wider circles of public opinion. The WTO cannot allow itself to be branded with the image of an anti-democratic organization which disregards cultural diversity, has no respect for the environment or labour standards, and which acts against the interests of a large majority of citizens, in particular the most disadvantaged.

We know that this is not true. But, perhaps the technicians of the GATT and the WTO have not taken enough time to explain their activities and convince the public.

I therefore think it is urgent not only to increase the transparency of the work carried out by the WTO, but also to engage in a genuine dialogue with all the representatives of civil society. This, in our view, is a task which we must address without fail.

Deepening of trade liberalization

I now turn to the important subject of a new round of multilateral negotiations which we could call the “Millennium Round”. It is our view that the best way of advancing multilateral liberalization is to start a new round. Indeed, experience has shown that a global approach offers more promising prospects than a regional or sectoral approach.

President Fernando Henrique Cardoso of Brazil

Trade rules should correct disparities in development

I am very pleased to participate in the commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of GATT and of the entering into force of the multilateral trading system. Like many other

Development through trade

In commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the GATT, South Africa chooses to look forward rather than deal with the imperfections of the past.

But in seeking to build a better future we ignore the lessons of the past at our peril.

Though international trade and investment have always been an integral part of the world economy, the extent to which all parties have benefited has depended on the circumstances in which they have taken place.

The current process of globalization is no exception.

The extent to which all countries benefit will depend on how we, the Member States act in concert to shape the processes.

The WTO came into existence precisely as a response to the need for a more effective regulatory, supervisory and enforcement environment for world trade and investment than the GATT could then provide.

But now we can see that the success of the system agreed to in Marrakesh in 1994 will depend on the wisdom with which it is implemented and taken forward.

In making a complex point it is natural to fall back on one's own experience, and I hope you will permit me to do so.

South Africans fought a horrifying abuse of power and were determined that it should never happen again.

We therefore elected to be governed by a constitution—in effect a rules based system—that must protect all in equal measure.

Tackling imbalances in the global economy

It was four years ago in Marrakesh that the multilateral trading system, whose jubilee we are celebrating today, reached its culminating point with the birth of the World Trade Organization, the WTO. For all of us, this was a very special moment, and for the world as a whole it marked a decisive step in the as yet unfinished construction of a community of nations desirous of ensuring that law prevails over power alone.

As we are all well aware, this system is not just the legal and diplomatic construction of another essential pillar of the global economy. First and foremost, it is the reflection of a changing world that is about to enter the next millennium with global trade approaching the unreal figure of US\$10,000 billion or nearly one quarter of the global gross domestic product. A world in which the ever faster pace of innovation in information technology will eventually make the global village, that of mankind, trade and knowledge, an irreversible reality.

Does this allow us to say that all is now well? Certainly not! Extreme wealth and extreme poverty exist side by side and still watch each other every day through television screens in a world in which image and information know no frontiers. We must therefore take the full measure of this reality and these continuing imbalances, for although the growing integration of the global economy overall has been the engine of mutual enrichment, nevertheless a large sector of the population is still excluded from the benefits of this new-found prosperity and the progress achieved. Since the beginning of the 1990s developing countries have undoubtedly seen their growth accelerate, but overall the imbalances persist and are getting worse. The per capita gross domestic product in the G8 countries today is still 40 times greater than the average in the poorest countries of the planet.

We must acknowledge that the global project which the pioneers of our system wished to put into place continues to be jeopardized by the plight of these hundreds of millions of people who will not indefinitely accept permanent exclusion from the great current of prosperity and progress sweeping onwards in the developed part of our world.

It is true that growth and development cannot be decreed. But it is also true that marginalization and underdevelopment are not inevitable either.

His Majesty King Hassan II, my august father, appropriately emphasized this in his closing speech to the Ministerial Conference in Marrakesh, when he proposed the establishment of a group to study the new mechanisms of economic and trade globalization in an effort to achieve the more equitable integration of the countries of the South. We must all take the initiative once again towards this end.

These recommendations made by His Majesty King Hassan II four years ago were premonitory when one considers what has just happened in certain Asian countries.

It is 11 years to the day since the Kingdom of Morocco acceded to the GATT: it was on 18 May 1987, as a logical and consistent further step in the 30 years of work of patiently building a modern Moroccan economy based from the outset on free enterprise, respect for private property, the prevalence of the rule of law and priority for regional integration.

The current debate within the WTO on how to deal with the Marrakesh and Singapore agenda, on broadening the agenda and on the methodology of future negotiations should not hide our strategic objectives. In this respect, anything that could help to achieve an unequivocal solution to the imbalances and difficulties to which I have referred should be included in an open-ended and innovative agenda.

With this objective in mind, Morocco, on the basis of the achievements and lessons drawn from the Uruguay Round negotiations, is more than ever determined to play its role in the promising implementation of the WTO's future programme of action, and to continue resolutely to assume its responsibilities. □

Prime Minister Janez Drnovšek of Slovenia

Binding nations without politics

As a relative newcomer to the system, as a country that acceded to the GATT in 1994, and as the last contracting party to sign on to the Agreement, my Government and myself fully understand the contribution of the GATT and now of the WTO to the remarkable worldwide growth in trade, employment and social progress. Therefore, here, at this singularly important commemoration, I wish to pay tribute to the GATT's founders and the enormous potential that they have unleashed.

The wealth of experience with the implementation of the

gradual reduction and elimination of trade barriers and therefore as the road to the ultimate goal of the GATT, as it was envisioned by its founders and is still championed today, that is, the disappearance of tariffs and quotas and other limitations to economic growth, greater employment and sustainable development.

Accession to the GATT was a major stepping-stone in Slovenia's economic history. It allowed my country to assert its economic independence and gain full citizenship among trading nations. It proved its viability as a young, vibrant and forward-looking economy. Slovenia is firm in its belief that all nations, large and small, and particularly developing nations and countries in transition, should be able to fully benefit from the multilateral trading system. No country should be barred from accession to the WTO. Even more, all of us should help those that are pursuing Membership. However, there should be no reason to compromise the established trade rules. The practice of contribution by new countries of meaningful market access concessions should be

maintained, and nothing in future negotiations should be used as an excuse to rollback or revise the commitments and agreements already achieved.

As we celebrate this remarkable milestone today, it is necessary to take account of the recent developments in international trade and to call on our Ministers to adopt objectives and guidelines for the future work in the World Trade Organization in clear and operational language, and to consider issues and future directions and through their recommendations to reaffirm the belief in the central role of the multilateral rule-based system, reaffirm the World Trade Organization as the primary forum for broad-based trade liberalization.

The compelling ideas of the GATT, brought into the World Trade Organization, based on equal opportunity and open markets, clear rules and coherent domestic and international economic policy-making, and others, are worth pursuing and developing against the same odds that GATT had faced. We believe that we will succeed. □

Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom

Spreading the benefits of globalization

The world is opening up with freer travel, common mass media, open communication systems. Free trade is a vital part of this movement. The emergence of Mercosur, NAFTA, ASEAN and of course the EU shows how strongly the tide is turning in favour of free trade.

So the question now is not so much whether there should be free trade, but how best to manage what I believe is an irreversible and irresistible trend so that all countries and all peoples can benefit. That is the millennium challenge—for us and for the WTO.

I believe that there are five key tasks:

First we must spread the benefits, of globalization.

The G8 Summit this weekend underlined the need to help developing countries integrate into the global economy and thereby benefit from the opportunities of globalization.

I am pleased to announce that the UK is setting aside \$10 million for technical assistance for these countries to help prepare for liberalization over this year and next. The Least-Developed Countries in particular need special attention. We must all commit to zero tariffs for their exports.

Second, we must keep markets open and fair.

It is hard to conceive of a return to the full-blown protectionism and strangulation of trade which disfigured the 1930s. That lesson has surely been learned.

But subtle forms of protectionism remain and pressures rise in a crisis. We must ensure that the current financial

able development and protection of the environment and contribute to international security;
 » and, above all that more open markets and more trade mean growth and new jobs for the benefit of all our people.

That is the message we at this meeting should be sending to all our peoples as we celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the GATT and took forward to the next 50 years of the multilateral trading system. □

Prime Minister Daniel Kablan Duncan of Côte d'Ivoire

Assisting Africa through trade

As a GATT contracting party since 1963, Côte d'Ivoire, whose economy since the earliest days of independence has been resolutely outward-looking, in accordance with its choice of a liberal economic policy, has progressively abandoned non-tariff barriers to trade in favour of more transparent customs duties.

Thus, today, Côte d'Ivoire has greatly liberalized both its foreign and domestic trade.

It was therefore with total confidence that it took part in the historic meeting in Marrakesh in April 1994, which saw the signing of the Final Act of the longest round of negotiations in the history of the GATT.

It is estimated that the Uruguay Round Agreements could lead to an increase in global income of approximately US\$500 thousand million by the year 2005. This is the benefit which all the WTO Member countries hope to achieve if the Agreements are fully implemented. However, there is a risk that this distribution of resources may not be universally beneficial, judging by the performance of the developing countries' economies. Indeed, as far as Africa is concerned, its share in the global economy has declined steadily, from 5 per cent in 1985 to roughly 2 per cent in 1996, even though the African countries have continued to export raw materials.

Nevertheless, some of the results of the Uruguay Round still cause us concern due to the erosion of trade preferences under the Lomé Convention.

To cite an example, Côte d'Ivoire will see substantial financial resources eroded solely in the pineapples and bananas sector, thereby impoverishing small-scale planters, to whom we attach special importance, unless a bold technical and financial assistance policy helps us to adapt our economy to recent developments in the globalization of trade.

In addition, there is the problem raised by the use of vegetable fats other than cocoa butter in the manufacture of chocolate. It goes without saying that a large sector of our economy would collapse.

The immediate social impact of this situation at a time

when our countries are resolutely engaged in an unrelenting struggle against poverty could be disastrous for the rural population, which will become increasingly vulnerable.

This is why it is important that the international community should continue to give their support under the plan to reduce the debt of highly-indebted poor countries so as to help us to integrate better into the multilateral trading system.

In this connection, we express our gratitude to organizations such as UNCTAD and the International Trade Centre (ICC), which combine their efforts with those of the WTO to help developing countries so that they are better prepared to enter into the forthcoming negotiations in sectors such as: agriculture; trade and environment; maritime transport; trade-related investment.

While we recognize the relevance of these issues, we would like to see the successes achieved in the preceding negotiations consolidated before exploring new areas. This is the only way in which countries such as ours can, with equanim-

quite serious negative effects on confidence in countries which only a short time ago were viewing their future prospects with some considerable optimism.

Developing countries, and particularly the least-developed, have derived the least benefit from trade liberalization in spite of measures taken in the GATT, beginning in the

