

Agriculture

On agriculture, Mr. Crosbie said that Canada is working hard with its partners in the Cairns Group of agricultural exporters to produce a comprehensive detailed reform proposal. He and other Cairns Group Ministers will meet in Thailand next week to settle this proposal.

Mr. Crosbie recalled that at last April's Trade Negotiations Committee meeting in Geneva, which completed the Mid-Term Review begun in Montreal four months earlier, it had been agreed that "the long-term objective is to establish a fair and market-oriented agricultural trading system." This was a hard-won milestone.

"We know that trade distortions and restrictions cannot all be removed in this Round, but must make good on our common commitment to make substantial progress in that direction," Mr. Crosbie told his colleagues.

He added that "the new GATT rules will need to continue to support domestic policies which contribute to avoiding production surpluses."

He stressed the need for an end to "the devastating effects of export subsidies ... Improved market access without fairer competition will not be credible and will not be sustainable. The new trade rules must be enforceable, and must free us from the constant threat of unilateral action."

In emphasizing the need for progress on agricultural trade, Mr. Crosbie said: "Who will believe that it would be wise to extend the scope of the GATT to areas like trade-in-services and TRIPs, if the basic rules of fair, open and non-discriminatory competition do not fully apply to agricultural products or to all countries?"

Market Access

Commenting on the lack of agreement to date on how to approach the detailed phase of negotiations on tariffs and non-tariff barriers (NTBs) to achieve the trade liberalization objectives set out at the Montreal Ministerial Meeting last year, Mr. Crosbie said: "With just a year left in the negotiations, we cannot afford to waste more time on procedural debates on where and how to negotiate. We need to get down to the details of the real bargaining."

He urged the other countries to bridge the differences that are impeding progress in this area. "We believe it would be practical and reasonable to adopt an approach of using a tariff formula supplemented by bilateral requests and offers which would go further than the formula in reducing tariffs on individual products or eliminating non-tariff barriers."