

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

The Contracting Parties' decision a year ago to meet at the ministerial level was a wise decision. The deterioration in the economic welfare of nations during the past twelve months has elevated the urgency of our deliberations.

On behalf of Canada, I want to associate myself with many of the preceding speakers in their concerns for the integrity and future of the multilateral trading system which has been painstakingly built up over the years.

In the present difficult economic situation each of us is faced daily with strong pressure to impose trade restrictions or to retaliate in response to trade restrictive actions by others. As earlier speakers have pointed out, the multilateral trading system, which is based on the GATT, is under strain.

As ministers we must ask ourselves whether what has been achieved should be preserved. If we believe that the phenomenal growth in world trade which has accompanied trade liberalization has benefited our economies, if we believe that enhanced trading opportunities stimulate economic development, not least for developing countries, if we believe that consumers have benefited and that standards of living for all of us have been improved -- then we have a real stake in making a resolute effort to maintain what we have, and to construct for the future. It is evident from our discussions that we all do share those beliefs. Therefore we must act to protect the system. The GATT rules serve to protect the small and undeveloped against the large and powerful.

It is no solution to put our heads in the sand and ignore the proliferation of protectionist actions and arrangements outside the GATT. If we do so, we steadily diminish the portion of trade affected by our rules. We decrease the impact and effectiveness of our compact for world trade and the jungle of protectionism will encroach further on the improved terrain of multilateral trade.

It is crucial that we leave this meeting with a strong shared commitment to the open multilateral trading system -- a firm resolve to resist protectionism. To make this political

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