

Brussels, 14th December, 1973

DECLARATION OF THE SPOKESMAN  
OF THE AFRICAN, CARIBBEAN AND PACIFIC  
GROUPS  
AT THE FIFTH MEETING  
OF THE  
NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE

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*Statement by Mr. Sanni*

Having reached the end of the first round of our negotiations,<sup>1</sup> it is appropriate that we should use our meeting today to take stock of where we have reached, so that we can make a first report to our respective Governments and also make plans for the second round which we have agreed should commence in January.

I believe you will agree that generally this first round has been taken up largely with becoming accustomed to each other, identifying the subjects which we need to tackle, and establishing the procedures by which we can carry forward our work in the most effective manner. There are many amongst us who had hoped that during this first period we would have been able to achieve much more. We had hoped that we would in fact have made more progress once the joint Working Groups had started functioning. We are, however, left with a situation where the Commission side in these Working Groups has said on most subjects that it needs time for reflection and that positive responses to our various proposals cannot be made before the next round of talks. For us this has been a disappointment.

Where have we reached so far? The Commission has agreed that the aim of our future relations should be the growth of our exports to the Community market, "a growth which must be accompanied by the requisite diversification both of their composition and of their geographic destination". The Commission has accepted as a basic principle of our future relations the free entry into the Community market of products originating in our countries. But the Commission has gone on to say that they have reservations on certain agricultural products for which special arrangements will have to be negotiated. We have recently received a list which is intended to set out the scope of these reservations, but unfortunately our Experts have not yet jointly come to grips with the details.

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It has been recognised by yourselves and by us that there are a number of specific questions which must be resolved if this broad agreement in principle is to have any real meaning. We have presented our case on Rules of Origin, but your Experts have only been able to say that they will consider and consult on this matter and will be ready to meet our Experts again on 21st January. We expect that at that time a positive response will be forthcoming.

On the question of non-tariff barriers we have made our own presentation in the joint Working Group. On this question I am sure you will forgive me for emphasising the importance which we attach to examination in these negotiations of all the measures which inhibit our export trade with the Community, whether these measures derive from Community legislation or from the national legislation of individual Member States. On this question too, we still await a response from your side.

Other questions falling under the broad heading of access to the Community market are the stabilisation of export earnings and the whole subject of measures to compensate for the erosion of benefits negotiated under our agreement. We hope that we will be able to make real progress on these two questions during the next round of negotiations.

I now turn to the other broad subject which has been introduced into this first round of the negotiations - the question of economic, financial and technical co-operation.

Here too, we seem to be in general agreement on the broad principles and objectives. You yourself have said that the Community is concerned to assist the economic and social development of our countries and their economic independence, giving increased means for diversifying exports and for developing our own capabilities in the technical field. You have accepted - in fact you have asserted - the principles of self-reliance and of joint and equal participation in the whole field of management of financial and technical cooperation.

In the joint Working Group our Experts have so far come to grips with questions under the three headings which we have agreed to designate as follows:

- (a) objectives and scope of aid;
- (b) programming of aid;
- (c) participation in management and administration of aid.

It had appeared at one stage that our Experts were making progress in the context of a real dialogue, but more recently we have had some reason to doubt whether this progress had in fact been achieved. We have noted the <sup>contents of</sup> ~~comments of~~ Document NEG/16/73/W Fin and, although the Committee of Ambassadors has been able to take a look at it, we regret to say that we are not at this stage prepared to endorse it in full. This document, we understand, has not been examined by the full joint Working Group but is only the product of a drafting Group. We therefore suggest that the full joint Working Party should take a look at it before it is assumed to be an agreed text.

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All of this means that we have a great deal of work to do when we start again in January. We propose that the Experts on our side will convene here on 14th January and will be ready to start meeting with your Experts during that week. The subjects on which they should concentrate at that stage are Rules of Origin, Non-Tariff Barriers, preliminary examination of the agricultural products list, which you have promised to supplement, and the three headings of economic, financial and technical co-operation to which I referred earlier.

The Plenipotentiaries on our side expect to start meeting on 21st January and have provisionally scheduled a meeting with you on Wednesday, 23rd January. We will make a better assessment during January and will give you as much notice as possible of the holding of this meeting. I think that one of the purposes of that meeting will be to work out a timetable for the additional subjects which have yet to be passed to our Working Groups.

We also think that we should envisage holding a joint meeting of our own Bureau, perhaps during the second week in January, to discuss our work procedures for the next round of negotiations.

Finally, may I say that it is our sincere hope that before we meet in January it will be possible for the Commission to obtain the necessary mandates on the subjects which we have raised during the course of these negotiations so that we can both be in a position to identify clearly the points of agreement and of disagreement. We wish to point out that, just as the Commission finds it necessary to inform its Member States from time to time, so the Committee of Ambassadors is under an obligation to make progress reports to the Ministers, and our task would be lightened if, in the next round of negotiations, we were in a position to obtain

concrete evidence of our progress so that we could duly inform, not only our individual Governments, but also our Council of Ministers.

It is, I am sure, in the interest of both our Groups that we bring these negotiations to a conclusion at the appropriate time.

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