

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

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Seventeenth Session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE FIRST MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 31 October, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. TORU HAGUIWARA (Japan)

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Mr. TORU HAGUIWARA explained that Mr. Barbosa da Silva, Chairman of the CONTRACTING PARTIES, would be unable to attend the first week of the session because of his urgent duties as Secretary-General of the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

1. Opening address by Chairman

The CHAIRMAN, in opening the seventeenth session, inter alia drew attention to the major problems confronting the CONTRACTING PARTIES. He also welcomed Nigeria as a contracting party, referred to the participation of Spain and Portugal in the work of the CONTRACTING PARTIES following the Decisions adopted at the sixteenth session, and drew attention to the requests for accession, pursuant to Article XXXIII, received from Argentina and Ireland. The full text of the Chairman's address is reproduced in Press Release GATT/544.

Mr. DARAMOLA (Nigeria), having thanked the United Kingdom for sponsoring Nigeria's membership, said that Nigeria would play its part fully in maintaining the principles on which GATT was based and would continue to pursue the liberal policies which had hitherto characterized its trade relations. Mr. Daramola mentioned that Nigeria had also taken steps to become a member of the International Monetary Fund. Referring to the Committees set up under the GATT programme for the expansion of international trade, Mr. Daramola said that Nigeria would be glad of the opportunity to participate in the work of these Committees. On the question of regional trade groupings, he said that the Nigerian Government shared the concern of other contracting parties to ensure that such groupings did not result in increased barriers to trade and that they did not deprive the less-developed countries of the satisfaction of contributing to their own development through trade. Nigeria recognized however that, given faithful adherence to the principles of GATT, regional groupings could prove to be a step towards complete

liberalization of trade. For this reason, Nigeria supported the attempts being made to bridge the gap between the various trade groupings. In the same spirit it would join in examining any proposals for improving intra-African trade. Mr. Daramola went on to say that the stage was being reached when the value of GATT would be assessed in terms wider than those of concessions gained by means of tariff adjustments. This would seem to indicate a need for some change of emphasis in negotiations and might in turn call for some adjustment of attitude among the contracting parties. Nigeria hoped it would be possible to examine the question as to whether the concept of parity of concessions reckoned in terms of tariff bindings was indeed adequate in present circumstances to achieve the expansion of international trade, or whether the time had come to recognize that the disparate levels of development among contracting parties made parity of concessions impractical, however desirable, bearing in mind the unequal impact on their national economies of the reduction or removal of duties.

Mr. DARRO-SARKWA (Ghana), having stressed the close ties between Ghana and Nigeria, welcomed Nigeria's membership and the important contribution which this membership would make to the GATT.

Sir Edgar COHEN (United Kingdom) likewise warmly welcomed Nigeria's membership which, following the accession of Ghana, represented a new stage in the history of GATT. These countries had a lot to contribute to GATT. In connexion with the reference by the representative of Nigeria to the possible need for the CONTRACTING PARTIES to readjust some of their methods and procedures, Sir Edgar Cohen stressed the significance of the increasing applicability of the GATT in the world and the need for the CONTRACTING PARTIES to adjust their outlook to take account of the new countries.

Mr. BRUCE (South Africa) expressed his Government's satisfaction that Nigeria had become a contracting party. Nigeria was the most populous state in Africa and GATT would gain in strength from its membership.

Mr. HARTOGH (Netherlands), speaking on behalf of the Member States of the European Economic Community, welcomed Nigeria as a contracting party. Co-operation with countries like Nigeria would facilitate the Community's aim of expanding trade.

Mr. DE ALCAMBAR PEREIRA (Portugal), having thanked the Chairman for his reference to Portugal in his opening address, associated himself with the welcome extended to Nigeria.

Mr. ANIEL-QUIROGA (Spain) likewise thanked the Chairman for his reference to Spain's participation in the present session.

Mr. TMANI (Tunisia) expressed his Government's great satisfaction at Nigeria's membership. Nigeria was one of the most important countries in Africa and he was sure that it would make an outstanding contribution to the work and discussions of the CONTRACTING PARTIES.

Mr. RANGANATHAN (India), in welcoming Nigeria as a contracting party, stressed the importance of Africa in the future development of world trade and the important rôle which Nigeria was likely to play.

Mr. TOWNLEY (Rhodesia and Nyasaland) welcomed the accession of Nigeria and the participation of Portugal in the work of the CONTRACTING PARTIES.

Mr. SUBARDJO (Indonesia) expressed the hope that Nigeria's membership would strengthen the position of the less-developed countries in GATT.

Mr. VALLADAO (Brazil) associated his delegation with the welcome extended to Nigeria by other representatives. At the same time he welcomed Spain and Portugal, with whom his country had close historical ties. He also expressed the hope that, before the end of the seventeenth session, Argentina's provisional accession to the GATT would be an accomplished fact.

Mr. ADAIR (United States) warmly welcomed Nigeria as a contracting party.

2. Adoption of agenda (L/1307 and Add.1)

The CHAIRMAN referred to the provisional agenda for the session, which was contained in documents L/1307 and Add.1.

Mr. TOWNLEY (Rhodesia and Nyasaland) said that his Government wished to seek authority to enter into renegotiations under Article XXVIII:4 and requested that this item should be included on the agenda for the session.

This was agreed.

Mr. PERERA (Ceylon) referred to the decision of the Council to defer until the eighteenth session the review under Article XVIII:6. The release referred to in item 6 of the agenda was due to expire on 2 December 1960 and his Government requested that consideration of this item should likewise be deferred until the eighteenth session. Mr. Perera quoted figures to indicate that the interests of CONTRACTING PARTIES would not suffer in any way.

It was agreed that there should be a short discussion on Ceylon's request at the next meeting of the CONTRACTING PARTIES.

The EXECUTIVE SECRETARY referred to the consultations which certain contracting parties had held with Italy under Article XXII:1 during the intersessional period. He had been Chairman for these consultations, and he hoped to make a brief report to the CONTRACTING PARTIES after further discussion with the contracting parties concerned.

The agenda proposed for the session in documents L/1307 and Add.1, together with the additional item, "Article XXVIII:4 - Request by Rhodesia and Nyasaland", was adopted.

The CHAIRMAN then commented on certain items on the agenda. In connexion with Item 2 he recalled that when the programme for the expansion of international trade was inaugurated at the thirteenth session, it was understood that the CONTRACTING PARTIES themselves would co-ordinate and supervise the work of the three Committees which were then appointed. Thus, under this item, it was intended to afford contracting parties an opportunity to comment on the progress achieved under the programme as a whole and to make any statements of a general character which they might consider to be relevant to the responsibilities of the CONTRACTING PARTIES in all the matters covered by the programme.

Commenting on item 3 the Chairman, having explained that sub-item (a) related to the consultations at present being conducted by the Committee on Balance-of-Payments Restrictions, said that it had been customary, at the last session in each year, to refer to the Committee sub-items (b) and (c). Sub-item (b) related to the annual report under Article XIV:1(g) and, if it were agreed that the sub-item should be dealt with by the Committee on Balance-of-Payments Restrictions, the draft being prepared by the secretariat would be referred direct to the Committee. Sub-item (c) concerned the arrangements for consultations in 1961 under Articles XII:4(b), XIV:1(g) and XVIII:12(b). It was agreed that sub-items (b) and (c) of item 3 should be referred to the Committee on Balance-of-Payments Restrictions with the request that the Committee should, before the end of the session, submit to the CONTRACTING PARTIES reports on sub-items (a), (b) and (c) of item 3.

In connexion with item 13 the Chairman put forward for the consideration of the CONTRACTING PARTIES the suggestion that, mainly because of the very heavy agenda before the CONTRACTING PARTIES but also taking into account the intensive work on commodity problems being undertaken in other international organizations, the Working Party on Commodities should not meet this year. He proposed that this suggestion should be considered at the next meeting of the CONTRACTING PARTIES.

This was agreed.

3. Order of business (W.17/2)

The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the proposals distributed by the Executive Secretary in document W.17/2.

The CONTRACTING PARTIES took note of the proposals in document W.17/2 and of the comments on these proposals made by various representatives. The Chairman said that these comments would be taken into account when the timing of the discussion of the items concerned was being finally decided.

The meeting adjourned at 4.25 p.m.