

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

RESTRICTED

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CONTRACTING PARTIES
Twenty-first Session

REGIONAL LIAISON ARRANGEMENTS

Note by the Executive Secretary

In the report of the Committee on Budget, Finance and Administration (L/2064, paragraph 6) it is recommended that consideration be given to the various aspects of liaison and public information arrangements in areas distant from Geneva.

This question has been considered by the CONTRACTING PARTIES on more than one occasion. It has been generally agreed that closer contact between the secretariat in Geneva and the contracting parties outside Europe should be maintained. There are various ways in which this question might be approached, all of which have received consideration since the matter was last discussed. Acceptance now of one possibility need not rule out the adoption of other approaches at a later stage.

The establishment of liaison offices in Latin America, Asia and Africa is one possibility. This possibility was placed before the Budget Committee in connexion with the Executive Secretary's estimates for 1964 (L/2033, paragraph 10) and is still being considered.

Secondly, close contact can be achieved by regular visits to the areas by the Executive Secretary, the Deputy Executive Secretary or senior officers. This course is, in fact, being pursued and several such visits by senior officers have been made during the past year to the three areas referred to above.

A third possibility might be the organization of annual regional meetings by countries in each area. Such meetings, which could be attended by the Executive Secretary or his Deputy and appropriate senior officers, might be held shortly before the ordinary annual sessions of the CONTRACTING PARTIES in order to afford opportunities to discuss matters of major importance on the agenda and to review current activities in the GATT and the work programme for the ensuing year. Special emphasis could be given to problems of international trade and development of particular interest to the region, in relation to GATT objectives and activities. Whilst the co-operation of individual governments in the region would be helpful, the CONTRACTING PARTIES might bear the major part of the cost, including provision of the secretariat for the meeting.

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If this arrangement were adopted it might provide the best basis for considering the desirability and eventual establishment of permanent liaison offices. Accordingly, this suggestion might be considered as the first step in a broader approach to an improvement in liaison arrangements.