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# GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

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CONTRACTING PARTIES  
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## REVIEW OF THE WORK OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES AND FUTURE PROGRAMME

Statement by M. Roland Nungesser, Secretary of State  
for Economy and Finance, France, 23 November 1967

I am gratified that this meeting, which is my first opportunity of working with GATT, happens to coincide with the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the General Agreement.

When we look back on the progress made since 1947, at which time international trade was hampered by barriers of all kinds, we can be legitimately proud of the work we have done together. Not only did the General Agreement give us an instrument for negotiations but - more important - it set up a state of mind which has enabled us to ward off the successive waves of protectionism by which our countries, since the nineteenth century, had been trying to solve their domestic economic problems.

I shall not dwell on the figures showing the results of these twenty years, as they appear in the secretariat reports, although these figures are quite impressive. I shall rather stress the effort towards mutual understanding represented by these results, the strenuous work of our negotiators and the personal action of the Director-General of GATT, to whom I should also like to pay my own tribute. We are all well aware that, without Mr. Wyndham White, without his deep understanding of men and things, without his energy and his diplomacy, without his determination not to be disheartened by difficult situations, many negotiations would not have reached such a happy conclusion.

During these twenty years, GATT has had a heavy task to accomplish. Not only did it have to guarantee the development of international trade in a given legal framework, but it had to fit in with a rapidly changing world in which political, economic and technological parameters are ceaselessly evolving. Methods of negotiation had to be altered and made more efficient at each of the tariff conferences; new approaches had to be found to new questions. And so participation in the General Agreement by countries with different economic levels or patterns has led us to seek fresh solutions so as to give developing countries a fair place in the negotiations and to enable any State-trading countries to take part in our work if they so desire.

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We cannot claim to have reached perfection. It may be reasonably felt that, in some cases, the results are too flimsy and the solutions adopted unsatisfactory. For instance, this is the opinion of France as regards the approach that has been chosen in an attempt to remedy the trade difficulties of the developing countries.

It is not easy for us moderns to adapt our tools to the rapid changes which I have just mentioned. This difficulty is also to be found every day in domestic politics. Much more than preceding generations, we have constantly to use our imagination.

However, in spite of or, perhaps, because of this situation, we have just finished an important trade round, the results of which far surpass any that have been obtained up to the present.

These negotiations have just ended. Their Protocols have not yet been signed by all the contracting parties. We hope that these signatures will be very quickly forthcoming and that the commitments which have been made can be fully applied in accordance with the programme we have set ourselves. We shall also be able in the next few years to take stock of our work.

This, of course, does not mean the end of our efforts. It does, however, make them more difficult for some time. We cannot honestly claim that we are ready to open wide negotiations at present. We cannot reasonably believe that questions that have proved insoluble during four years of strenuous negotiation will be miraculously solved in the months to come. In my view, it would be impractical to adopt a precise programme of work without even being certain that the Agreements signed will be fully carried out, and without assessing their effects on the economic life of our respective countries and the community of nations as a whole.

I feel that we should reflect deeply and seriously before embarking on any given path and should leave it to the permanent organs of GATT to make a careful assessment of the trend to be given to our future work. I am making this proposal as a matter of pure common sense but I do not mean it to be negative. I merely fear that time will be lost if, under pretext of saving time, we work in an atmosphere of improvisation which would be unworthy of our past.

Any approach to a new programme of work for GATT can be successful only in so far as we have broached, under the conditions I have just mentioned, a serious analysis of the industrial and agricultural problems.