

# GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

RESTRICTED

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COUNCIL  
19-21 June 1963

## CONFERENCE AND SECRETARIAT ACCOMMODATION

### Note by the Executive Secretary

1. The Council will recall that at its last meeting I referred to the difficulties which had arisen over the provision of suitable accommodation at the Palais des Nations for the recent ministerial meeting. On that occasion I also mentioned briefly the general problem of obtaining conference accommodation for the many ad hoc meetings of the CONTRACTING PARTIES, either at the Palais des Nations or elsewhere in Geneva.
2. During the last few years the availability or otherwise of such accommodation has become a major issue in our conference planning and whilst so far the secretariat has managed somehow to find last minute solutions, be it not always of a satisfactory kind, the situation has now reached a critical stage.
3. Moreover, after thoroughly investigating the matter I am satisfied that there is little hope of improvement in the foreseeable future and indeed I fear that in the coming years the situation will only further deteriorate.
4. In this connexion it should be borne in mind that, while the United Nations authorities have done their best to meet our requirements GATT does not figure high on the priority list and our needs can only be met when:
  - (a) the United Nations does not need the Palais accommodation for the ever-increasing number of conferences and meetings of the organization and its subsidiary bodies;
  - (b) when contractual or standing arrangements with the specialized agencies permit.
5. It will be clear that ad hoc United Nations conferences, given the vastly increased membership of the United Nations, block the Palais facilities for other users for long periods of time.

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6. At the same time it has become increasingly necessary over the last few years for GATT to call meetings of the Council, Committees and Working Groups at very short notice. Not only has this been the result of the general expansion of activities of the GATT, but it is in the nature of the work of the CONTRACTING PARTIES, which is subject to often rapidly changing developments and does not lend itself to advance conference planning as is possible in other organizations. It is therefore no less than essential to the work of the CONTRACTING PARTIES and the proper functioning of the secretariat that such meetings can be convened, if necessary cancelled and reconvened at the most propitious moment. If this cannot be done the interests of the CONTRACTING PARTIES are bound to suffer and GATT's usefulness would be seriously impaired.

7. I have therefore reached the conclusion that action can no longer be delayed and I intend to ask the CONTRACTING PARTIES at their next session to consider the construction of a GATT headquarters building at Geneva providing for the necessary conference accommodation in addition to office space for the secretariat. With this in mind, I would put forward tentative proposals, including their financial implications.

8. The only alternative to this solution would appear to be to abandon Geneva as a suitable site for the headquarters of the GATT and examine possibilities elsewhere. Contracting parties might consider what possibilities exist in this direction so that the CONTRACTING PARTIES can consider both alternatives at the same time.

9. The Council is requested to authorize studies of both questions.