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ADDRESS BY MR. ALY SAHAGAT OF THE
EGYPTIAN DELEGATION TO UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND
EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Chairman and Fellow Delegates:

On behalf of the Egyptian Delegation attending for the first time meetings of this international Conference, I wish to express our deep appreciation for the hospitality and cordiality extended to us since our arrival here in this fair capital of Cuba. We shall take with us the pleasant memories of days spent in Havana, in a setting unique for its beauty and color.

Mr. Chairman, the eyes of the entire world are focused on this conference, fervently hoping that this organization whose charter we are drafting, shall become the pivot and pillar of an everlasting peace. They were focused before on another conference held in one of the fair cities of the United States which established the charter of the United Nations, under whose auspices we are meeting today. Though the peoples of the world have pinned their hopes and faith in that international institution, yet they have been following with deep concern the trials through which the United Nations has been passing since its initiation in San Francisco. The question before us all now is whether nations will struggle against each other for wealth and power, or work together for security and mutual advantage. Most countries represented here gave their reply by endorsing the charter both in the letter and in the spirit. So let us bear in mind these trials and shortcomings. Let us alleviate the fears of the peoples of the earth by working as a united family of nations. Let the bitter lessons of the past be our guiding star in our present deliberations, and let us have as our foremost goal the interests of the whole rather than to further

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the interests of the individual. Mr. Chairman, it is my intention here to strike a general note with a passing reference to the economy peculiar to my own country. The enlightened and admirable speeches of the honorable delegates before me have all contributed to paint for us a picture of a harassed world trying to rise from the aftermath of a war which left nothing behind but ruins, economic chaos, and last but not least, a suffering humanity. The outcome of our present deliberations shall have an enormous bearing on future international trade and world economy. To return to free international trade is not yet within sight. If this is the case, should not we then do our utmost to conciliate the various interests and to try to understand the problems of each country, be it big or small, in a spirit of co-operation. This spirit can best be shown now while we are facing the difficulties of this period of economic transition.

Mr. Chairman, Egypt, as any other country, has an economy characteristically all its own. It aspires to the political development of the country as well as to raise in its national economy. Egypt from time immemorial has been solely an agricultural country. The perennial sun, the great River Nile, our highly developed system of irrigation, and a fertile soil have all contributed to make her produce long staple cotton, renowned all over the world. It has depended mainly, therefore, for its economy, on the export of this long staple cotton in order to pay for its imports of various commodities and finished goods of which its ever-increasing population stands in need. In this connection, it would be pertinent to mention that Egypt's population has risen about four millions during the last seven years, making its total population number over nineteen millions. So we had to face a problem pregnant with many serious developments. What are we to do with this rising number of people? The lands under cultivation could not absorb the rising tide of humanity. So with the advent of the abolition in 1930 of the special customs tariff accorded to certain countries under an antiquated system of capitulations, there began a movement towards the industrialization of the country. The process of changing from a purely agricultural economy to a partially industrial one was slow, yet steady. Hence began the rise of national industries producing goods solely for the consumption of the masses. Yet when the clouds of World War II were gathering

fast, these industries at the outbreak of hostilities were able to enlarge the already existing plants to supply not only the needs of the population, but also the urgent and vital demands of the Allied Armies stationed on its territory. Thus, when the war came to a successful end, we found on our hands an important element new to Egypt's economy, namely, the rise of a skilled labor class, most of whose members were lured from the land to the industries of the big cities seeking to improve their incomes and, in turn, their standard of living - a goal envisaged by the United Nations charter as well as by the present charter we are now drafting. So, if Egypt, like any small nation, initiates a reasonable and not prohibitive protective policy to safeguard its young and rising industries, would this measure be denied her and be censored by the charter?

It is elementary economics that if you raise the standard of living of the working classes, you increase the purchasing power of the people, they become potential consumers of more goods, and consequently encourage the flow of commodities, both domestic and foreign. Mr. Chairman, the mentioning as an instance the case of the gradual industrialization of Egypt and the problems she will have to deal with in the future as a natural consequence of this movement, is with the sole purpose of stating that the Egyptian Delegation corroborates to a large extent the exhaustive and excellent surveys delivered the other day by the honorable delegates of Colombia and Mexico. The smaller nations have a duty, and an urgent one at that, towards their peoples. They look to the other nations who have been endowed with rich natural resources, a high standard of living, and an advanced economy and technical knowledge for an understanding of their difficulties, for an attitude of cooperation and human solidarity. So, if these fortunate nations realize that the prosperity of one nation is an essential condition for the prosperity of another, they will thus pay tribute to stark reality rather than to outdated theories.

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Mr. Chairman, the proposed charter which has been submitted to us is an elaborate document worthy of the highest praise. Yet, in the opinion of the Egyptian Delegation, a few articles should be revised. We have no intention at this juncture, however, to either seek clarification of these articles or to elucidate reservations and amendments which we propose to put before the various committees at the appropriate time. Yet, there are two points which we feel we should like to bring out now. The first point is that the Arab States members of the Arab League have prior to the initiation of the present draft charter of the international trade organization, unanimously passed certain resolutions in order to safeguard their vital and common interests. And in conformity to the covenant of the said League, these resolutions are binding on all member states, which are determined to honor them in due course. The second point is related to the question of preferential treatment. If the proposed charter is to tolerate such a practice among certain countries, giving as their sole excuse that these privileges are of long standing, then I can only add that Egypt, together with the member states of the Arab League, shall be free to enter into similar agreements of a preferential nature.

We have witnessed in another charter the damaging effects created by according special privileges to certain nations. I repeat, Mr. Chairman, damaging, not only to the smooth functioning of the organization itself, but also to the national interests of the other member states, let alone the hurt to national pride and to human susceptibilities. Mr. Chairman and Fellow Delegates, before concluding, a word should be mentioned with regard to the unique position enjoyed by some of the big

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powers. In fairness, we of the smaller nations realize that these powers have to shoulder greater responsibilities. They have also certain obligations to perform towards humanity. But these responsibilities and obligations are a natural outcome of a world becoming closer and closer in every sphere of action through the evolution of modern Science and means of transport. This is the more clear when we observe how the nations of this universe have become more than ever economically interdependent. So, if we aspire to a recovery and reconstruction of the post-war world and to the future free interchange of commodities and goods, we should join hands in a spirit of mutual understanding and co-operation. Let us discard the old practice of the survival of the fittest and let us forge ahead in our present task for the good of the peace-loving peoples of the earth in the spirit of live and let live.
