

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND EMPLOYMENT  
Department of Public Information  
Havana, Cuba

ADVANCE TEXT  
HOLD FOR RELEASE  
CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Press Release ITO-194  
23 March 1948

STATEMENT BY THE HONORABLE WILLIAM L. CLAYTON,  
CHAIRMAN, DELEGATION OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

This is a day for history. There have been other conferences on international economic affairs. But none of them has undertaken a task so difficult as the one that is completed here today. None of them has come to an agreement concerning so many vital economic interests of so many states. None of them has produced a document so comprehensive as the Havana Charter for World Trade. Few, if any, of them have attained so notable a measure of success.

This is a momentous day for the United Nations. It marks the culmination of an enterprise that had its beginnings in the declarations of policy that were made in the Atlantic Charter in 1941 and in Article VII of the Mutual Aid Agreements in 1942. It marks the completion of three years of careful planning and almost two years of continuous negotiations. It marks the embodiment in a Charter, produced by more than fifty nations, of the principles contained in the Proposals that were published by the United States in 1945. It marks the end of four months of hard work here in Havana. And, as we look upon the result of these labors, we find that the time and the effort of all the many countries who have contributed to the Charter of Havana have been well spent.

The Charter is complicated and difficult. It is long and detailed and technical. But behind its many chapters and its scores of articles, there lies a simple truth. The world will be a better place to live in if nations, instead

of

of taking unilateral action, without regard to the interests of others, will adopt and follow common principles and enter into consultation, through an international organization, when interests come into conflict. And this, throughout the entire range of trade relationships, is what the signatories of the Charter agree to do. Each will surrender some part of its freedom to take action that might prove harmful to others and thus each will gain the assurance that others will not take action harmful to it. This may well prove to be the greatest step in history toward order and justice in economic relations among the members of the world community and toward a great expansion in the production, distribution, and consumption of goods throughout the world.

The International Trade Organization will deal with questions that nations have always held to be of the greatest importance. It will seek solutions for problems that have all too often been a source of irritation and ill will. It will serve as a center where the peoples of the world, with their diversity of economic interests, can meet on common ground. The ITO will substantially complete the structure of international economic cooperation. It will provide a necessary supplement to the work of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the International Monetary Fund, the Food and Agriculture Organization, and other specialized agencies. It will add strength to the United Nations itself.

It is difficult to realize that the Charter designed to bring this Organization into being is now completed. For we have been told, again and again, throughout these years, that it could not be done. The program was too ambitious. It would involve too many commitments. Circumstances and systems were

were too diverse. Fair dealing, in international trade, was old-fashioned and impractical. The disorganization caused by the war was too great. The problems of reconstruction were too pressing. Nations were too much preoccupied with immediate difficulties. They would not look to the future. The future, in any case, was too uncertain. It could not be done. It has been done! The Charter is now ready for submission to the legislatures of the participating nations for their approval.

This conference has afforded the world an impressive demonstration of the ability of nations to work out a comprehensive agreement on matters of vital importance under conditions of great difficulty. Interests have differed at Havana. But efforts to understand, to explain, and to agree have never failed. We have all gained in knowledge and understanding. We have achieved, through these years of working together, a voluntary agreement for our mutual benefit. In this achievement, a troubled world may well take hope.