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SPEECH DELIVERED BY MR. P. GROUSSET, MINISTER OF FRANCE,  
HEAD OF THE FRENCH DELEGATION, AT THE  
FINAL PLENARY SESSION

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Our Conference has come to a close with the production of an International Trade Charter, henceforward to be known throughout the world as the Charter of Havana.

The name, Mr. President, is, as it were, symbolic. Conceived in the United States, the subject of long discussion in Europe, at London and in Geneva, the Charter has been finally drafted in a country of Latin America where the civilizations of North and South America meeting and interpenetrating, form a harmonious whole with the great European traditions handed on by Spain. The Charter of Havana itself is a synthesis. And if the many delegates who came together to draft it have been able to enjoy the charms of Havana for a longer period than they hoped at first, it is because they have had to integrate in a single document, acceptable to all, tendencies and interests which, while not necessarily antithetical, are nevertheless substantially different.

The lead as regards both the Charter and the International Trade Organization was given by the United States. The first draft Charter which has served as a basis for all our work was produced by the United States Administration. And it is only now after more than two years of reflection, study and discussion, that we are able properly to appreciate the value of the enormous volume of preparatory work which was done in Washington. In thanking the United States Government for the lead it gave, I should like therefore to pay a special tribute to all those in the United States who contributed to the immense effort required to perfect the first draft Charter.

In proposing to the United Nations as a whole their idea of an International Trade Charter and an Organization to apply it, the Government of the United States had principally in mind the re-establishment of freedom of trade and the speediest possible elimination of all barriers to its development after the two successive catastrophes which the world has suffered during the last few decades.

We all share, Mr. President, the United States Government's desire to see trade carried on freely throughout the world. If several delegations, among them the French delegation, have been unable to accept the original text of the Charter as it stood, it is not because they did not share the purpose and  
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the objectives set forth in it, but because they were not always in agreement with the authors of the draft Charter regarding the means which should be employed to attain that purpose and realize those objectives.

Two principal objections have been made to the draft Charter submitted to us:

First, it has been asserted that the levels of industrialization in the various countries still differed too widely to allow free trade to be established immediately with advantage. It was for this reason that the idea arose of introducing in the Charter a special chapter dealing with the industrialization of countries insufficiently developed from the technical point of view. The final drafting may be considered, Mr. President, as one of the Havana Conference's titles to fame. It may be said that while this text was made possible only by the understanding shown by the authors of the original draft, it is principally to the efforts of the representatives of the countries directly concerned that we owe the final version, which, it seems, the majority of the Governments represented at this Conference will be able to accept.

At this point special mention must be made of the countries of Latin America. Their representatives came to Havana with clear and well defined ideas on this subject, a proof of their hard work during the months preceding the Conference.

But our work could not have been brought to a successful conclusion if the problems of industrialization had not also received very thorough study in the countries of the Near and Far East, China and the Indies.

The second objection to the original draft of the Charter was made on the grounds that it did not take sufficiently into account the inadequacy of certain domestic markets. Many delegations, including the French delegation, believed that free trade between different countries could not be of real advantage to all unless economic units, in some cases extending beyond present frontiers, were established as a result of free negotiations between the countries concerned. This idea of regional economic organizations has become a topical one. It is being studied in Latin America and in the Near East. But it is in Europe, and once more on the initiative of the United States Government, that far reaching economic regional schemes are now being elaborated and even, one might say, on the eve of becoming reality.

It is not surprising therefore, Mr. President, that the European delegations should have played a very active part in drawing up those Articles of the Charter which deal with regional economic problems and more particularly with the question of customs unions. But here again the final draft would

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have been impossible if the authors of the original Charter had not shown an understanding which it is impossible to praise too highly.

Mr. President, the text of the Draft Charter prepared by the United States Administration and which has served as a basis for our work, has been, in fact, profoundly modified in order to take into account the criticisms and suggestions proffered by the various delegations which have taken part in the Preparatory Committee and in the World Conference at Havana. But the original idea of the draft Charter has remained intact and I venture to believe, Mr. President, that the alterations made can only facilitate and hasten the realization of that idea. However that may be, and although a text which is the result of a synthesis or, if you prefer it, a compromise, does not entirely satisfy anybody, we can, I think, assert that, in the present circumstances, it would have been difficult to draft a Charter substantially better than the one we are now submitting to our respective Governments in the confident hope that it will be accepted by the majority of them.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I should like to express the hope that the Organization which is to apply our Charter will perform its functions in the same spirit of friendly co-operation and mutual understanding which has made possible the drafting of the document which lays down the statutes of this Organization, sets forth the general purpose of its activities and the immediate objectives which it will be called upon to realize at the earliest possible date.

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