

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

RESTRICTED

L/1285/Add.2

4 October 1960

Limited Distribution

Original: English

IRELAND - ACCESSION

Request for Participation in Tariff Negotiations

Statement by the Representative of Ireland at the Meeting of the Council on 22 September 1960

1. I would like to give a brief outline of the background against which the question of the possibility of Ireland's accession to the GATT must be considered.
2. The Government of Ireland have traditionally followed a liberal trade policy and I may mention that all the trade liberalization measures adopted in accordance with OEEC obligations have been extended to all countries. They have been encouraged in their support of liberal trade principles by the increasing activity which the contracting parties have shown recently in seeking solutions to those trade problems which are of particular importance to Ireland, such as the question of the entry of agricultural products to markets in the industrialized countries in face of widespread protectionist policies, and the effect on international trade of the establishment of the EEC and the EFTA. It is natural, therefore, in view of our export interests and our liberal trade policy that we should wish to assist as much as we can in the advancement of this work.
3. Experience has underlined the difficulties in the way of securing access for agricultural products to continental markets. Pending some easement in this respect our main hopes of expanding agricultural exports must continue to be centred on the United Kingdom market.
4. There is a special trade relationship between Ireland and the United Kingdom deriving from the complementary nature of the economies of the two countries, aided by such factors as geographical proximity, free movement of labour and money, interchangeability of currencies, close banking links and the absence of language barriers. This relationship is reflected in the arrangement incorporated in the Trade Agreements negotiated between the two countries in 1938 and 1948 and was reaffirmed in a supplementary Trade Agreement signed in April of this year.
5. The importance to Ireland of her special trading arrangements with the United Kingdom is illustrated by the fact that three-fourths of our exports go there and one half of our imports come from there.

6. Agricultural products, for which markets outside the United Kingdom are severely restricted, account for the greater part of our export trade. In 1959, agricultural exports amounted to £78 million of which £60 million, or 77 per cent went to the United Kingdom. A most important factor influencing this concentration of exports is the special treatment our agricultural products receive in the United Kingdom market: for cattle and sheep, there are links with British guaranteed prices; agricultural products generally have duty free entry and there are certain tariff preferences. The links with British guaranteed prices for livestock and the tariff preferences accorded affected some 70 per cent of agricultural exports to the United Kingdom in 1959.

7. Of industrial and other non-agricultural exports totalling £45 million in 1959, about 70 per cent went to the United Kingdom. These exports have risen substantially in recent years aided by advantageous terms of entry. Most Irish goods are accorded duty-free entry. Those that are dutiable are admitted at the Commonwealth preferential rate where such exists.

8. In exchange for these benefits, Ireland has contracted under Trade Agreements to accord certain advantages to the United Kingdom, principally preferential treatment for most United Kingdom goods of a class which are subject to duties on entry into Ireland and preferences in respect of any new duties. There is also contractual admission free of duty of a range of items and certain tariffs are bound. These are all matters which we should wish to discuss with the ~~CONTRACTING PARTIES~~ with a view to finding satisfactory terms on which Ireland might accede to the GATT consistently with maintaining our special trading relations with the United Kingdom. We hope it would be possible to do this during the coming session of the ~~CONTRACTING PARTIES~~ so that we might then be able to participate in the tariff negotiations due to start next January.

Note: The export figures quoted do not include the value of temporary exports.

