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CENTRAL AFRICAN ECONOMIC AND CUSTOMS UNION

Statement by H.E. Mr. Guerillot, Ambassador of the
Central African Republic to the European Economic Community,
on 28 March 1966, on the implementation of the
Central African Economic and Customs Union

I should like to make a short statement on the implementation of the Treaty establishing the Central African Economic and Customs Union. The Union is composed of five republics - Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo (Brazzaville), Gabon and Chad. The text of the Treaty was presented to the CONTRACTING PARTIES at their twenty-second session (document L/2554). On that occasion, the Minister of National Economy of Gabon drew the attention of representatives here to the fact that the establishment of a complete customs union between the Federal Republic of Cameroon on the one hand and the four States of the Equatorial Customs Union on the other hand, would not modify the existing situation as regards the CONTRACTING PARTIES. The Treaty does not provide for any change in the common external tariff adopted by the five States in 1962. This remark still applies, and the institution of the Economic and Customs Union has not brought any new elements. However, since some contracting parties have asked to be kept informed of the development of the Union, I should like to give a few details in this regard.

The Treaty establishing the Central African Economic and Customs Union was signed at Brazzaville by the Heads of State of the five countries on 6 December 1964, and was ratified by the national parliaments in the course of 1965. While the ratification procedures were progressing, a number of meetings of ministers and experts were held, to seek adequate solutions to the various technical problems encountered, in particular the unification of the purely fiscal charges levied on imports. The Treaty came into force on 1 January 1966. As from that date, the five States of the Union form a single customs territory, the same tariffs and the same regulations being applied at the external frontiers by the customs administrations. Of course, not all the provisions of the Treaty have yet become fully effective, in particular those relating to economic co-operation. But they are being brought into operation and a large number of industries in the member States have recently been brought under the single charge system. As you will have been able to see from the Treaty establishing the Union, this novel fiscal system enables the five countries to participate in the development of national industries without having to make any substantial sacrifices from the

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point of view of revenue since the levy, although charged at the production stage, is paid to the State in which consumption takes place. Still on the subject of economic co-operation, the Secretary-General of the Union is planning procedures for the allocation of industrialization projects so as to ensure the harmonious development of the member States as a whole.

And so, thanks to the firm resolve of the governments of our countries, and also because of the encouragement received from the various international organizations concerned with the economic advancement of less-developed countries, the Central African Economic and Customs Union is now a living reality. Many problems remain to be solved, but we firmly intend to continue in this undertaking because we believe, as you pointed out Mr. Chairman in your opening statement, that "regional integration undoubtedly can bring considerable benefits to those countries which are participating in it and, as the General Agreement clearly recognizes, it can make a positive contribution to the expansion of world trade". The CONTRACTING PARTIES will be kept regularly informed of our progress.

