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Statement by the Danish Delegate at the Sixth Meeting of the Contracting Parties in their Sixth Session

The new document, GATT/CP.6/23, distributed yesterday in the afternoon and introduced just now, is in my opinion of the utmost interest. I think we all - and specially the low tariff countries - should thank the French Government for taking this bold initiative and thereby demonstrating the intentions of one of the big high-tariff countries to contribute considerably to the breaking down of the protectionism of the world of to-day.

In paragraph 1 of the document the French Delegation declares that since the General Agreement was drawn up, important results have been achieved towards lowering of tariffs, elimination of discriminatory practices and the expansion of trade. It could not be denied that some results have been achieved. I would even be prepared to use - in a written document - the words "important results", but as this is not a public meeting, but strictly confidential, I don't think we need, when speaking, to be so polite as to talk of important results. In my opinion we are much nearer the truth when we say that what we have up till now achieved, is to reduce tariffs to such an extent only that only in very few cases industries - not to speak of agriculture - have been influenced. Therefore I fully agree when the French Delegation says that "much remains" to be done if the objectives that the contracting parties have assigned to themselves are to be achieved.

I also welcome that the French Delegation declares to be of the opinion that the time for new progress to be made has now come. We feel that such a declaration is very important, and we feel confident that as we - and I am sure also others - agree in what is said, it will also be possible to find a way. Where there is a will a way can always be found.

Contracting parties will remember that this whole problem was, as Mr. van Blankenstein just mentioned, discussed in Torquay during the tariff-negotiations, and also during the special Session of the Contracting Parties some months ago. During these discussions we have repeatedly declared that we are prepared to see all tariffs reduced to the lowest possible, common level, in order that industries and agriculture in all countries could have the same competitive conditions and be able to contribute in the most effective way to the benefit of all countries by the freest possible competition, on the basis of the different natural possibilities of production in the different countries, parallel to what is the case inside the different countries where no barriers hamper trade between different parts of that particular country.

How, do the details in the French proposal correspond to this.

I am not going to say very much against the suggestion of reducing the tariffs by 30% in three years. This I understand could be a beginning. I must, however, say, that reducing a very high tariff by 30% may in many cases involve no difficulties at all. Reducing a very low tariff by the same percentage may on the other hand cause serious difficulties. I understand that subparagraph 6 of paragraph II in the French proposal tries to meet this. At any rate the overall reduction of existing tariffs by the same percentage cannot be a sine qua non to the French Delegation, as, I understand, what the French Government is aiming at is the breaking down of the protectionism, because time has come for new progress to be made. That being the aim of the French Government it is simple logic that one should fight against protectionism where protectionism is to be found and not where it does not exist. When I speak of protectionism I mean in the agricultural as well as in the industrial field.

I welcome to see France taking actively part in the fight against protectionism. And I hope that France will not make the fault of dragging all the countries of the world into such a new scheme, if that might make the solution of more acute problems unnecessarily complicated.

One more question, Mr. Chairman.

The French proposal speaks of coordinating tariff reductions and special economic integration plans. I fear that this might lead us from one form of protectionism into some other form of protectionism, even worse.

This I know, is not what the French Delegation is out for. I am sure the French Delegation in bringing this proposal before the Contracting Parties have been inspired by the wise words of the Canadian Minister of Commerce, when he spoke to us the other day of people who falsely believe that protectionism is necessary and who fear free competition.

Encouraged by the high intentions of the French proposal I feel that these points must be of minor importance to the French Delegation, and could and should be disposed of in such a way that they would not prevent the fight against protectionism and the maintenance of artificial, uneven competitive conditions, specially amongst the highly developed countries in Europe and America. It is there the difficulties really lie.

I agree with the Delegation for the Netherlands that as the Contracting Parties have already set up an intersessional working party to deal with these difficulties it might cause confusion to set up another group, and I suggest that the question should be discussed inside the working party already set up. As the Contracting Parties invited the "Group of Ten", who signed the Memorandum in Torquay, to submit considered proposals to the Working Party, it might perhaps be useful, if the proposal was first discussed between the 10 countries, if the French Delegation is prepared to do that. We in the Danish Delegation fully appreciate the new document so promising and encouraging as to further fruitful cooperation.