

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

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CONTRACTING PARTIES
Fourteenth Session

FOURTEENTH SESSION AGENDA

Communication from the Delegation of Australia

The Executive Secretary has received the following communication, concerning item 5 - Rome Treaty - on the agenda for the fourteenth session, from the leader of the Australian delegation:

"You will recall that we raised with the secretariat the scope of item 5 in the provisional agenda. The advice received was that the item was restricted to a report on the Article XXII consultations and an item covering more general discussion at the session would have to be listed 'at the request of Australia'. We were not prepared to proceed in this way as it would have given the misleading impression that there were particular points of difficulty other than those arising out of the consultations which we wished to pursue at this session. What, in fact, we sought and considered to have been agreed at the last session was the opportunity to discuss developments which are of interest to the CONTRACTING PARTIES.

"Our reference to the agreement at the last session is to the understanding recorded in the Chairman's summing up of the debate at the last session that this matter would be on the agenda of the fourteenth session (vide page 143 of SR.13/15).

"It is not necessary to stress the great importance the establishment of the European Economic Community has for all contracting parties. The consultative machinery now operating under Article XXII and under which progress will be reported at this session under agenda item 5, will provide opportunity for discussion of some of the issues raised. Nevertheless there are day-to-day developments which could usefully be explained to contracting parties at successive sessions with mutual advantage to the six Member States and other contracting parties. Recently the second report of the Commission of the EEC was published and early this year a memorandum containing a number of points of real importance to the contracting parties was prepared by the Commission. We believe that many delegations would share our view that an opportunity to receive information on developments in the European Economic Community and possibly to discuss these matters would be in the interests of mutual understanding between the Community and the CONTRACTING PARTIES.

"As I explained in the opening plenary meeting, I was not presupposing any "right" to have listed at each session a general item - European Economic Community - although with regard to this session, agreement seemed to us clearly to have been reached last year. If this is not the view of the CONTRACTING PARTIES we would suggest that ambiguity be removed for future sessions.

"In our view it would be appropriate for the members of the EEC to provide to the CONTRACTING PARTIES at each session information on developments in the implementation of the Rome Treaty and that the CONTRACTING PARTIES be given an opportunity to comment on these developments. An alternative would be to make special provision at each autumn session for general debate on the Rome Treaty and to have an understanding that the scope of any specific item dealing with the Rome Treaty would not be so narrowly interpreted as to prevent a comment or question on other aspects to be recorded for later consideration.

"Our proposals are aimed at preventing a situation in which the subject cannot be mentioned (without involving argument about the 'right' to do so) or without obtaining fresh permission of the CONTRACTING PARTIES on the occasion of every meeting. The very seeking of permission anew on each occasion would seem more likely to provoke misunderstanding than some standing arrangement about an item likely to be of continuing interest and importance to us all for some time to come."