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Statement by the Representative of Poland on 16 November 1967

I should like very briefly to speak on the subject of Item 4 of the agenda. The report of the Committee on Trade and Development marks an important step towards crystallizing the immediate problems of the developing countries.

On 16 October this year we signed a Protocol for the Accession of Poland to the General Agreement, which inter alia involved acceptance by Poland of Part IV of the Agreement.

With regard to implementation of the results of the Kennedy Round, we shall begin to fulfil our obligations in this direction from 1 January 1968 - which is in keeping with the proposal made by the developing countries as mentioned in Section III of the Report of the Committee on Trade and Development (L/2912).

Passing on to Section IV of that Report, and the problem of extending the opportunities for products exported by the developing countries, including manufactured and semi-manufactured articles, to gain access to the Polish market, we shall shortly be in a position to supply accurate data on this point.

We are gratified at the prospects for expansion of trade among developing countries, through negotiations under the auspices of GATT. In this connexion we have taken due note of the statement made in the Committee on Trade and Development by the representative of Chile, to the effect that the General Agreement is the only valid legal instrument in the field of international trade. We believe that the interest shown by UNCTAD in these negotiations is a good sign, and we welcome the possibility of collaboration between GATT and UNCTAD in this field.

Having participated in the first UNCTAD Conference, we have been able to observe how many of the ideas launched and developed in GATT since the Haberler Report and the decisions taken in 1958 under the programme for the development of trade have served as a basis for UNCTAD's work. This encourages us to hope that the present exchange of ideas among the CONTRACTING PARTIES will prove valuable for the work of the second UNCTAD Conference.

While on the subject of the developing countries' problems, I should like to thank the representative of the United Arab Republic for emphasizing the importance of the pragmatic approach we have chosen in acceding to GATT, and the opportunities opened up at the same time for developing countries by the improvement in the conditions of our trade with the industrialized countries.

We regard the Protocol for the Accession of Poland to the General Agreement (including the clarifications given in the report of the Working Party (L/2806 of 23 June 1967)) as a very important legal instrument which for us may mean an approach to the problems often referred to as problems of East/West trade. I say "may mean", for the document still contains points which are not clear as regards the full implementation of certain measures for the liberalization of trade and also includes some escape clauses.

We realize that this bridge built pragmatically between positions that seemed irreconcilable from the point of view of principle, is still a fragile structure. We must go forward cautiously. We are happy, however, to point out that the first results are very encouraging, and we are therefore determined to pursue the course we have chosen.

During the negotiations for our accession to GATT, we did not call attention to the important reforms made in our system of foreign trade recently. We felt that these reforms were an internal matter, and we did not wish, by citing them, to commit ourselves before their results were confirmed.

This manner of proceeding is singularly lacking in flamboyance as the pragmatic approach almost invariably is. At the same time, we are keenly interested in all the reforms undertaken in countries whose system is similar to ours. We are following very closely the reforms already set in motion in Czechoslovakia, and we listened with great interest to the statement by the observer for Hungary, announcing the immediate implementation of very important reforms in the economic administration of his country. We particularly noted the suggestion, in the text of his speech as circulated, of discussions on the underlying principles of and possible amendments to the text of the General Agreement. We shall be only too ready to go along with others if and when these imaginative ideas begin to materialize.

With this in mind we have reserved the right (see paragraph 7 of the report of the Working Party on the Accession of Poland - L/2806) to re-negotiate our position with regard to the provisions of the General Agreement. We felt that the most important point at the moment was to proceed on the basis of where we stand in 1967 and to go forward pragmatically.

This is a matter of great importance to us, since we find ourselves in a paradoxical situation. We are a country of 32 million people in the very heart of Europe, a country preordained by geography to devote itself to trade and traffic. Our steel production is some 50 per cent greater, and our coal production three times greater, than that of France after the War. We are considerable producers and exporters of sulphur, and in the near future we shall be exporting copper. We have expanded our shipyards, and we are among the first dozen shipping exporters in the world; we manufacture many different types of machinery; yet the pattern of our exports to the industrialized countries is that of a developing country. I do not propose to go into details and explain the many and varied reasons for this state of affairs. I will simply remark that no-one would have considered it a sound proposition in France or the United Kingdom twenty years ago to link the future of their exports to products such as eggs, pork and beef, chickens, horses and frozen rabbits.

For us, accession to GATT signifies the imminence of change in the pattern of our exports to the industrialized countries. It should also simplify the problem of deciding as to the investments to be made with a view to a more rational participation in the international division of labour.

Nevertheless, from our present vantage-point in 1967 we can discuss matters on the basis of the existing structure of our exports; and hence on the subject of Item 3 I can present only a vague sketch of problems of importance to us. This would skirt the wider issues and probably be of very limited interest to others.

Where we shall really stand -- and I emphasize the "really" -- in 1975, that we shall be able to discuss in 1975, or in 1974 at the earliest.

Perhaps by then we shall be in a position also to put forward some ideas on negotiating techniques. For the moment, as I have already stated, we subscribe to all the aspects of GATT's broad and imaginative programme of action, as reviewed by the Director-General, and in all of them we feel there is a place for us.

Though our own interest in agricultural exports seems likely to decline steadily, for reasons outlined in a document we presented during the Kennedy Round negotiations (TN.64/NTB.15 of 27 April 1964), we are keenly interested in the possibility of negotiations concerning agriculture.