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PROGRAMME FOR THE EXPANSION OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Statement by the Representative of Norway on 15 November 1967

I believe that my Government was one of the first to support both the Director-General's initiative to put Item 3 on the agenda for this session of the CONTRACTING PARTIES and his appeal that as many Ministers as possible participate in the debate on this point. After now having listened to the various statements on this matter, I think the conclusion can be drawn that both the timing and the content of the Director-General's proposal were right.

While the first two decades have been rather concentrated on the first T in GATT - tariffs - topped by the achievements of the Kennedy Round, it now seems that in the period in front of us the second T - trade - could be the prevailing source of the work of the organization.

I would, however, warn against an exaggeration of the extent of the switch from the first T to the second T. The Kennedy Round is not yet safely in harbour, and I shudder to think what might be the extent of the unravelling of its results if major trading partners should succumb to internal protectionist pressures.

Furthermore, it was not only in the agricultural sector that the results of the Kennedy Round created dissatisfaction. The results in the fish sector were very disappointing indeed for my country. Also in the non-ferrous metals sector and the ferro-alloys sector the results fell far short of expectations. Considering the comparatively low tariffs in these last two sectors and the heavy pressure which the Nordic group tried to bring to bear to have them reduced, it seems indicated that low tariffs not always have merely a nuisance value. Against this background the proposal to make a detailed factual study of the level and protectiveness of tariffs after the Kennedy Round is a valuable one. Furthermore, if it is generally accepted by the CONTRACTING PARTIES, Norway will participate in an examination of various aspects and factors in possible free trade for certain products.

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The conclusion therefore seems to be that we still need GATT in the tariff field both as a watch-dog to protect what has already been achieved, and as a terrier to dig out still untried subjects for negotiations.

While GATT still has a fair monopoly in the pure tariff field, we enter into stronger competition when tackling the second T - trade. The Director-General himself drew attention yesterday to what he termed "a perpetual proliferation of international activities". To stick to the dog world: we shall need some strong huskies to pull the GATT sledge through the wilderness of non-tariff barriers. But even so the load on the sledge must not be too heavy. My delegation therefore strongly supports the establishment of an inventory before we set out.

As a member of an established industrial free-trade area, Norway is experiencing the tendency of non-tariff barriers seeking to replace the abolished tariff barriers. And as a small country we realize our limited possibilities to compete with greater and richer trading partners in the application of non-tariff measures like for instance State aid and export subsidies. We are therefore vitally interested in international examination and possible control of such measures. However, as I said, GATT has many competitors in the non-tariff trade field, and we should try to avoid unnecessary overlapping.

Now turning to agriculture, I will limit myself to supporting the revitalization and if you like - rebaptizing of Committee II. We also find the suggestion to include food aid provisions in the dairy arrangement and the establishment of a Dairy Council within the framework of GATT as constructive.

Norway's positive attitude to the problems of developing countries is well-known, and I can only refer to the statement made yesterday by Ambassador von Sydow on behalf of the four Nordic countries.

Mr. Chairman, we have listened to many constructive statements on this point of the agenda. Our immediate task now seems to be to define the subjects where we should seek ministerial endorsement next week. My delegation would be happy to participate in this attempt, whether it should be decided to be set up a working party for this purpose or by other means.