

# GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

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CONTRACTING PARTIES  
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## REVIEW OF THE WORK OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES AND FUTURE PROGRAMME

Statement by M. P. de Smet, Director General a.i.  
of Foreign Economic Affairs of Belgium,  
on 23 November 1967

Mr. de Winter, Minister of Foreign Trade Relations, has asked me to express his regret that he is unable to be present during this session.

He has been confined to his bed with bronchitis since Tuesday.

The Minister had wanted very much to take part in the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the signing, at Geneva, of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, all the more since Belgium was one of the twenty-three countries to sign the General Agreement on 30 October 1947, after negotiations extending over several months with a Belgian, Ambassador Seutens, in the Chair.

The Minister wished to pay tribute to the substantial achievements of GATT and to thank the Director-General, Mr. Wyndham White, for his distinguished services to the cause of trade expansion.

The Chairman rightly observed at the opening of the session that apart from the results of the six rounds of tariff negotiations, concluding with the Kennedy Round, the principal virtue of the GATT has consisted and still consists in bringing countries that have accepted it to think of their economic policies in terms of the well-being of the world community, not merely of national interests.

My Government welcomes the steady increase in the membership of our organization, especially the accession of so many developing countries and, more recently, nations with an economic system different from our own.

Their participation bears witness to the vitality and universal character of GATT.

The Kennedy Round was undoubtedly the most important negotiation ever undertaken in the history of international economic relations.

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The Belgian Government has, however, been greatly concerned during the past few months in observing signs of the recrudescence of protectionism in various countries, some of them important partners in the GATT, and thinks it of the greatest importance to maintain intact the results of the Kennedy Round.

There is some fear that if this is not done, a kind of chain reaction may cause other countries to take similar measures with a considerable effect on international trade.

Belgium has confidence in our organization's future and in the universal will to continue the work in hand - to promote trade expansion and thereby a higher standard of living and a better life for every nation.