

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

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CONTRACTING PARTIES
Twenty-Fifth Session

TRADE NEGOTIATIONS AMONG DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Statement by the Chairman of the Trade Negotiations Committee of Developing Countries on 13 November 1968

1. As the CONTRACTING PARTIES will recall this subject was discussed at the twenty-fourth session. In the conclusions reached at that session the CONTRACTING PARTIES noted with satisfaction the initiative taken by developing countries to explore the possibilities of an exchange of tariff and trade concessions directed towards the expansion of their mutual trade. At that time a Trade Negotiations Committee of Developing Countries had been set up to prepare the basis for such negotiations. The CONTRACTING PARTIES took note of the establishment of that Committee and also noted that they would be kept informed of progress and that in due course the results of the negotiations would be brought to them for consideration.
2. Since that time the Trade Negotiations Committee has held several meetings. At an early stage of its deliberations the Committee agreed that developing countries not contracting parties to GATT should be informed of the exercise and should be given an opportunity of participating in the work of the negotiations Committee. In response to that invitation a considerable number of non-GATT countries have participated in the discussions of the Committee.
3. The main part of the work of the Committee has so far consisted in making arrangements for the exchange of information needed by the participating countries in defining the areas of interest, and in selecting products on which requests for tariff or trade concessions might be presented to other participating countries.
4. Early this year participating countries were invited to submit lists of products on which they would wish to explore the possibility of expanding exports to each other and of pursuing negotiations to this end.
5. Last month consultations, aimed at securing an exchange of information on trade patterns, tariff policies and import régimes of the interested countries as to facilitate the establishment of specific requests and offers of concessions, entered an intensive phase. During a period of two weeks a large number of bilateral consultations took place. In addition, a series of informal meetings were held at which a number of the participating countries gave information concerning their tariffs and trade régimes as well as their trade possibilities to those countries which were interested in negotiating with them.

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6. The results of these bilateral and joint consultations were reviewed at a general meeting of participating countries on 25 October 1968 and there was general agreement that this series of consultations had considerably facilitated efforts of a number of participating countries to establish specific lists of requests and to obtain a concrete indication of negotiating possibilities. It was also envisaged that a second round of such discussions might be organized towards the end of January next year.

7. The participating countries are generally aware of the difficulties of setting a time-limit or target date for the conclusion of the negotiations. There is, however, earnest desire on the part of almost all the governments concerned that the exchange of information and the exploration of the best ways of conducting consultations should be continued and appropriate arrangements carried out so that actual negotiations could be started at an early date.

8. The Trade Negotiations Committee has, until now, focused its attention on assisting the participating countries to explore the possibilities of an exchange of concessions. It intends to take up the question of establishing appropriate procedures and negotiating rules as soon as the participating countries are in a position to identify their specific interest in negotiating on particular products. The Trade Negotiations Committee has made considerable progress on the basis of its empirical approach to its work and can hopefully look forward to achieving concrete results in the coming year. It intends to keep the CONTRACTING PARTIES informed of the progress made and at the appropriate time the CONTRACTING PARTIES will no doubt be called upon to give consideration to the results achieved.