

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

RESTRICTED

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CONTRACTING PARTIES
Twenty-first Session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE FIRST MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on 24 February 1964, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. J.H. WARREN (Canada)

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Opening address by the Chairman¹

In opening the twenty-first session of the CONTRACTING PARTIES, the CHAIRMAN drew attention to the Conclusions adopted by the Ministers at their meeting in May 1963. He said that these Conclusions, which constituted a programme of work for the CONTRACTING PARTIES, in response to the challenge of the present decade, touched virtually the whole field of trade relations and trade policy. Much work in implementing the Ministerial Conclusions had been done but much remained to be completed. During the course of the twenty-first session, the CONTRACTING PARTIES would be considering, inter alia, the possible modification to the General Agreement in order to provide an institutional basis better fitted to the trade and development requirements of the less-developed countries, the possibility of preferential tariff treatment for the exports of developing countries, and the establishment of a trade information and trade promotion advisory service within the GATT. He also drew attention to the importance for all contracting parties of a successful outcome to the "Kennedy round" of trade negotiations. On behalf of the CONTRACTING PARTIES the Chairman welcomed the delegations from the seventeen countries which had acceded to the General Agreement since the twentieth session and from the two countries which had acceded provisionally.

¹The full text of Mr. Warren's statement is reproduced in Press Release GATT/829.

Mr. DAMAS (Gabon) thanked the Chairman for welcoming his country to the GATT. He outlined the commercial policy measures adopted by his country since it had achieved autonomy in external trade relations in August 1960. His government had entered into special trading relations with neighbouring African States, namely the Central African Republic, Congo (Brazzaville), Chad and Cameroon. In July 1962 the five States had introduced a common external tariff and in December 1964 the five Heads of State would be considering a draft treaty establishing a common market and customs union. Gabon had, since its independence, adhered to its membership of the franc zone and had entered into Association with the European Economic Community. The regional and association arrangements of which Gabon was a member represented a positive step in overcoming development and trade problems confronting countries such as his own. Gabon was nevertheless prepared to give favourable consideration to all proposals relating to the encouragement of intra-African trade.

Turning to the general framework of economic relations between less-developed and developed countries, Mr. Damas suggested that commodity market organization represented the most effective means of safeguarding the exports of less-developed countries from the effects of declining commodity prices. As regards the financing of development, Mr. Damas mentioned plans drawn up by the IBRD for facilitating the task of less-developed countries in obtaining and servicing loans. He suggested that industrialized countries should consider the formulation of less onerous terms and conditions for bilateral aid to less-developed countries. In conclusion, Mr. Damas proposed that the provisions of the GATT should be modified to accord with the realities of the trading problems of the less-developed countries which, he suggested, were very different from those confronting the original contracting parties.¹

1. Adoption of the agenda (L/2124 and Add.1 and 2)

The agenda, as contained in documents L/2124 and Add.1 and 2, was adopted with the addition of an item relating to the Convention of association between the European Economic Community and associated African and Malagasy States.

2. Order of business (W.21/1)

There was some discussion on the proposals by the Executive Secretary in document W.21/1 regarding the programme of work for the first days of the session.

¹The full text of Mr. Damas' statement is reproduced in document L/2161.

Mr. LALL (India) drew attention to the desirability of the CONTRACTING PARTIES making the maximum progress possible in the implementation of their work programme during their twenty-first session. He suggested, in this connexion, that it would be regrettable if action, which could be taken within the GATT, were to be deferred until the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. He proposed, therefore, that the CONTRACTING PARTIES should discuss certain of the more substantive items at a relatively early date so that the problems posed and differences of view could be aired. Contracting parties would then have an opportunity of attempting to resolve the problems and to accommodate differences of view, before returning to these items towards the end of the session. In particular, Mr. Lall suggested that the items relative to the trade negotiations in 1964, and to the trade of less-developed countries should be taken up initially in the period 9 to 12 March.

It was agreed that the proposals by the Indian representative would be taken into account.

The meeting adjourned at 4.50 p.m.