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SPEECH BY MR. A. B. SPEEKENBRINK PRESIDENT OF THE
NETHERLANDS DELEGATION BEFORE FINAL PLENARY SESSION

Mr. Chairman,

Now that so many distinguished colleagues already have given their opinion with regard to the results of the United Nations Conference on Trade & Employment you will no doubt understand and also appreciate that I limit myself to a relatively short statement.

I will then in the first place associate myself with all the previous speakers who expressed their gratitude to you, Mr. Chairman, and the other officers of our conference for their guidance in our discussions and their manifold and strenuous efforts in this respect. Wholeheartedly I include in this vote of thanks the hard working members of the secretariat and last but not least the interpreters, male and female, who often have had long working hours, the greater part of which they had to spend in those nice looking but still very uncomfortable glass cages.

With regard to our share in the discussion I think, Mr. Chairman, that I may say that the Delegation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, whilst consistently maintaining a spirit of cooperation and compromise, has tried to contribute to the work of the conference. We did this with great enthusiasm as it is the considered opinion of my Government that every effort to improve the relations between the nations of the world and especially those in the economic field, should be supported to the greatest extent. My country has shown this attitude in the past and after the war in no less degree when participating in the work of the United Nations. Personally I am very happy, Mr. Chairman, that it has been my good fortune to take part in the sessions of the Preparatory Committee in London and in

Geneva and to have now the honour of signing, in the name of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Final Act of the Havana Conference. Before doing so I feel obliged to remind you, Mr. Chairman, again of the fact that the Kingdom of the Netherlands is in a process of reconstruction, not only with regard to the territories in Asia but also to those in the Carribean. I trust that, when the time comes to consider the membership of the International Trade Organization under the stipulations of Article 71 of the Havana Charter, this process of reconstruction will have come to a satisfactory end, so that my Government will be able to put the necessary facts and propositions before the Interim Executive Committee, we have just set up, or to the Director General of the International Trade Organization if such an official will by then have been appointed.

In the meantime, Mr. Chairman, we shall continue in the same spirit that guided us during this conference and in the previous meeting of the Preparatory Committee. In this connection I may be permitted to remind you, that in the meetings of the Contracting Parties to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, which just have been concluded, I had the honour and pleasure to announce that my Government has notified the Secretary-General of the United Nations of the fact that in addition to the metropolitan country also the Netherlands Indies, Curacao and Surinam will apply provisionally the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade according to the stipulations of the Protocol of Provisional Application signed in Geneva on October 30 last year.

Mr. Chairman, during this conference the countries of the Benclux again worked in close collaboration and it therefore has been a great pleasure to me that my esteemed colleague and friend, Mr. Max Suetens, has been given ample opportunity to use his great gifts in several functions. That the Benclux as a customs union is a member of the Interim Commission gives great satisfaction to my Government. My delegation is convinced that this Commission

under the able chairmanship of our esteemed colleague, Mr. Dana Wilgress, will use its best efforts to find a solution for the few outstanding problems with regard to the present text of the Charter. Of these problems I would like to mention in particular the special position of Switzerland with which country the Netherlands have such happy and fruitful trade relations.

As you will understand, my country is very interested in the stipulations of article 42 of the Havana Charter which deals with customs unions and free trade areas. It is our opinion that this article has undergone a great improvement in Havana and it is my sincere hope that together with article 15, which gives certain rules for preferential arrangements for economic development, it will form the framework within which the Members of the ITO will be able to construe greater economic units and by doing so will give a very valuable contribution to the expansion of world trade. The fact that at the same time we were considering these problems here, a very important group of European countries has been discussing concrete measures directed towards an increasingly greater economic collaboration, while last Saturday notice was given of the intended conclusion of a custom union between France and Italy, makes it abundantly clear that the just mentioned articles in conjunction with all the other articles and principles of the Charter are based on realities.

In this connection, Mr. Chairman, I might also express my satisfaction with the new text of the old article 93, now article 93, which deals with the relations with non-members of the International Trade Organization. It is our opinion that the attraction to be a member of the ITO must arise from the useful work of that Organization and that we should not seek an -I might say- enforced enlistment of other countries into that Organization. At the same time we are in favour of a speedy entry into force of the Havana

Charter and have therefore supported those delegates who spoke in favour of the old text of the present article 103 of the Charter. However, we too consider the present text of that article to be a reasonable compromise between different points of view.

Mr. Chairman, as I promised to be brief, I mentioned only a few articles of the Havana Charter although for instance. I would have liked to deal at more length with the Chapter VIII of the Havana Charter which deals with the settlement of disputes. My delegation is of the opinion that compared with the Geneva text this part of the Charter has been greatly improved. There is no need for me to emphasize that the Kingdom of the Netherlands, comprising as it does territories in different stages of economic development which on the other hand have generally suffered great damage owing to the recent war- is vitally interested in practically every article of the Charter. We have always tried to state our point of view keeping in mind the needs and wishes of the different parts of the Kingdom and although -as practically every colleague- I cannot say that we are entirely in agreement with the present text of all the articles of the Havana Charter, we too consider the results of our work as a reasonable compromise which I too am happy to authenticate by the signature of the Final Act. As a contracting Party to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and as signatory of the Protocol of Provisional Application of the said agreement, the Kingdom of the Netherlands will even have to go further in certain respects. Acting on the full powers I have received, I hope to sign on Wednesday also different protocols which have the immediate or ultimate purpose of bringing certain stipulations of the general agreement on tariffs & trade into conformity with the corresponding articles of the Havana Charter.

Mr. Chairman, I will not take up more of your time and will therefore end with my thanks to you and to all our colleagues present here for the spirit of mutual trust and friendship in (more)

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which we have conducted our deliberations and might ask you also to submit the thanks of my delegation to the Cuban Government and to the city of Havana for the kind and often overwhelming hospitality shown to us.

I thank you.

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