MESSAGE FROM MR. K.B. LALL, CHAIRMAN OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES TO GATT, FOR THE EIGHTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT TO BE HELD IN PUNTA DEL ESTE, FROM 16-20 JANUARY 1967

In the name of the CONTRACTING PARTIES and in my own name, I send my greetings to you Mr. Chairman and to the distinguished members of the Trade and Development Committee.

It was on 8th day of February 1965 that the CONTRACTING PARTIES meeting, in a Special Session in Geneva, gave themselves the task of devoting special attention to the difficulties and deficiencies of their less fortunate Members so that they too may be able to make their due contribution to the expansion of international trade. To this end, the CONTRACTING PARTIES added a Part IV to the General Agreement, accepted new commitments, resolved to adopt special measures, and brought into being the Trade and Development Committee to help themselves to fulfil their new task.

The Trade and Development Committee has already met on as many as seven occasions. We owe it to the vision of Ambassador Lacarte and the generosity of the Government of Uruguay that the Committee is meeting for its Eighth Session at Punta del Este.

This is not the first time that Latin America will be showing the way in the field of development policy. So many of the concepts evolved at Alta Gracia have, for instance, been incorporated in the Final Act of the UNCTAD. The meeting of the Trade and Development Committee in Punta del Este could have somewhat similar impact on the GATT. In accepting the invitation for the Committee to meet at an eastern point in the Southern Hemisphere, the CONTRACTING PARTIES have given proof of their desire to draw upon the thoughts and experience of Latin America in appraising their work and in determining the lines of future advance so that they are better able to meet the needs and realize the possibilities of the developing parts of the globe.
The Committee meets at a time when the most far-reaching enterprise undertaken by the CONTRACTING PARTIES is about to enter a crucial phase. When this exercise was inaugurated, the Ministers had declared their intention to use it to the maximum extent practicable for solving the trading problems of the developing countries. A number of practical solutions have since been proposed and discussed: these include, inter alia, a deep cut in, and wherever practicable complete elimination of, import duties on products of which developing countries are principal or substantial suppliers and special treatment for products, the export of which could be built up to substantial dimensions only over a period of time. It is my earnest hope that the Committee will succeed in providing guidelines for the participants in the Kennedy Round to reach a fruitful consensus on both these solutions.

At its previous meetings, the Committee has sought to set in motion machinery to enable the less-developed contracting parties to give concessions to one another in an effort to augment mutual trade exchanges. But the chronic difficulties experienced by some of the contracting parties with their payments position and with inadequacies in their infra-structure of mutual contact and communication have stood in the way of more rapid progress. I venture to urge the Committee to address itself to these difficulties and find ways and means to make it possible for concrete action, even if it be on a modest scale, to be undertaken as speedily as practicable.

The Committee and its subsidiary groups have successfully endeavoured to identify obstacles and evolve practical approaches for dealing with them. So far, however, actual achievement has fallen far short of the expectations aroused by the Committee's work. The discussions in Punta del Este will, I trust, impart a note of urgency to the work of the GATT in the developmental field and help the Committee to evolve a programme of action for being pursued actively by the CONTRACTING PARTIES.

Members of the Committee must have noted the emphasis which is being currently placed on helping developing nations to help themselves. There is no sector of developmental activity to which this approach is more relevant than trade development. The deliberations of the Eighth Session will, I am confident, constitute a landmark in the work of the CONTRACTING PARTIES and help to open out many avenues for joint and several endeavours in the quest of a better world. It is in this confidence that I send, on behalf of the CONTRACTING PARTIES and on my own behalf, to the distinguished delegates assembled in Punta del Este, my best wishes for success in the important work on which they are engaged.