The Democratic Republic of the Congo is to become the 79th contracting party to GATT. Its membership will take effect on 11 September 1971, thirty days after the signature by the Congo of its Protocol of Accession.

The terms of the Protocol have been negotiated in a GATT working party, which met in June 1971. The Decision for Accession was taken by the Contracting Parties in a postal ballot.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is acceding to GATT under Article XXXIII of the General Agreement. In doing so, it is following a path different from that of other developing countries which have joined GATT in recent years. These countries have generally acceded under the simple procedures of Article XXVI, paragraph 5, which allows formerly dependent territories to become Contracting Parties in their own right without negotiation, provided they do so on the same terms, and offering the same concessions to other Contracting Parties, as applied before independence. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo preferred to negotiate a fresh basis for its adherence to the General Agreement, and has successfully done so.

The Congo levies both customs duties and revenue duties at the border.

The customs duties are all on a most-favoured-nation basis. With her accession to GATT the Democratic Republic of the Congo has agreed to bind a certain number of customs duties under the GATT consistently with its financial, trade and development needs; these are listed in the schedule attached to the Protocol.

One of the main features of the agreement reached between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Contracting Parties concerns the revenue duties charged on imports into the Congo. The Democratic Republic of the Congo while retaining the right to increase its revenue duties, which constitute an important source of financing for its economic development, has declared its intention not to increase revenue duties - applied like customs duties on the c.i.f. value of
goods - above the level which, when aggregated with customs duties, would exceed the combined rate of the bound customs duty rate in the Schedule and the rate of the revenue duty imposed on the date of entry into force of the Schedule. In any case, no such increase will be put into force without prior notification.

As a contracting party, the Democratic Republic of the Congo will enjoy the benefits of all concessions negotiated prior to its accession to the GATT.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo has been applying the rules of the General Agreement on a de facto basis since 30 June 1960, the date of its independence.