STATEMENT BY MR. OLIVIER LONG, DIRECTOR-GENERAL,
GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE,
TO THE WORLD FOOD CONFERENCE
Rome, 7 November 1974

This Conference is taking place for reasons of urgency and necessity.

It is indeed a matter of urgent necessity to dispel the threats overhanging the food supplies of the peoples of the world. Within the vast complex of problems which beset our planet to-day, one hardly needs to stress the interdependence both of the problems and of the strategies designed to solve them: social, economic, monetary, financial and trade strategies.

GATT, on behalf of which I have the privilege of addressing you briefly, is aware of its responsibilities in the framework of international co-operation. These responsibilities are concerned with trade, and therefore also with trade in food. For this reason, and with the twofold aim of safeguarding the past achievements of this co-operation and of advancing yet further, more than a hundred governments decided last autumn to enter into comprehensive multilateral trade negotiations in the framework of GATT.

This undertaking brings together industrialized and developing nations; market-economy and State-trading countries; members and non-members of GATT; and it is open to all those which might wish to join in the effort thus undertaken by the community of trading nations.

Under the Declaration approved at Tokyo a year ago, the participating countries have agreed that the negotiations shall cover trade in both industrial and agricultural products, including those whose production, storage and distribution are the subject of the deliberations of this Conference. The reason why so many countries are taking part in the multilateral trade negotiations is, of course, that they expect them to result in a substantial improvement in their trading conditions. I need not stress the importance of trade in food for a very large number of both developed and developing countries, both importers and exporters.
Under this same Tokyo Declaration, the participating countries have agreed on the main principles and guidelines to govern the negotiations. The negotiations will aim to achieve the expansion and ever-greater liberalization of world trade, inter alia, through the progressive dismantling of obstacles to trade and the improvement of the international framework for the conduct of world trade. They will also aim to secure additional benefits for the international trade of developing countries so as to achieve a substantial increase in the foreign exchange earnings, the diversification of their exports, the acceleration of the rate of growth of their trade, an improvement in the possibilities for these countries to participate in the expansion of world trade and a better balance as between developed and developing countries in the sharing of the advantages resulting from this expansion. No doubt, some of these principles and guidelines will need to be further developed in the course of the negotiations; but, basically, these principles have been firmly laid down and agreed upon by all.

Naturally, to have a clearly accepted idea of what must be done, and of the objectives and stages of the negotiations, is only a beginning. It does not yet resolve the difficulties inherent in the undertaking. Nevertheless, in the field of multilateral trade, the general scheme was determined a year ago, and since then the technical work that was still needed has been done. The period of preparation is thus ended, and one is justified in believing that the active negotiations will begin without further delay.

Mr. President, in the economic world, where everything is inter-connected, urgency cannot be divided up. Your conference carries the hopes of nations for a more equitable, more rational and more plentiful distribution of food resources. The multilateral negotiations aim to secure the full use of the resources of the world and the improvement of standards of living. I therefore believe it is realistic to say that the two endeavours are directed to the same objective and that they complement each other.

I can therefore conclude by expressing my sincere conviction that international co-operation within the framework of the multilateral trade negotiations will buttress the efforts of this conference to achieve a more efficient and more humane organization of the production, safe-keeping and distribution of food.