The GATT Contracting Parties (member states), meeting in Geneva, have decided that their next Session, to be held in November 1982, should be convened at ministerial level.

The purpose of the ministerial meeting, according to the unanimous decision taken on 25 November, will be "to examine the functioning of the multilateral trading system, and to reinforce the common efforts of the contracting parties to support and improve the system for the benefit of all nations".

The GATT member states agreed that Ministers would address themselves to "the implementation of the results of the Multilateral Trade Negotiations, problems affecting the trading system, the position of developing countries in world trade and future prospects for the development of trade. Finally, in the context of their consideration of the work programme of the GATT for the 1980's, Ministers would also determine future priorities for co-operation among contracting parties".

The GATT Council has been entrusted with the overall responsibility for the preparation of the ministerial meeting, including the establishment of appropriate institutional arrangements. The Council will also decide the duration and precise date of the meeting.

The Chairman of the Contracting Parties, Ambassador Gabriel O. Martinez of Argentina, said that it was his understanding, on the basis of the views expressed during this debate, that the Council would be assisted in preparing the agenda and the documentation for the ministerial meeting by a preparatory committee open to all contracting parties. The Council would also make arrangements for other bodies of the GATT to make appropriate contributions to the preparatory work.

The Council is expected to launch preparations for the 1982 ministerial-level Session at its next meeting, scheduled for 7 December.

The proposal that a ministerial-level Session should be convened was made in the annual report of the GATT Consultative Group of Eighteen to the present Session of the Contracting Parties.

END