GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE
Fourth Round of Tariff Negotiations

Statement made by Dr. G. Ferlesch, Director-General
in the Ministry of Foreign Trade, at the public meeting
on 23 May 1956

On the occasion of the opening meeting of this conference the
Italian delegation stated that Italy had gladly agreed to participate in
the negotiations in order to make her contribution to the efforts directed
towards the lowering of tariff barriers, a task which was initiated on the
occasion of the first Tariff Conference held in Geneva in 1947, thereby co­operating in a positive way in the expansion of international trade. You
will remember that on that occasion the Italian delegation did not share
the pessimistic views expressed by a number of other delegations concerning
the prospects offered by the conference, even though they recognized fully
the existence of some negative factors which unavoidably were bound to
limit the extent, the scope and importance of our negotiations.

The achievements of four months of hard work confirm that we were
not wrong in believing that, after all, this conference would have useful
results. Naturally, no one expected spectacular results from this
conference, but one cannot deny that the tariff concessions exchanged by
the Contracting Parties taken as a whole represent a further contribution
to the elimination of trade barriers through the reduction of the general
level of tariffs and the extension of the trade area covered by tariff
bindings. No doubt the concessions granted within the framework of this
conference are all the more appreciable when one considers that the elimina­tion in many countries of other trade barriers which existed when previous
conferences were held now provides the Contracting Parties with the
possibility of extending their trade in a concrete manner.

We also believe that this conference has reached results which have
proved more considerable than one could foresee at the beginning of this
new round of tariff negotiations. In fact, the completion of about sixty
negotiations concerning the reduction or the binding of tariffs between the
representatives of twenty-two countries constitutes an appreciable result.
Allow me to say, that it is above all thanks to the spirit of understanding
demonstrated by the various delegations and to their efforts with a view to
widening the basis for such negotiations that such important results have
been reached, notwithstanding the existence, initially, as I said already,
of clements militating against such an achievement. This is positive
evidence that the Fourth Tariff Conference well deserved to be convened, and we can only feel happy with the task and with the results achieved.

The Italian delegation has done everything in its power to contribute to such an achievement. In the course of the conference we have made repeated efforts in order to overcome the difficulties which threatened to limit the scope of, or even to prevent the conclusion of some agreements. Thus Italy could eventually grant concessions which, taking account of the indirect benefits reaped by other countries, represent an import trade coverage of about $206 million. This is a positive contribution to the lowering of tariff barriers throughout the world; indeed, the concessions granted by Italy represent about 12 per cent of the aggregate Italian import figure for 1954. More specifically Italy has concluded bilateral agreements with eight contracting parties, and has further contributed, if I may say so, to the conclusion of agreements between the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community on the one hand, and the United States and Austria on the other. Naturally, all the agreements concluded by Italy are not of the same scope, particularly if one considers, as I believe it is useful to stress, the possibilities and the aspects of other exchanges between countries with which we have negotiated. In any case, however, one cannot but recognize that the results of the agreements in question will have favourable consequences not only within the framework of direct trade relations between Italy and the countries concerned, but also (and I believe this cannot be unduly stressed) for the whole of the Contracting Parties, considering the importance of the multilateral aspect of the General Agreement.

The Fourth Tariff Conference which is now being concluded cannot logically be regarded as the last step in a series of efforts which have been made for many years by the Contracting Parties and which are orientated towards the gradual reduction of trade barriers. This is nevertheless an important step. It may be that the negotiation procedures which have been followed until now will be improved and replaced by other methods which may prove more effective, taking account of the new technical situations which are the natural result of the negotiations completed up to date. Within the general framework of her faithful co-operation in any effort orientated towards the widest possible achievement of the objectives of the General Agreement, Italy will not fail to participate - naturally within the limits of her own possibilities - in a spirit of understanding, as widely as she can in every new effort which might be undertaken by the Contracting Parties.

Before concluding, allow me to express here our thanks on behalf of the Italian delegation to the GATT secretariat for the effective help which they have given us and which has contributed to the good results of this conference.