It is well known how great the interest is of the low-tariff countries - and the Netherlands among them - in all matters connected with reduction of customs duties, and I think I therefore on this occasion may make some comments with respect to the progress achieved in this field. It has already been pointed out that by the end of the Geneva, Annecy and Torquay Conferences the limited possibilities of further progress by this type of tariff conference were clearly shown. It was realized that a new kind of action should be taken by contracting parties, particularly in order to arrive at a meaningful reduction of the disparities in European tariffs. The results of the present conference are in our view on the one hand gratifying, and on the other hand disappointing to us. It was not so difficult to satisfy us to a certain extent, because we had such limited expectations as to the possible outcome. I said at the opening of the conference that we took a realistic and rather sceptical view in order to avoid a cold shower at the end.

Well, we have avoided the cold shower. Perhaps I may today illustrate our initial position in another way, perhaps in a more up-to-date way: we could be compared with someone entering the tour on a bicycle, but fixing to our bicycle a good quality bicycle lamp clearly showing the long-term way ahead of us. We have thus avoided running into painful disillusionments. I apologize for using this parallel, and I may assure all delegations that it does not prejudge our position in a case which was very recently brought before one of the tariff authorities of one of the main trading nations. In any case, I may say that the results are better than we expected them to be, and this may be considered as a real achievement of our Organization. I have been authorized by my Government to sign the Protocol embodying the outcome of our negotiations. On the other hand, as I have said, this outcome is not satisfactory and more or less disappointing. It has in any case confirmed our opinion that only limited results can be achieved and it has confirmed our fear that the reviewed rules and the new Articles drawn up at last year's Review Session could not prove exceptionally helpful.

It is the considered opinion of our Government that at the end of this conference we must not relax but our Organization must go on with its work. The Contracting Parties and the Organization established by them remain the most...
responsible body in the field of tariffs, and we certainly have to remain active and direct our attention also in the future to the reduction of tariffs. We realize, of course, that on the short term in the next two or three years probably only limited results can be achieved. We may therefore emphasize the need that also in more limited fields the possibilities of regional action should be further developed. I am thinking, as it will be clear to you, particularly of the OEEC action in Paris which in other fields of trade policy has supplemented the work done by the Contracting Parties on a worldwide basis. I know that some countries have some objections against regional action in the field of tariffs, but we feel sure that the difficulties expressed by them could be overcome if they would in that Organization apply the spirit of co-operation that we know in this Organization.

I may say and recall that the position of our Government with respect to the past conference has been that until the last moment before the opening of the conference we were reluctant to participate in its work, but we realized that one cannot always negotiate on one's own terms and one has to pay full regard to the position of other countries. Therefore our Government decided to take part in the work before us, and I may say that we have gone a great deal out of our way and have done our utmost to contribute as much as possible to the outcome of the conference which is now being concluded. In this connexion I may mention that very recently a plan for regional action on a limited scale has been introduced by the low-tariff countries in the OEEC. We feel entitled to expect that others in their turn should hence and now show their willingness to work with us somewhat more on our terms and convictions and endeavour to make progress with respect to those particular tariff problems which are of concern to the low-tariff countries. I would like to appeal to all the European contracting parties not to put unnecessary difficulties in our way of achieving results and not to lay too much emphasis on more or less academic theories of worldwide action in order to render more difficult our progress in the other Organization. I may also appeal to the non-European contracting parties without whose support in this particular field no realistic progress, in our mind, could be achieved.

The GATT, the worldwide organization which has been elaborated here, remains, as I have already said, the most representative and authoritative Organization particularly in all tariff matters, and I have said that the Organization should remain active. I am sure that our Government, for that reason also, fully supports the view already expressed by the Chairman of the Contracting Parties that it is desirable that the Organization for Trade Cooperation, as elaborated in last year's conference, should be ratified as soon as possible by a sufficient number of important trading nations.

The main problems in the field of tariffs, as far as we are concerned, are usually headed under the rather simple word of "tariff disparities". We realize, of course, that these disparities are connected with a great number
of complicated problems, and that it will not be so easy to attack them in a general and global manner as, for instance, has so fruitfully been done by this Organization, particularly in respect to quantitative restrictions. But I am not sure that it is so very much more difficult; for I may recall that when last year the rules with respect to quantitative restrictions were reviewed by our Organization a great number of structural and very difficult problems were brought to the forefront, and were satisfactorily dealt with. We therefore remain convinced that a global and general attack on trade barriers, and in particular on excessively high tariffs in some countries, is absolutely necessary. We even believe that there is a growing need for such action by this Organization. In view of certain developments which in recent years have taken place in a number of countries, we feel that all these general problems connected with tariff disparities should as soon as possible be seriously examined and discussed by this Organization.

I may point to one or two aspects in this connexion which seem of great importance to us. I would like to draw attention to the fact that of course many countries still consider tariffs merely as a long-term, stable and rather unhararmful measure of protection of certain industries, an instrument of a long-term and structural economic policy. There seems lately to have been a growing tendency in some countries to use tariffs, and particularly a temporary increase or a temporary suspension of tariffs, as an instrument of a short-term policy, a short-term price policy, monetary policy, a business cycle policy, etc. I just mention this, and would like to draw attention to the possible dangers involved in this kind of development and the urgent need for a full-dress examination and discussion of such problems. In our view, it just cannot be denied that important developments are taking place in various countries with respect to import tariffs. In the Benelux countries we are very much aware of the significance of the reduction of duties and the removal of import duties which has taken place in the past year in the Customs Union, in the course of proceeding to the development of an economic union. Recently, we have been more aware of tariff problems because of the very interesting and enlightening studies which have been made by the experts of the Coal and Steel Community - the CECA countries if you wish - under the chairmanship of the Belgian Foreign Minister, and we feel convinced that these studies would be of great interest also to contracting parties other than those directly participating in European integration.

In conclusion, I would like to say that I have tried to show the great interest which my Government attaches to tariff problems generally and the great interest we therefore have in all action which is taken in this field by this Organization. Thank you.