The Sixth Session of the Contracting Parties is, from some points of view, the most important we have yet held.

In the first place, during the course of the Fifth Session it became clear that the setting up of the International Trade Organization would be indefinitely postponed. Hitherto, the expectation that the ITO would be established naturally affected our attitudes. Now our approach must be adjusted to the knowledge that we cannot expect to have an ITO at any time in the foreseeable future. Therefore, we must face the fact that there is no inter-governmental body, world-wide in membership, competent to deal with questions of commercial policy other than the Contracting Parties to the General Agreement.

Secondly, we have now entered a period in which the world economy is faced with many new stresses and strains. We must respond to the challenge of our present circumstances by strengthening the Agreement and allowing no impairment of its fundamental purpose.

In the ITO the broad economic policies of our governments would have formed the background for the consideration of commercial policy questions. And we, as Contracting Parties to the General Agreement, need not be unmindful of them. While operating in the technical field of tariffs and trade, we can hold the principles of the Havana Charter as our guide, so that they will be taken into account, along with the national and international economic policies of our governments, in all our deliberations. Broadly speaking our endeavours should be directed to the attainment of the purposes contained in Article 55 of the Charter of the United Nations, particularly higher standards of living, full employment and economic progress and development, which were also the purposes of the Havana Charter.

In the past, we have been primarily concerned with customs tariffs and as a result of the three tariff conferences we have brought about a greater degree of stability in tariff levels, coupled with a substantial reduction in the rates of duty. Tariff questions will still require our attention; in fact we have on the agenda a tariff problem which is of special importance to some of the contracting parties in Europe. Also, at this Session, we are asked to establish procedures to be followed if governments which are not parties to the Agreement should wish to accede during the intervals between tariff conferences.

In addition to tariff questions, the Agreement calls upon us to play an active role in dealing with other barriers to trade, such as quantitative restrictions and methods of administrative protectionism. At this Session, we are to undertake a review of all those restrictions which are employed by contracting parties as safeguards for their external financial position and balance of payments. The General Agreement also requires that consultations shall be held early in 1952 with individual contracting parties on the continuance of discrimination in the application of their restrictions. It should be noted in this connection that the provisions for the post-war
transitional period under the Articles of Agreement of the International Monetary Fund also call for an examination of exchange restrictions next year. As these are two aspects of the same problem - exchange restrictions and trade restrictions - it is desirable that the activities of the Fund and of the Contracting Parties should be coordinated.

As for the other barriers to trade, the Contracting Parties are expected to examine a variety of technical customs and trade problems, such as the valuation of goods for duty purposes, customs administration and formalities, internal regulations affecting imported goods and many others. A request to consider at this Session a number of resolutions on these matters has been received from a large and influential organization of men actually engaged in international trade, the International Chamber of Commerce.

At Torquay, about five months ago, we concluded a conference which had as one of its principle purposes the conduct of tariff negotiations intended to prepare the way for the accession of several new governments. The Federal Republic of Western Germany and Peru were the first of these governments to sign the Protocol. They are represented today as observers, and on the 1st and 7th October, respectively, we will welcome them as contracting parties and as full participants in the work of the Session. We hope the other acceding governments will sign the Protocol before the close of the Session.

The growing importance of the General Agreement is reflected in the attendance here today of the Minister of Commerce of Canada, Mr. Howe, the Minister of Commerce of France, M. Pflimlin and the United States Assistant Secretary of State, Mr. Thorp. Sir Hartley Shawcross, President of the United Kingdom Board of Trade, will join in our discussions later in the week. May I be permitted to hope that it will become a standard practice for Ministers of Trade and Commerce to be present for a few days at the beginning of a session of the Contracting Parties each year. This would parallel, and indeed provide the logical counterpart to, the opportunities for contacts which Finance Ministers enjoy at the annual meetings of the Boards of Governors of the International Bank and of the International Monetary Fund.

On behalf of the Contracting Parties I wish to welcome these distinguished representatives and the representatives of the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund and other organizations.

I now declare the Sixth Session open.