GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

Fourteenth Session of the CONTRACTING PARTIES

DECISION TO CONVENE A TARIFF CONFERENCE

At the thirteenth session in November 1958 the CONTRACTING PARTIES established a co-ordinated programme of action directed towards the further expansion of international trade and established three committees to carry out the programme. The first of these committees (Committee I) had the task of examining the possibility of arranging for a further general round of multilateral tariff negotiations within the framework of the GATT. Earlier in the thirteenth session the United States delegate had stated that the United States was prepared to participate in a further general round of tariff negotiations including tariff negotiations with the European Economic Community.

Committee I met in February and again in May 1959 and has made recommendations on the basis of which the CONTRACTING PARTIES have decided to convene a tariff conference, commencing in September 1960. The scope of this conference will cover four categories of negotiations:

(i) negotiations among contracting parties for new concessions, as proposed by the representative of the United States at the thirteenth session;

(ii) renegotiations with Member States of the European Economic Community, pursuant to GATT Article XXIV(b); i.e. negotiations for adjustments to be made in the Common Tariff to make up for changes in rates bound under the GATT.

(iii) any re-negotiations of concessions in the existing schedules which governments intend to undertake before the end of the current three-year period of firm validity;

(iv) negotiations with countries invited to negotiate with a view to acceding to the GATT.

The CONTRACTING PARTIES have decided that the conference shall be held in two phases. The first phase, up to the end of 1960, will be concerned with re-negotiations with the European Economic Community, and with any re-negotiations of existing concessions (items ii and iii above). The second phase, opening at the beginning of January 1961, will be concerned with negotiations for new concessions and negotiations with countries wishing to accede to GATT.
The CONTRACTING PARTIES have also decided to set up, at the appropriate time and in accordance with past practice, a Tariff Negotiations Committee to follow the course of the negotiations and review their progress from time to time.

In determining the time-table outlined above Committee I took into account the fact that the powers of the President of the United States enabling that country to participate in tariff negotiations (under the Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act of 1958) will expire on 30 June 1962. The Committee also noted that, in accordance with the provisions of the Rome Treaty, the Members of the European Economic Community will start adapting their tariffs to the new Common Tariff on 1 January 1962, which makes it desirable that the renegotiations contemplated in Article XXIV:6 and, for that matter, the negotiations conducted by the European Economic Community for new concessions, be concluded before that date.

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