GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

EIGHTEENTH SESSION OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES
TO OPEN ON 15 MAY 1961

The Contracting Parties will hold their eighteenth session from 15 to 19 May.

Among the items of business are proposals for offering assistance to newly independent States which ask for advice and help in formulating their commercial and customs policies. A preliminary debate in the GATT Council showed a large measure of support for the idea that contracting parties should be prepared to furnish assistance on matters falling within the competence and jurisdiction of GATT. At the same time the need for close co-ordination with other inter-governmental agencies whose interests touch the field of commercial policy as well as with organizations engaged in technical assistance was stressed.

A decision to convene a meeting of Trade Ministers during November 1961 will be taken and arrangements for its conduct and for any preparatory work that may be needed will be discussed. A further communique on this decision will be issued in due course.

In connexion with the GATT programme for the expansion of trade, there will be an opportunity to review the progress of the Tariff Conference; but at this session no new decisions of fundamental importance regarding the work of Committee II (agricultural protectionism) or Committee III (trade problems of less-developed countries) are foreseen.

In the field of regional integration the Agreement creating an association between the Member States of the EFTA and Finland, as well as an Agreement between Denmark and Finland on trade in agricultural products, will be examined, in accordance with the relevant provisions of Article XXIV.

It was agreed at the seventeenth session to review the operation of Article XXXV as applied to Japan by a number of contracting parties (thereby withholding GATT treatment from Japan), and at this session the Contracting Parties will appoint a working party to carry out the review, at a date to be determined.

Reports on consultations with certain countries on import restrictions which they impose to protect their balance of payments as well as other matters arising from the maintenance of import restrictions by countries no longer claiming balance-of-payments difficulties, will be before the Contracting Parties.

Following the consultation on the marketing of butter in the United Kingdom which was held on 17 - 20 April 1961, the Contracting Parties will take up the proposal of countries which took part in the consultation that ways and means for keeping the butter market under review should be considered.

The Chairman of the session will be Mr. W.P.H. van Oorschot, Kingdom of the Netherlands.

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