GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

NINETEENTH SESSION OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES
TO GATT OPENED ON 13 NOVEMBER 1961

The nineteenth session of the Contracting Parties to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade opened at Geneva on 13 November 1961. The session will continue until 8 December.

From 27 to 30 November there will be a meeting of Trade Ministers at Geneva.

The main items of the agenda of the session are analyzed in the opening address by the Chairman of the Contracting Parties, Mr. E. P. Barbosa da Silva (Brazil), which is reproduced in full in press release GATT/621. In his address the Chairman draws attention to fundamental developments in the conditions of international trade, and in particular to recent moves towards regional integration. The urgent task, he states, is to strengthen and adapt the GATT so that it can continue to play an effective and constructive role despite the changes which have taken place in the structure and pattern of world trade.

Turning to the ministerial meeting the Chairman refers to the Tariff Conference which is now drawing to a close and calls for guidance from the ministers concerning the development of new techniques for the achievement of further tariff reductions under GATT. In regard to the work already done regarding protection afforded to agricultural producers and the export problems of the less-developed countries it may be concluded that the stage is now set for action by governments in the light of the factual background.

Other items on the agenda to which the Chairman refers are import restrictions maintained for balance-of-payments reasons and the progress in abolishing or relaxing such restrictions, problems arising in particular sectors of trade - butter and cotton textiles, recent developments in regional integration and regional economic organization in Europe and Latin America, the review of the application of Article XXXV to Japan, and the application of the GATT to a number of newly independent States on a temporary basis while they review their tariff and trade policies.

The present officers of the GATT are Chairman: Mr. E. P. Barbosa da Silva (Brazil); Vice-Chairmen: Mr. Toru Hagiwara (Japan), and Mr. W. P. H. van Oorschot (Netherlands). An election, for 1962, of Chairman and Vice-Chairmen will be held before the end of the current session.

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