OPENING STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES
MR. E.P. BARBOSA DA SILVA (BRAZIL)

It is my pleasure as Chairman of the Contracting Parties to welcome Ministers to this meeting which is the most representative gathering of Trade Ministers which has been convened since the end of the second world war. This fact is not surprising, when one considers the importance of the issues which confront us.

It would not be proper for me to take up much of the scarce time of which we dispose. Moreover, I have already in opening the nineteenth session of the Contracting Parties, analyzed briefly the situation as I see it. The Contracting Parties have, in the last few years, identified a number of basic problems which appear to them to require urgent attention. They fall under three particular headings, first, tariff disarmament on a most-favoured-nation basis; second, the search for a modus vivendi for international trade in food and agricultural products; and finally, measures for facilitating the increase of export earnings by less-developed countries. These problems have been exhaustively analyzed. There is copious documentation about them. The Contracting Parties feel, however, that they cannot proceed to the next stage of finding practical solutions to these problems without policy directives adopted at a political level. It is for this reason that they decided to invite Ministers to attend the meeting here today. This is, as everyone realizes, a critical turning point for the General Agreement. The General Agreement forms the basis of the greatest and most representative of the trading communities. It needs, therefore, just as much energy and direction as is being currently put into more restricted trading communities of a regional character.

On the other hand, if the considered judgement of Ministers assembled here is that the problems I have mentioned must be dealt with through other means and in other instances, then the Contracting Parties should clearly draw the necessary inferences and take appropriate steps for the re-direction and re-deployment of the resources, whether financial or administrative, which they have hitherto put into the administration and development of the GATT.

I hope that it will not be necessary to come to this conclusion, but I must insist, speaking not only as Chairman of the Contracting Parties, but also as a representative of a country which is developing and is dependent on an orderly expansion of world trade, that what we are hoping from Ministers is the political endorsement which this organization requires, because we are dealing here with the basic political problem of our age. That problem is the existing and, I am afraid, growing disparity, between two-thirds of the world's population which lives with poverty, and the other third which enjoys abundance and growing prosperity. We have to cut this abscess from our international society.
before it bursts into violence and open strife. This is the challenge. The dismantling of trade barriers is just as important as disarmament for preserving world peace. Action in both fields should be considered of equal importance. This organization could be a potent factor in meeting this challenge but only if it receives a political endorsement of its role, based on the conscious recognition of the gravity and fateful character of the challenge to which I refer. If there is such endorsement there is some hope that, through the GATT, we can agree upon, and individually implement, the measures which the solution of the problem requires, some of which will run into the opposition of deep-seated national egoisms. What I am sure, is that either we sink these national egoisms, or we sink with them.