The Government of the United Arab Republic has informed the Executive Secretary of GATT of its desire to accede to the General Agreement, under Article XXXIII.

At the meeting of the GATT Council of Representatives on 25 May the representative of the United Arab Republic, Dr. A. El Banna, Under Secretary of the Ministry of Economy, made a statement giving reasons for the request of the United Arab Republic to join the GATT. First, he said, in the course of their foreign economic policy developments the United Arab Republic had established trade relations with a large number of countries, many of which are Members of GATT. Secondly, the GATT recognizes the importance of an expanding world trade for economic development and provides for special measures which can be taken by developing countries to implement their development plans. Thirdly, GATT can contribute to solving the problems resulting from the declining share of the developing countries in the expansion of international trade. While the demands for manufactured goods had led to increased trade for the industrialized countries and while most developing countries had followed a liberal policy in importing these goods, many industrialized countries still imposed tariffs, internal taxes and quantitative restrictions on imports of many types of raw materials, especially if they are processed, even in a slight degree. The GATT, he said, with its aim of expanding international trade, had found it necessary to give due consideration to this problem. Fourthly, he said, the structure of the economy and foreign trade of the United Arab Republic is in line with the Articles and provisions of the GATT. No restrictions on imports are imposed, except those needed to safeguard infant industries or to allocate scarce foreign exchange earnings among imported commodities.

Lastly, Dr. El Banna referred to the recent GATT ministerial Conclusions in which it was recognized that economic development in the less-developed countries can be encouraged through increased trade among themselves. He said that, in their view, the membership of the United Arab Republic in the Arab Countries Agreement on facilitating trade through the exchange of tariff concessions and in the common market of the countries of the Casablanca charter, is in harmony with the ministerial Conclusions, as well as with the rules of GATT for setting up customs unions.
Numerous speakers, representing countries in many parts of the world and in varying stages of economic development, warmly welcomed the decision of the United Arab Republic to seek full membership in the GATT and stressed that the importance of the United Arab Republic from an economic and social point of view would substantially widen and strengthen the application of the General Agreement. This was a new sign of the growing importance of the GATT as a multilateral forum for dealing with the trade problems of less-developed countries.

It was agreed to set up a working party to examine the request of the United Arab Republic to accede to GATT, pursuant to Article XXXIII. The working party will make recommendations to the Contracting Parties at their next session, which is the twentieth.