MEETING OF MINISTERS OPENS
16 - 21 MAY 1963

Ministers responsible for international trade in some sixty countries are attending the GATT Meeting of Ministers at Geneva which opened on 16 May and will close on 21 May. Adding together the GATT Member governments represented at this meeting, and the governments which have sent observers, a total of eighty-five countries are taking part in this meeting.

At the opening session Mr. Hans Schaffner, Federal Councillor, Chief of the Federal Department of Public Economy, Switzerland, was elected Chairman unanimously.

The Ministers then adopted the following agenda:

- Measures for the Expansion of Trade of Developing Countries as a Means of furthering their Economic Development,
- Arrangements for the Reduction or Elimination of Tariffs and other Barriers to Trade, and Related Matters;
- Measures for Access to Markets for Agricultural and other Primary Products.

In his opening remarks (reproduced in full in Press Release GATT/745) Mr. Schaffner said that the discussions would encompass "the world's fundamental problems. And fundamental they are indeed, the items which are listed on the agenda of our session. It is no exaggeration to say that, no matter whether our work is going to meet with success or failure, the world will not be quite
the same as before. Under these circumstances, our first and foremost concern must be to live up to the sense of urgency which is expected from us, and, therefore, to consider our gathering as a real working session."

Referring to the forthcoming trade negotiations Mr. Schaffner said: "There are tariffs high and low, homogeneous and disparate, there are other obstacles to the free flow of trade, and there is agriculture. We should not be overly frightened by the weight of these difficulties. They are natural as a reflection of the varying background conditions existing in the countries concerned. And they are surely surmountable - although some may need time to work out - if only we are firmly resolved to make the forthcoming negotiations a success. The set of problems we shall have to grapple with may be unique, but unique is surely also the chance we are offered to achieve a decisive break-through to freer world trade. It is a magnificent opportunity indeed which it would be quite unforgivable to miss. The instrument to turn this, our chance, into reality is the new GATT trade conference to be held next year. Active preparations for it have already started. One of the objectives of the present gathering of Ministers is to launch it officially and to give it a good send-off by appropriate directives pointing the way to the solution of the principal difficulties."