I take this opportunity in order to make it quite clear that the Austrian Government is fully aware of the importance of the problems the less-developed countries are faced with. My Government is in favour of early action of the Contracting Parties in this field, and is prepared to contribute to the realization of the aims of less-developed countries, as outlined in the paper before us.

Austria agrees to the creation of some institutional machinery for following closely the problems of economic development; my Government therefore is prepared to contemplate amendments to the General Agreement itself which would put the activities of Contracting Parties in this connexion on a permanent basis, by considering the different aspects of the development issue which are not limited to pure trade problems but include also various forms of assistance.

As to the proposals for concrete action in the field of trade and tariff policy which are before us, I have the honour to make known the following position of my Government:
As a principle, Austria could agree to a standstill relating to tariffs and quantitative restrictions applied on imports from less-developed countries. We take it that such a standstill is not to be interpreted as modifying the provisions of the General Agreement.

With reference to the proposals put forward for an early removal of quantitative restrictions I would like to recall the progress achieved by my country when dismantling its quantitative restrictions. Austria has made effective as from 1 January 1963 new liberalization measures by which discriminatory treatment so far existing has been removed, with the exception of some sensitive items. At the same time, liberalization has been extended to new items. Global quotas have been instituted in favour of contracting parties, such as to provide import facilities under items still restricted. Austria is prepared to carry on its programme of liberalization and to complete it, with the exception of certain hardship cases, by the end of 1964.

The items so far liberalized include a large number of products of interest to less-developed countries. The further measures of liberalization as envisaged under the programme to be completed until the end of 1964 will be made effective bearing in mind the export interests of less-developed countries.

I may conclude that Austria’s steps in the field of liberalization follow the lines proposed by the less-developed countries. We do not feel that the target dates foreseen under the Austrian programme of liberalization differ very much from the target dates outlined in the proposal before us.

With reference to the problem of duty-free entry for tropical products I should mention that the Austrian customs tariff provides already at present for duty-free entry as far as tropical timber is concerned. As to the limited range of tropical products subject to duty, my country is prepared to stabilize the tariff rates in question at a low level.

A similar view is taken by my Government vis-à-vis the tariff treatment for primary products. Many of them are free of duty already at present, for those subject to duty my Government is considering their inclusion in the scheme of tariff reduction to be dealt with under item II of our agenda.

As to the proposed measures of tariff reduction in favour of semi-processed and processed products exported by less-developed countries, we feel that the interests of less-developed countries could be covered by the inclusion of such goods in the offer lists to be presented under the proposed new scheme for tariff negotiations. Austria would do its best in order to take care of such interests when preparing its lists of offers. My country is in favour of an early and substantial reduction under the new scheme to be considered; such a cut would also be beneficial to the interests of less-developed countries.
Proposals have been put forward in the sense that products of particular interest to less-developed countries should not appear in a list of exceptions from the new tariff round. While considering these proposals with sympathy, my Government feels that this point should be decided upon in the light of the discussion we shall have on item II of our agenda.

As to the proposals for granting preferences in favour of products of less-developed countries, I feel that some preliminary studies should be undertaken in order to clarify the various issues involved.