STATEMENT MADE BY MR. J. O'HALLORAN,
MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
ON 17 MAY 1963

This is the first opportunity that we in Trinidad and Tobago have had, since we became a contracting party in our own right, to express our appreciation of, and our strong support for, the efforts made during the past two years by our colleagues in the other developing countries to secure a new deal for peoples such as ours.

Thanks to the initiative of Nigeria, it has been possible for the developing countries to secure serious consideration of the grave and urgent problems that continue to beset us.

We believe that the action programme, which we have been examining at this meeting, offers opportunities for the solution of these problems; and we are glad to have the opportunity to endorse the proposals.

We have been greatly relieved to hear several speakers express support for the proposal that a study should be made of the importance of preferences to certain of the less-developed countries.

No developing country or less-developed country could be opposed to the principle of the removal of restrictions on trade, whether these restrictions take the form of high tariffs or high internal charges.
But, we would ask this Meeting of Ministers to give some thought to the difficulties which, even now, face the small, poor islands of the West Indies.

Of the less-developed countries, the West Indian islands are, perhaps, the worst off.

Many of these islands are entirely dependent upon a single agricultural crop, cultivated on poor soils and under such difficult conditions, that it is a miracle that they are able to survive at all.

Contracting parties, who represent large land areas and great populations, may find difficulty in appreciating the problems of small islands, like the West Indies, with populations of one or two hundred thousand persons. They will hardly be able to understand the problems of a little island like Montserrat with 12,000 persons.

Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica may be a little larger in size but their own economic position is very little better.

None of these West Indian islands is happy about their position. They want to stand on their own feet and be able to pay their way. They are all doing their best to help themselves, to improve their methods of cultivation, to organize their marketing more effectively, and to see how far they can diversify their economies.

But their scope is very limited. They do not produce very much and they do not find it easy to sell what they produce. Without the protection they have been receiving, they would hardly be able to sell anything at all.

Let me repeat - these territories do not like to be protected. They do not like to be dependent on special treatment. But they realize that, because of their small size, their poor soil and their very limited natural resources, they could not hope to compete freely and on equal terms with larger and better endowed countries and must therefore continue to receive protection and special treatment.

I would strongly urge this meeting not to lose sight of the particular problems of the West Indies in considering solutions to the general problems of the less-developed countries as a whole.