I am taking the floor before this honourable gathering for the first time and I shall first on this unique occasion pay a tribute to GATT. No doubt the GATT, like any human institution, is far from being perfect, but the work which is being accomplished here is of the most serious nature. If results have not yet corresponded to the hopes placed in GATT the reason is only that it is sometimes very difficult to overcome certain egoisms.

The honourable members of this assembly which have preceded me have made excellent and very competent statements which it would be very difficult to add to. Therefore I think my statement will not be a very academic one and I shall endeavour to respond to your legitimate desire not to lengthen the debate.

I would wish to repeat however that preferences in favour of the African and Malagasy States associated to the European Economic Community have never hampered international trade yet. In fact statistical data show quite clearly that EEC imports from the associated African and Malagasy States increased by only 9½ per cent from 1958 to 1962, whereas during the same period there was an increase by 16 per cent in respect of imports from non-associated African States and 36 per cent in the case of the Latin American countries.
How can it be then that everything seems to depend today on securing the elimination of such preferences whereas the discussions on the agricultural policy of the highly industrialized countries reveal at each stage that protection of much wider scope exists and is fiercely defended against any lowering.

We, the African and Malagasy States associated with the EEC, have never been opposed to the adjustment or even the elimination of tariffs within the shortest possible period. Our attitude inside the association bears witness to this. But we proclaim that tariff and quota matters are only one aspect of the problem.

It must be recognized that the instability of prices and the inadequacy of export earnings are the main problems which affect producers of tropical products and that such problems have to be resolved first.

It is, therefore, a global solution which we must attempt to devise while dealing at the same time with questions of price stabilization, market organization, and tariff and quota problems.

Allow me to add that the words less-developed or developing countries express considerably different situations. There is a hierarchy even in under-development. We, the African and Malagasy States associated with the EEC, happen to be unfortunately at the lowest level of the scale.

And therefore to us the discussions at this meeting hinge around vital problems, more vital for us in any case than for any of those who are comfortably situated at the higher echelons of the world economic hierarchy.

We hope that the trees will not conceal the wood and that it will be recognized that as far as we are concerned the main problem is, first and foremost, to live.

A proverb of our land can be translated as follows: "Telling the truth to your friends does not destroy your friendship but may well impair it."

I hope that the frankness with which I have spoken to you on my behalf and on behalf of the representatives of the African and Malagasy States associated with the Community, which are not in a position to take the floor before this honourable assembly, will be received as a loyal contribution to our common endeavour towards the attainment of co-operation and solidarity.

END