Opening of the Kennedy Round

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ON 4 MAY 1964

On this memorable occasion of formally launching the Kennedy Round negotiations, I wish to begin my remarks by reaffirming the intention of my Government actively to participate in the negotiations and further by expressing the sincere hope of my Government that by overcoming all the difficulties with which we are faced now the negotiations would ultimately come to a successful conclusion.

We are aware that, whatever the cause may have been, agreement has not been reached on all of negotiating rules despite the strenuous work carried out by the Trade Negotiations Committee and its subsidiary bodies since the ministerial meeting of last May. My delegation does not believe, however, that the past one year has been spent wastefully. In fact, we feel that at least some progress has been made in some aspects of the negotiations and, where notable progress has not been registered, the work of these bodies have paved the way for future agreements by identifying the problems and the views of countries concerned.

I would now address myself to specific matters, and in so doing I would like first to take up the question of disparities. As is well known, this question originally arose between two major trading partners, namely, the United States and the European Economic Community, and therefore, we are of the view that it is in the first instance incumbent on these two participants to seek a proper solution. We earnestly hope that they could arrive at an agreement on a satisfactory solution to this problem not in a distant future. Japan, for its part, would be prepared to go along with any appropriate solution that may emerge as a result as long as the interests of third countries are adequately protected.
Turning now to the thorny problem of agriculture, I recognize that, in the context of the Kennedy Round negotiations, agriculture presents a difficult problem to many countries including my own. It is my understanding that there was a general consensus of opinion in the Committee of Agriculture that a pragmatic approach was needed to deal with the field of agriculture in the light of its special characteristics. My delegation shares with others the view that this approach would indeed be the only possible way to lead us to meaningful negotiations on agricultural products.

Now, I wish to say a few words about a particular non-tariff barrier to which a large part of Japanese exports are still subject, namely, discriminatory trade practices such as discriminatory import restrictions and the so-called voluntary export control. You will recall that at the ministerial meeting in 1963, in which I had the privilege of participating, I made reference to this matter and appealed to the countries concerned to remove these unfair trade practices as quickly as possible. We are at present vigorously pursuing the bilateral negotiations for an early elimination of these practices but, much to our regret, the negotiations have not so far yielded the desired results.

Mr. Chairman, we intend to continue to devote our tireless efforts, within the framework of GATT as well as in OECD to which my Government acceded as a full member a week ago, for having these practices dismantled at an early date. While making a renewed appeal to various countries concerned to eliminate them in the near future, I would like to draw the attention of the Ministers here present and all other members of this Committee to the fact that as long as current wide-spread discriminations continue to be applied to our exports, the benefits that my country could draw from the Kennedy Round negotiations would be so limited that my country will have to redress the disadvantage by adjusting its offers.

Further, I should like to reiterate that the Kennedy Round negotiations is expected to play an important rôle in the liberalization of world trade. In this connexion, it must be borne in mind that the negotiations would provide the most effective step to cope with the adverse effects the regional economic groupings now in the process of integration may cause to third countries.

Last but not least, I wish to indicate with regard to the participation of developing countries in the negotiations that my Government is fully conscious of the importance which these countries are attaching to the negotiations and that my Government would cooperate as far as possible with other countries so that the negotiations, along with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development now in session here in Geneva, would bring about sufficient benefits to the developing countries.

In concluding, I wish to reiterate that my Government places great importance on the success of the Kennedy Round negotiations and expects that the negotiations would be instrumental in achieving significant liberalization of world trade. My delegation hopes that the present gathering of the Ministers would turn out to be something more than a ceremonial opening of the negotiations.