Opening of the Kennedy Round

STATEMENT MADE BY H.E. MR. J.B. ANDRIESEN, MINISTER FOR ECONOMIC AFFAIRS OF THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS ON 4 MAY 1964

At the formal opening of the Kennedy negotiations which may have certain far-reaching effects on the relationship between trading nations, I feel it is necessary to state the Netherlands' position quite clearly.

I want therefore to express, as we have already done in the past, the great value that the Netherlands Government attaches to this conference and how much we want to see it brought to a successful conclusion; that of a 50 per cent reduction of tariffs with as few exceptions as possible. It is our firm conviction that the removal of obstacles to the international division of labour and the promotion of the development of trade are essential conditions for the free world.

Now, we get the impression that the discussions in Geneva up to this moment had as a main objective an agreement between the Community, the United States, the United Kingdom and other industrialized countries. This is of course, not the whole matter. In point of fact, Mr. Chairman, I should like to emphasize that the result of these attempts will be (as has also been expressed by Governor Herter) of vital importance to countries in less advanced stages of development. This aspect is known to the contracting parties, but I should take this opportunity to repeat it. The promotion of real marketing opportunities for a greater variety of products from less-developed countries should be an essential part of our programme. I am convinced, Mr. Chairman, that this conference will provide the GATT with the opportunity to make this aim in the negotiations come true. It would be lacking realism to say that this will be an easy matter. I share your views, Mr. Chairman, as expressed in your statement at the World Trade Conference on Trade and Development, telling us that the problem with which we are dealing here, is a problem for the international community, and is just as much a problem for each member of the community, whatever its stage of development, poverty or wealth.

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Therefore, if we do not use this occasion to improve conditions of trade to the greatest possible extent, and for all countries concerned, I very much doubt whether we will ever be given another chance to achieve this.

Mr. Chairman, this may mark the beginning of a great venture, and when I use this word, it is to emphasize the rich reward. Difficult and time consuming negotiations now lie ahead, with the extreme complexity of the problems involved. Sometimes we may lose our stations and tempers will surely be strained at times, but let us not waver in our perseverance and endurance and at all times let us realize that everything depends on the final results. Mr. Chairman, I will fully support the words expressed by Mr. Rey of the EEC in congratulating ourselves that you have been given the chair of the Trade Negotiations Committee. Your experience and stimulating guidance will be of the greatest help in leading this most important conference, with the assistance of GATT, to a successful conclusion. May we look forward to giving you every possible assistance in your arduous task.