The following is the text of the statement delivered by Vice-Chairman Mr. G. Bresson (Upper Volta) at the opening meeting of the twenty-second session of the Contracting Parties, on 2 March 1965. He delivered the text which Mr. J. Lacarte (Uruguay) was prevented from delivering, being absent through illness.

It is with particular pleasure that I should like to convey a cordial welcome to all of you who are attending the twenty-second session of the Contracting Parties of GATT. My remarks are aimed in particular at the representatives of Gambia, Malawi, Malta and Togo whose entry since the twenty-first session raises the number of countries linked to the General Agreement to seventy-nine. This figure certainly reflects the growing interest which the General Agreement is awakening in many parts of the world and is fresh evidence of our growing integration which covers more than 80 per cent of world trade.

Since the twenty-first session, the Contracting Parties have formalized at their recent second special session the text of the new Part IV of the General Agreement on trade and development and have approved a Declaration in which a very substantial majority has undertaken to give effect to these provisions within their respective constitutional and juridical limits until final entry into force of Part IV.

Aware of the growing responsibilities which the intense eagerness of less-developed nations to raise their standards of living puts upon them, the Contracting Parties reacted immediately to the drawing up of the Part IV to which I have referred and have thereby shown their will to contribute to resolving the problems facing those countries.

As has been well said, Part IV, despite the fact that it is a formal amendment to the General Agreement, is not the last word in the field it covers. This attitude mirrors a fair understanding of the dynamic value of the process in which the less-developed countries are involved - those countries who are increasingly entering the General Agreement in search of the solutions which contribute to the promotion of their cause. Of course it is incumbent upon us to see to it that these hopes find their just satisfaction within the framework of the Contracting Parties.
The changing nature of the problem has also been recognized by the establish­ment of the Committee on Trade and Development, whose broad and important terms of reference assigns it tasks of such importance that the relatively less-developed nations will place great hopes in it.

We must endeavour to see to it that Part IV is soon an integral part of the General Agreement. Twelve contracting parties have already given final acceptance and thirty-two more adherences are still required for its permanent application to become formal. A large majority of countries have supported the provisional Declaration of Application and since this aspect is now settled the Committee on Trade and Development now has an adequate base for the achievement of its first tasks.

Meanwhile, specific mention must be made of the goodwill and spirit of co-operation shown by participating constructively in the drawing up and approval of Part IV by those contracting parties coming under the definition of industrialized countries. Such initiatives are elements of lasting strength for the General Agreement and will redound to the benefit of all.

The Trade Negotiations Conference - generally known as the Kennedy Round - provided for by the Ministerial Meeting in May 1963, was opened formally almost a year ago.

We cannot face our work in this twenty-second session without keeping in mind the importance of the work which the Contracting Parties have set for themselves within the Kennedy Round. For the first time the general reduction of barriers to trade, whether they be customs duties or other kinds of restrictions has been agreed to - in all sectors, agricultural and industrial.

The tariff negotiations in the General Agreement have always been important and have contributed effectively to the liberalization of trade. But few can doubt that the Kennedy Round constitutes the maximum endeavour ever made in this sector by our organization.

In the past few years the proliferation of economic groups in different areas of the world, together with the special favourable treatment that each of them grants to its members, has introduced an element into trade which, while not a new one, does have a special impact because of the magnitude it has assumed. If the legitimate efforts which the regional groupings are making to promote the cause of their member countries are not to end up in a situation which accentuates the trend towards watertight compartments in trade, it will be necessary to reduce the general obstacles which exist today.

Here is the true meaning of the Kennedy Round - the rich possibilities which it provides of contributing to the new tendencies in world trade which are firmly directed towards a growing interdependence among peoples, with the consequent benefits of prosperity and mutual understanding.
As a political and economic undertaking, the Kennedy Round assumes a really extraordinary scope for all Contracting Parties who, taken as a whole, must do whatever they can in this task, so that the contribution of each of them may be many times over-compensated by the benefits to be derived from the attainment of the goals.

Two aspects of paramount importance in the Kennedy Round still remain to be tackled: negotiations in the field of agriculture and the participation of the less-developed countries. A principle element of the strength of this great Conference lies in the harmonious and coherent character of its approach. It seeks to favour the trade of all the products of all the participating countries by attacking all existing obstacles. The achievement of this overall objective will constitute a great source of prestige for the General Agreement.

The reports to be presented during this session by the European Economic Community, the European Free Trade Association, the Latin American Free Trade Association, the Central American Free Trade Zone, and the Equatorial and Cameroon Customs Union, will serve to highlight the growing importance and the true strength of these organizations, which must bring themselves into line with Article XXIV of the General Agreement. Let us recall that out of a total of seventy-nine countries participating in the work of the General Agreement, forty are linked to these organizations, either as members or as associates. This proportion should lead us to think because it cannot fail to have a repercussion on our future discussions.

Events of great interest have occurred in all these organizations since last year. In the case of the European Economic Community, for instance, not only are we to receive the report of the Commission but consideration will also be given to the reports of the Working Parties set up under the Agreement of Association signed with Turkey, and the Convention of Association of African States and Madagascar. We shall also consider the question of the association of overseas territories.

We are also to receive reports of similar importance from the above-mentioned regional organizations.

It is known that the development of the groupings I have referred to has awakened the fear that the rules of the General Agreement may be impaired. This question has already occupied our attention in the past.

There are a number of sectors, which are well known to those here present, in which these fears are centred. Undoubtedly the discussions we are to hold on these matters will provide explanations which will improve our mutual knowledge of the questions involved and which will tend to settle open points in relation both to the terms of the General Agreement and to the legitimate aspirations and responsibilities of these groups.
These groups constitute a practically irreversible phenomenon under present circumstances since they are driven by all sorts of political and economic factors. This is now an undeniable fact. At the same time it is now up to us to see that this process evolves along lines designed to strengthen international co-operation, otherwise we would be in danger of straying from the guiding principles of the General Agreement with all the serious consequences which would result.

A few months ago the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development closed. Quite rightly, the Contracting Parties followed very closely this process which led to the institutionalization of the Conference and of the Trade and Development Board.

We can all agree that this Conference constitutes a rare opportunity to appreciate the tendencies, hopes and needs of the countries of the world in an important sector such as trade and in which the General Agreement precisely has been occupying such a significant position for almost twenty years.

The contracting parties could not have overlooked under any circumstances the results of the Conference on Trade and Development and in reality the facts have shown that they have been keenly aware of the tendencies manifested in this Conference. Thus in the General Agreement two undertakings whose magnitude I have already referred to, are now under way and whose objectives mirror the firm intention of improving the conditions in which trade has now carried on: the Kennedy Round and the new Part IV, which constitute positive elements of progress.

You are all very familiar with our long agenda. I have referred to some of the points contained in it and I should merely like to add a reference to one question which I think is of particular importance.

We shall have to consider the interesting proposal made by the Executive Secretary concerning the definitive application of the General Agreement. It implies the acceptance of the Agreement in terms of Article 26 and the end of the system of provisional application which has been in effect since 1948. Any step of this kind will have the effect of solidifying the General Agreement by giving it a structure much more in keeping with its antecedents, responsibilities and future plans. May I express the hope that this suggestion will merit the most careful and sympathetic consideration by the delegations here present.

All of us who are present today regret the forced absence of the Chairman of the Contracting Parties, Mr. J. Warren of Canada, whose brilliant term of office over this organization draws to an end at this session. Although before winding up our discussions we shall have an opportunity to express our gratitude for his many virtues which have been put at the service of the General Agreement, I do not wish to let this initial opportunity go by of paying a tribute to such a distinguished colleague.

In its valuable report concerning the main events which have occurred in world trade, the secretariat has informed us that the trend has been towards a marked growth both in trade in general and among countries of greater and lesser development. This feature could not fail to please us as it contains positive elements of prosperity for all. With the certainty that our work will contribute concretely to maintaining and intensifying this current, I now declare the Twenty-Second Session opened.