It is a very special occasion which we have come together to celebrate today. The signature of the Final Act which puts an end to the Kennedy Round will stay as a landmark in the history not only of foreign trade policy. Its scope and significance go far beyond the limited field of the trade volume involved and the tariff concessions granted, impressive though they may be. Let us assume for just one horrible moment that the Kennedy Round would have ended in failure, and it becomes immediately obvious what was at stake not only for the trade relations between the participating countries, but for international relations as a whole. We would have found ourselves in the presence of ill feelings, angry words, and - worse than that - severely compromised prospects for the future of world trade as whose highest hope so far the Kennedy Round had always been considered. Most luckily, we have been spared this major disaster.

I have kept very vivid memories of the days when the negotiation was launched, some time in the spring of 1963, and it was my privilege to preside over a most distinguished gathering of Cabinet Ministers coming from all parts of the world. I was then highly impressed with the immensity of the problems ahead of us, but also with the enormous amount of goodwill which inspired all participants. Still, I was particularly gratified - when I came to grips with the seemingly innumerable questions to be solved - to see that I could count on one good man in particular among so many, and this was my friend Eric Wyndham White. His encyclopaedic knowledge of facts and people was only one thing to marvel at. His unrivalled experience in handling difficult situations was another. But what I admired most was this unique combination he embodies between the inventiveness of his mind and the deep insight in human nature which makes him find, at the right moment, the right formula to carry the reluctant or spontaneous agreement of all.
These unforgettable days filled me with the confidence that in spite of all the existing difficulties and the highly ambitious objectives set for the Kennedy Round somehow a way would be found to reach a successful conclusion. The results we now all know about go far beyond my - and I suppose your - most optimistic expectations. They constitute a historic break-through to freer trade all over the world, and, I hope, a decisive defeat for this deadly enemy of economic progress, which is protectionism.

And there is not the slightest doubt to whom we owe this marvellous success. We owe it to all of us, of course, to a certain extent, because we all contributed all we had to offer in energy, effort and goodwill. But it is quite obvious that all this would have led to nothing if there had not been one man, following our exertions with a perspicacious eye, gauging with unfailing accuracy the merit of our arguments and the extent of our possibilities. A man with these qualities which distinguish our friend Wyndham White was necessary not only to keep us on the right track, acutely to perceive where, how and when we could agree, but who also had the ability to lead us with a gentle, but forceful hand where he wanted us to go in our own best interest, and - last but by no means least - the infinite patience, the capacity to wait, till the right moment came to do the right thing.

I am told by all who had the great opportunity to be present during the dramatic last days of the negotiation about the impression they had of a magnificent masterpiece all of a sudden taking shape in all its manifold facets. This was Eric Wyndham White's hour, and he will not forget it, as we shall always remember it.

So, my dear friend, let me thank you, on behalf of all of us, from the bottom of our hearts, for all you did to make today's occasion possible. I am sure that you will feel as relieved as we do that the final point can now be put to our work.

It is only fitting that, at this moment, we should also remember the Director-General's assistants whose tireless toil was an indispensable prerequisite for what has been achieved. Among them I would like to mention with particular sympathy the Deputy Director, Mr. Finn Gundelach, who unfortunately is about to leave GATT. All our best wishes are with him in his new functions.

Finally, I think a compliment is due to the GATT organization as such. It will celebrate its twentieth birthday this year. It is difficult to overrate its momentous contribution to the cause of world trade. Not in the least thanks to GATT and its excellent work the economic world has changed fundamentally since the war ended. We all wish it full success in its future efforts, and we obviously hope that its trusted captain whose outstanding merits it was my pleasure to extol will remain at the helm for many years to come.

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