After submitting the Belgian report on import restrictions applied by Belgium under the waiver of 3 December 1955, M. De Smet, Chairman of the Belgian delegation, added a few personal remarks on the agricultural problem. Having been requested to circulate his statement, he has summarized it as follows:

"Agriculture offers problems that are extremely difficult to solve. It is not so much the actual volume of agricultural trade or the relative proportion of farm products in international trade which make agricultural difficulties so hard to deal with. This feature of the problem derives from the fact that in each country the authorities responsible for agricultural interests have to deal with, and on behalf of, people who are afraid that their future may ultimately be decided by international organizations. At best, these people are prepared to appeal to such organizations to settle the sectors of their national policy which have become too difficult to handle, and this is the case with the problem of the marketing of agricultural surpluses. On the other hand, the farming population refuses to allow these international organizations an effective voice in determining the policies which create these unsaleable surpluses.

"Furthermore, farmers feel happier to have problems of the parity of living standards discussed at national level, where they wield considerable political power. In such circumstances little heed is paid to the needs and interests of other countries, which are mainly looked upon either as the source of competition which has to be counteracted or removed or else as markets which they would like to see opened up for themselves, regardless of the views or interests of the local producers every time production surpluses have to be got rid of.

"This frame of mind does not make for calm and unbiased consideration of the real problem involved - the problem of surplus production. Taken as a whole - all over Western Europe and in almost all branches of agriculture - production is expanding at a much faster rate than consumption. Production, as in all other countries, is conducted on the basis of "support" or guaranteed prices; competition is blocked and it is thus impossible to count on competition to improve the situation."
"It will, therefore, be necessary for the hard pressure of facts to teach people the lesson of experience and oblige farmers to look reality in the face.

"Possibly, the ministerial meeting will make it possible to speed up 'the moment of truth'.

"As I see it, the only possible arrangement is to conclude agreements for the sharing of markets. This means that there is little hope of satisfying the wishes of those contracting parties who consider that action by GATT should help them to increase their exports by gradually replacing national suppliers or suppliers from third countries.

"When it becomes quite clear that this is how matters really stand, some interests may want to regard this as a reason for not finding a solution. I feel, however, that GATT should direct its efforts to turning people's ideas towards the joint action to be taken for the gradual reduction - while safeguarding the interests of the farmers - of the rate of increase in production to a level close to the rate at which consumption is increasing, due allowance being made for supplies from third country sources which certain contracting parties would like to go on importing. If such a policy could be adopted it might, I feel, speed up the reconsideration of all the problems connected with agricultural policy."