Sir,

I have the honour to inform you that the Inter-sessional Working Party on Tariff Reduction, which was established by the CONTRACTING PARTIES to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade at their Ninth Session, has recommended that the CONTRACTING PARTIES convene a tariff negotiating conference to begin in January 1956 and have instructed me to bring to the attention of governments the necessity for taking initial action at a very early date if they wish to take part in such a conference. The Interim Report of the Working Party has been circulated to contracting parties in document L/373.

There was unanimous agreement in the Working Party on certain principles and procedures for another round of tariff negotiations, namely that they should be based upon the principles of the new Article XXIX in the revised Agreement (Volume I, Revised, Basic Instruments and Selected Documents), that each government should present a consolidated list of offers, instead of communicating its offers individually to each participating country, and that the Tariff Negotiations Committee should have somewhat broader functions than in previous negotiations.

The Working Party plans to meet again in September to consider whether any additional modifications should be made in the rules and procedures that have been used in the past. They have recommended, however, that the preliminary preparatory work that must take place before that date should follow the same general procedures as in the past. Accordingly, at their request, I am inviting each contracting party wishing to take part in such a negotiating conference:
(a) to notify me of its intention by 31 July 1955;

(b) to send by 15 August 1955 at the latest to the United States authorities a preliminary list of products on which it intends to request concessions from the United States and to send fifty copies of that list to me for distribution to the other participating governments;

(c) by 1 October 1955, to send to each participating government (including the United States) a list of requests for concessions and, simultaneously, to send me fifty copies of each such request list for circulation to the other participating governments; and

(d) to send to me as soon as possible two copies of the latest edition of its customs tariff and by 1 October two copies of its foreign trade statistics for 1953 and 1954 and to send the same information to any participating government requesting it together with such additional information as may be requested and is readily available.

The Working Party also considered whether governments which are not contracting parties should be invited to participate in these negotiations for the purpose of acceding to the General Agreement. There was no objection on the part of the governments represented in the Working Party to making such an opportunity available, and I have been requested by the Working Party to make informal enquiries among those governments which had previously expressed interest in the work of the General Agreement. If any such government indicates that it would be prepared to participate in the negotiations for that purpose, I shall seek the concurrence of the contracting parties before issuing a formal invitation on their behalf.

At its next meeting the Working Party will consider not only what additional recommendations it should make to the CONTRACTING PARTIES concerning the rules and procedures for the negotiations, but also concerning the place and the exact date for convening the conference.

Finally, I wish to call attention to the confidential nature of the Working Party's recommendations. The Working Party's Report itself is restricted, and contracting parties are requested to take every precaution to avoid disclosure of the Report to unauthorized persons. Some members of the Working Party also stressed the hope that the intention to hold negotiations early in 1956 be kept confidential for the time being, though they recognized that the procedures of certain contracting parties may require public notice before request lists can be prepared.

Accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

E. Wyndham White
Executive Secretary