Sir,

I have the honour to recall that at their Ninth Session the CONTRACTING PARTIES completed a review of the General Agreement undertaken with the object of equipping the Agreement to contribute more effectively to early progress towards the attainment of its objectives. As a result of the review certain amendments to the substantive provisions of the General Agreement were agreed upon and an Agreement was drawn up to establish a permanent organization for the administration of the GATT. Although these results are important, it was also I think widely recognized at the Ninth Session that the most important thing was to ensure the effective application of the GATT. I have therefore been considering that modifications in procedure might further this objective and I now venture to make the following suggestion for consideration by contracting parties. This suggestion might usefully be discussed at a meeting of the Intersessional Committee in the interval between now and the Eleventh Session.

I suggest that at the Eleventh Session, and as a regular procedure thereafter at the annual sessions, the first few days should be devoted to an exchange of views at ministerial level. Further, the ministers might review the progress achieved during the past year in moving towards the objectives of the Agreement and generally exchange views on the trends and problems in international trade. A useful background for such a discussion would be provided in the annual report on International Trade which contains a record of the work of the CONTRACTING PARTIES as well as an analysis of trends in international trade and developments in commercial policy. In the light of this discussion I would hope that it would be possible for the ministers to lay down certain broad general directives to guide the CONTRACTING PARTIES in their work for the ensuing year.

I feel that this procedure would not only provide direction for the work of the CONTRACTING PARTIES, but that a regular annual meeting between Trade Ministers would be of great value in itself and a useful counterpart to the annual meeting of the Ministers of Finance which takes place at the meetings of the Boards of Governors of the Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

E. Wyndham White
Executive Secretary