Statement made by H.E. Mr. L. Dana Wilgress, Leader of the Canadian Delegation, at the public meeting on 23 May 1956

In my capacity as Chairman of the Canadian Delegation, I am happy to express the satisfaction of my Government on this occasion which marks the conclusion of another successful round of tariff negotiations under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

When this 1956 Conference was convened we all realized that the results, in terms of the reductions of tariff levels, were likely to be somewhat limited. This was due, in the main, to two fairly obvious reasons. First, very substantial progress had already been achieved in the field of tariff reductions at previous tariff conferences. This was bound to have some limiting effect on the possibilities for further reductions at this time.

Second, one of the major negotiating countries, the United States, was limited in its ability to offer concessions, both as to the extent of the reductions it could make and as to the timing of its concessions. This was bound to affect the scope of a significant number of the agreements negotiated at this Conference.

Within these limitations, however, the Canadian Delegation feels that the results of the Conference have been most encouraging. The benefits to trade that will follow will likely be greater than many of us had anticipated four months ago. As will be seen when the schedules of concessions are made public, these new agreements will mean useful and worthwhile tariff concessions over a significant range of products entering world trade and benefiting many countries.

I cannot, at this time, discuss the details of the agreements which have been concluded between Canada and the other countries with whom we have negotiated at this Conference. The results will be made known publicly at a later date. I do wish, however, to express deep appreciation of the spirit of co-operation that has been shown at this Conference by all the delegations with whom the Canadian team has negotiated. Great efforts have been made to achieve the maximum practicable results within the limits of what each country was prepared and able to do. This spirit of practical co-operation
has become one of the traditional characteristics of our work as members of the GATT.

I would also like to express our appreciation to the Executive Secretary and other members of the secretariat. The efficient way in which they have made all the necessary arrangements, and their valuable assistance in the conduct of the negotiations have contributed substantially to the success of the Conference.

In my statement as Chairman of the Canadian Delegation at the opening of this Conference, I stressed the importance that the Canadian Government attached to these negotiations from the point of view of strengthening the multilateral basis of trade relations between countries. It is this broader aspect of this Conference that I should like to emphasize.

The GATT negotiations that have just been concluded must be seen against the background of the substantial and extensive progress already made in the reduction of tariffs and other barriers to trade over the past nine years. The successful outcome of these negotiations provides a further assurance of continued stability in world trade and a further proof of the determination of governments to pursue the liberal trade policies they have developed and strengthened through common effort.

The reduction of tariff levels is certainly among the most important aspects of international trade co-operation. Co-operation under the GATT, however, is much more than this. It involves a readiness among all participants to view their trade relations in the widest multilateral context, as opposed to any narrow sectional or regional approach. The GATT is much more than a forum for the negotiation of tariff concessions. It is an agreed code of principles and rules of conduct guiding like-minded countries in their commercial policies and in their day-to-day trade relations.

I referred earlier to the fact that the limited negotiating powers currently available to the United States Delegation set the scope of many of the agreements negotiated here. We are all conscious of the importance of United States leadership in the field of trade and economic policy. I wish, therefore, to make it clear that we in Canada have welcomed the effective participation of the United States in this Conference. They have made an important contribution to the strengthening of world trade. There is no doubt that the continuation of the forward-looking policies of the United States in the commercial and economic field will have a most encouraging influence on international relations generally.

This Conference has given greater emphasis than any of the past trade conferences to the multilateral aspects of trade negotiations. We have all been very conscious of the importance of broadening the scope of these negotiations by giving full weight to the indirect benefits accruing to each
of us through negotiations between third countries. Canada has welcomed this and has sought to play its full part. However, we realize that some countries may feel that more remains to be done in this field and that continued efforts for the reduction of tariff levels and tariff disparities should be considered in the long term. As in the past, Canada is ready and willing to give the most serious study and consideration to any possibilities for further progress in this field, on a genuinely multilateral basis and within the framework of GATT. As will be appreciated, Canada would not be in a position to participate fully and effectively in such efforts unless our other major trading partners were able to do so. However, we would be happy to co-operate with other countries in exploring all possibilities that may appear practicable. The GATT provides the logical basis for the development of any new and constructive initiatives and for the carrying forward of the substantial work already accomplished in expanding international trade.