You will recall that in my letter reference III-I-11 dated 8 April 1956, I put forward a suggestion that contracting parties consider being represented at the opening stages of the next and subsequent sessions of the CONTRACTING PARTIES, by ministers. In that letter I developed in general terms the reasons for the suggestion. It had been my intention to enlarge on this suggestion at a meeting of the Intersessional Committee early in the summer so that governments would have ample opportunity to consider it, and if they approved of it, to make the necessary arrangements in good time.

It now appears, however, that there will probably be no occasion for convening the Intersessional Committee before the regular meeting which takes place some five or six weeks before the session. In these circumstances I am anxious to add a few words to the explanations given in my letter, particularly as regards the position of countries in the early stages of economic development, for whose problems the revised provisions of Article XVIII were worked out.

It has always seemed to me that the sessions of the CONTRACTING PARTIES should provide a valuable opportunity for a discussion of the urgent and difficult problems facing these countries in the field of international trade and commercial policy. Discussion of the economic problems of the under-developed countries in the United Nations is undoubtedly valuable, but it is conducted on a political plane and I feel that such discussion could very usefully be supplemented by the more practical and technical forum provided by the GATT meetings.
I am, therefore, hoping that the governments of these countries will give serious consideration to the suggestion I have ventured to put forward. It may be of interest to you to know that the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany have apparently come to a similar conclusion since they have expressed support for my suggestion, but only if it is agreed to and acted on by the under-developed countries which are parties to the Agreement, since the other ministers have frequent opportunities of meeting in the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation. It is apparent, therefore, that at least one of the important trading countries sees advantage in discussion of trade problems at a ministerial level between the highly industrialized countries and those which are less economically developed.

I should be happy to discuss these points further with you and I would be grateful if you would bring the contents of this letter to the attention of your Government.

R. Wyndham White
Executive Secretary