SPEECH BY H.E. THARAY SITHU U HLA MAUNG, AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND
PLENIPOTENTIARY OF BURMA TO YUGOSLAVIA, AT THE PLENARY MEETING OF THE
CONTRACTING PARTIES HELD ON 30 OCTOBER 1957

Permit me first of all to convey to you, Mr. Chairman, and to this meeting of GATT the apologies of our Minister of Trade Development for his inability to be present here to-day owing to heavy pressure of work and other unavoidable circumstances.

This is an auspicious day for us, being the tenth anniversary of the setting up of our organization. We, in Burma, have watched with much interest and appreciation the growth of this organization from infancy to adulthood, from an organization born out of the stress and strain of war into one which has made a magnificent contribution to world trade development. And, Mr. Chairman, the duty I discharge to-day in conveying my Government's felicitations is a particularly pleasant one for me personally, for I had the good fortune of being my country's representative at the Havana Conference in 1947, which gave birth ultimately to GATT.

We who thus had the privilege of creating this organization, and of enunciating the first principles for its guidance, appreciate fully the nature of its teething troubles, and particularly the reason for the concentration in its early years on one aspect of the many-sided and intricate problem of world trade, viz. tariffs, and for which it has often been criticised. That, after all, Mr. Chairman, was our principal problem in those days, and the organization deserves praise, not criticism, for tackling first things first. The success it has had in this field is sufficient justification thereof. But GATT has not satisfied itself merely with this one aspect. The decade during which it has been in existence has confronted GATT with many other problems, and it has faced those problems with courage, and tackled them with competence. The annual review it will now undertake of trends and developments in world commodity trade, the constant attention it devotes to the relationship between balance of payments and world trade, its training programme, and its close association and co-operation with other international organizations, particularly with the International Monetary Fund, provide ample proof that GATT has grown with the years, and that it is adequately equipped to deal with the problems of a changing and developing world. We congratulate the organization, and its able Executive Secretary and his staff for the guidance and assistance they have provided.

MGT/142/57
English only
I now turn to the principal item on our agenda - the Rome Treaty creating the European Economic Community. The world we live in to-day, Mr. Chairman, is still a very divided world, too full of conflicting interests. But it is also a world of the atom and of Sputnik; and the great strides made by man in the field of technology, and in the realm of ideas and of human relationships, have brought him to the forceful realization that no nation, big or small, far or near, developed or under-developed, can exist in isolation - that the alternative to inter-dependence and world-wide co-operation is atrophy and death. This realization is specially great in this part of the world, twice devastated within living memory by the most destructive wars ever inflicted on mankind. Europe to-day has awakened to the fact that its very existence in the world of the future requires that it rids itself of its long legacy of strife, that it brings to life the underlying unity of its culture and economy. The European Economic Community is a direct product of this realization, and no-one can, therefore, hesitate in welcoming it.

The birth of this community is thus the result of an inevitable process, of the progress of mankind to higher things. But in welcoming its advent, we must not lose sight of two vital factors. We must remember firstly that, as I have said, the peoples of the world to-day have made substantial progress towards the ideal of international co-operation and integration. In this advance, they have evolved and accepted a body of principles relating to global co-operation and inter-dependence never before achieved in history, and they have given these principles practical shape and form through several world organizations, not the least important of which is GATT. Nothing must be done to reverse this process or arrest it. And, sitting here as members of this organization, it is our duty to ensure that the proposed European Economic Community - whose members are also contracting parties of our organization - is in full consonance with both the letter and the spirit of GATT.

Secondly, it must be remembered that the European Economic Community is an organization for regional integration. Under present-day circumstances, such integration may be a necessary first step to the eventual evolution of a world community. Nevertheless, the world to-day having in fact already travelled some distance towards global co-operation and inter-dependence, it is incumbent that any measure of regional integration should proceed in full harmony with this process - that it constitutes both in spirit and in fact a part of that process, not the reverse or even an obstacle.

From this point of view, we welcome the solemn declarations embodied in the preamble to the Rome Treaty and in Articles 18 and 110 relating to the harmonious development of world trade and the progressive abolition of restrictions on world commerce. But there are certain provisions in the Treaty which do not appear to assist the evolutionary process I have referred to above, and some of which would seem to be contrary to the declarations I have just quoted. I wish to refer in particular to some of the tariff changes contemplated by the Treaty, which would have the effect of taxing the import of certain commodities which are now admitted free of duty into some of the six countries and which would thus seem to restrict rather than develop world trade. I wish also to refer to the proposal to
associate certain overseas territories with the European Common Market, which may have the result of depriving the Community somewhat of its character of regional integration that is also a first step towards eventual world integration. We have heard with great interest and sympathy the case formulated for Ghana by its distinguished representative. There are certain other commodities - rice, for example - in respect of which the end result might well be the imposition of a new restriction on their import, and thus a restriction on world trade itself. We are also anxious that such restrictions might lead to economic dislocation in certain under-developed countries, which would endanger not only their programmes of economic development but maybe even their economic stability itself. This surely is a result that no-one around this table would desire.

As I have said, however, we are heartened by the fact that the Rome Treaty contains solemn declarations of the intentions of its adherents to develop world trade, and to abolish progressively restrictions on international exchanges. We trust, therefore, that the fears expressed in the course of this meeting by several distinguished representatives will be examined in the spirit of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, and indeed in the true spirit of the Rome Treaty itself, and that every effort will be made to remove the causes of these fears. Such an act will be in full consonance with our practice in GATT, which has an enviable reputation for arriving at understanding and agreement by mutual and friendly discussions.