STATEMENT BY DR. FRITZ BOCK, FEDERAL MINISTER OF AUSTRIA FOR TRADE AND RECONSTRUCTION, ON 28 NOVEMBER 1961

Obstacles to the Trade of Less-developed Countries

I have studied the report of Committee III with particular interest. The salient features of the report are those paragraphs which deal with concrete measures in favour of less-developed countries. It is, therefore, my opinion that the possibility of taking measures intended to augment exports of less-developed countries should be carefully studied.

The report emphasizes the significance of liberalization for exports of less-developed countries. I should like to mention that Austria's attitude towards items, the export of which is particularly interesting to these countries, has been a liberal one already up to now. During the last few years imports of a large part of these items have been liberalized. I refer to my statements of yesterday by which I outlined the future liberalization programme of Austria, and should like to point out once more that we shall proceed with further liberalization in 1963. It can, therefore, be expected that this step will result in still better export chances for less-developed countries.

In Austria, relatively low tariff rates on tropical foodstuffs and raw materials are levied, items that are of high importance for these countries. Moreover, exports of these countries will benefit by Austria's offers made in the Dillon negotiations. A favourable effect of such tariff reductions on exports of less-developed countries is to be expected, all the more so as no special national taxes on consumption are imposed in Austria on such export items.

In the case of raw cotton textiles, Austria has been pursuing a liberal import policy towards less-developed countries. Imports from Asian supplier countries, for instance, rose by 70 per cent in 1960, as against 1959. From statistics prepared by the GATT secretariat on the occasion of the International Cotton Textile Conference, Austria's liberal attitude appears clearly in the case of certain cotton products.

Owing to the measures outlined above, Austria's imports from less-developed countries have been partly expanded to a high degree; among others, imports from Nigeria, Malaya and Peru have registered a remarkable increase. Austria's purchases from Argentina have registered a particular rise. Trade relations with India have shown a steadily rising trend on the import side. Certain limits are set, however, to the possibility of expanding further Austrian exports by the fact that Austria, as a small country with only limited capital resources,
cannot compete with wealthier countries as far as the granting of credits is concerned. Although, in this light, it may well be expected that the expansion of exports to less-developed countries will be limited, Austria will take all necessary steps to facilitate further the access to the Austrian market for these countries, in accordance with the recommendations of Committee III.

Austria has already given its support to the ideas advanced by the Executive Secretary on technical assistance to be rendered by the GATT to newly independent countries and wishes to support any such initiative which the Contracting Parties may take up and pursue in accordance with requirements expressed by interested governments. I am sure that contracting parties will take into account and co-ordinate with similar actions taken with this purpose by other international organizations, such as the "Development Centre" of the OECD. I understand that the Executive Secretary has envisaged such action on a scale which, without requiring much expenditure could be devised in a way as to render valuable assistance to young countries shaping their institutions and instruments of trade policy.

I would not conclude my statement without mentioning Austria's effective contribution to the development of newly independent countries by widely opening the doors of our hospitable universities and scientific institutions to students from less-developed countries. Austria, disposing of a rich experience in this field, also offers its "know-how" to these countries for the establishment of technical schools and institutions, and it is gratifying to know that some newly independent countries have already shown interest in these possibilities.