GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE
Third Session of the Contracting Parties

Statement by Director General of
UNESCO

The following message has been sent by the Director General of UNESCO, Mr. José Torres Bodet, to the Working Party which has started work this week at Annecy to consider advising UNESCO on various problems arising from barriers to trade in cultural, scientific and educational products:

"I wish to express my profound thanks to you, to the members of this Working Party, and to the entire Tariff Negotiations Committee for undertaking to discuss and to study the proposals I have put before you. I am aware that all of you are already heavily burdened, and I am all the more appreciative of the goodwill you have shown towards Unesco in adding our item to your crowded agenda and in setting up a Committee to study it in detail.

"I hope that today will mark the beginning of an enduring and fruitful co-operation among us. It seems to me that this joint effort proceeds quite naturally from the fact that we hold certain objectives in common.

"As I understand it, the broad purpose of the Contracting Parties and the Acceding Governments is the reduction of barriers to international trade.

"Unesco, too, is concerned with barriers - barriers of all kinds which stand in the way of greater mutual understanding among the peoples of the world. The degree to which such international understanding can take root depends in large measure on the flow of information and the materials of information from one country to another. You will be the first to appreciate to what extent, in turn, present-day economic conditions affect this interchange between countries."
Thus, both our Organizations are concerned with the removal of economic barriers. Or, to state it more positively, you are seeking a greater exchange of goods in international trade; Unesco seeks a greater exchange of a particular kind of goods which serve the interests of education, science and culture.

Those of you who participated in the drafting of the Havana Charter may have had in mind that your principles might be specifically applied in this manner when you set forth as the Charter's objectives 'the attainment of higher standards of living, full employment and conditions of economic and social progress'.

Certainly you would be making a significant contribution to these objectives in enabling educational, scientific and cultural materials to circulate more freely in international trade. Reduced tariffs can mean for the people in each country a greater access to the creative endeavour and the production of educational materials in other countries. It can mean a book in a library, a painting in an art gallery, a blackboard in a schoolroom that would not otherwise have been there. These are real, practical ways of increasing the opportunities for education, which is an essential factor in achieving the Havana Charter's aims of higher living standards and social progress.

"Furthermore, this kind of educational advancement, which derives from the interchange of each country's finest achievements, is the best kind of educational advancement, because while it instructs it also inculcates greater understanding and appreciation of other countries. In so doing, it helps to strengthen in the minds of people everywhere an attitude of tolerance and mutual respect which is the most solid basis for peace.

"No temporary economic advantage, no revenue gained, can equal what all countries lose in failing to make the fullest use of the channels of international trade as a means of mutual comprehension
and advancement. No protectionism could be more short-sighted than that which "protects" the minds of people from the ideas and attainments of the rest of the world.

"Hence, the premise of the Unesco proposal is that the principles that animate the Havana Charter and the techniques that govern your tariff negotiations might be applied in the greatest possible measure to educational, scientific and cultural materials. I fully realize the practical difficulties in the way of making special provision for these materials in the current negotiations. I realize, too, that the list of materials I have submitted is long and contains a good many items in which it is difficult to distinguish the educational from the possibly commercial uses. The list was placed before you as an indication of the needs of many countries which might be filled, in part, through increased international trade.

"No group could be more competent than yours to examine, as your terms of reference phrases it, "the most practical means of studying and formulating solutions" of these questions. In fact, it seems to me in itself an event of considerable significance that the representatives of many countries have gathered around a table to explore the methods of dealing with this problem.

"Unesco's own approach to the problem in the past has been mainly through the sponsorship of international agreements. Indeed, it is indicative of the importance attached by the Organization to the reduction of economic obstacles that the first two international agreements it has initiated fall within this category.

"The first is an Agreement to Facilitate the International Circulation of Visual and Auditory Materials of an Educational, Scientific and Cultural Character. Upon ratification by ten countries, this Agreement would remove Customs duties and quantitative restrictions on the importation of films and related materials for
educational purposes.

"The second Agreement is designed to Facilitate the International Circulation of Publications. The text of this Draft Agreement has been circulated among you as GATT/CF/12/Add.2. I should like to make it clear that at the present stage this is a draft proposed by the Secretariat of Unesco and subject to revision according to the wishes of the Organization's Member States. I have submitted it to you in the hope that you might be willing to give us your comment and advice, as individual experts, in reshaping the Agreement, if necessary, to make it the best possible instrument of freer international trade in books, newspapers and periodicals. I know that the Member States of Unesco would place great reliance on any guidance you might offer.

"I mention these initiatives taken by Unesco in part to demonstrate that the Organization has a wide and abiding interest in the proposition we have put before you. I think I may safely say that as long as there is a Unesco, the Organization will be eager to continue to participate in any way it can in the work launched by this Committee.

"Indeed, as I see it, to enlist the co-operation and assistance of competent international trade bodies, such as yours, is a major prerequisite to the accomplishment of practical results. In turning to you, I have gathered hope from the belief that your own larger purposes are the best possible vehicle for Unesco's specific interest in facilitating the movement of educational, scientific and cultural materials.

"In a sense, Unesco is here to plead for "special interests". But Unesco's "special interests" are pencils for school children, equipment for research laboratories, art and literature for all the people - interests which, I submit, are not really so "special"
because they are shared by everyone concerned with larger opportunities for educational advancement.

"Unesco is the custodian of these interests, but you are the practitioners. It is a good team, which carries with it the hopes of many people in many countries who will be the beneficiaries of the results achieved here".