Representatives of more than sixty countries of the world, including 51 member states of the United Nations, opened the United Nations Conference on Trade and Employment this afternoon at 4:00 p.m. in the Capitolio in Havana.

The first speaker at the inaugural plenary meeting of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Employment was President Ramon Grau San Martin of the Republic of Cuba. He welcomed the delegates on behalf of the Cuban people and Government and emphasized the "historical responsibility" facing the states in their attempt to stabilize and promote the economic welfare of the world at a time when everything seemed so uncertain.

President Grau San Martin further stated: "Commercial interchange has reached such a degree of development that it has gone way beyond the time in which it merely endeavored to satisfy the material needs of mankind.... The present concept of trade takes so vast a sphere that there is room in it for all the initiative of human thought and energy."

The President of Cuba told the Delegates that "your task is closely linked to the task of peace." He recalled Cuba's participation in the preparatory work leading up to drafting of the World Trade Charter now being studied.

The President added: "The world today is anxious for a new order in production and trade, a better distribution of materials and products which includes not only a few corrections and a considerable approach to the supreme dictates of creation and to the principles of justice inherent therein."

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Enlightened self-interest, he continued, must be based on the realization of the legitimate interests of others: "a harmonious adjustment should be developed in a democratic atmosphere, such as is offered by the high moral repute of this meeting."

In conclusion, President Gregor San Martin expressed his confidence that the Conference would be crowned by success and "can result only in a fruitful achievement for the present and a rich endowment for future generations."

United Nations Assistant Secretary-General Benjamin Cohen informed the delegates of Secretary-General Trygve Lie's regret at being unable to be present at the inaugural meeting of the Conference. He added that Mr. Lie had addressed to transmit to the Cuban Government his (Lie's) sincere thanks for the cooperation and preparations in connection with this important international gathering.

Mr. Cohen said that in few fields of the vast task outlined by the San Francisco Charter can the United Nations make an immediate contribution to the improvement of international relations and to the economic life of the various peoples within that of international trade. He briefly outlined and contrasted the efforts made after World Wars I and II to improve and stabilize world trade, saying that the draft Charter and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade recently concluded in Geneva pointed to what may be accomplished in this field.

World economy, Mr. Cohen declared, was at present "tragically disrupted by the effects of a war of unparalleled destructiveness. He added: "Your task is to look beyond such immediate distortions and to chart a course for what we pray will be a brighter future and to establish a code of conduct which nations will accept as a guide for their commercial policies in a united effort to make the best use of the world's resources for the common welfare." Mr. Cohen said he recognized the great difficulties inherent in the realization of this task, but added that "we feel encouraged to hope that broad areas of agreement can be found in this Conference. "The world is weary, perplexed and still haunted by fear. You can send forth a message from here which will revive flagging spirit and bring fresh hope. On behalf of the Secretary-General, Mr. Fryg Lie, I wish you the fullest measure of successful achievement in your important work," Mr. Cohen stated in conclusion.
Mr. Camille Gutt, Chairman of the International Monetary Fund, took the floor. He declared that the International Trade Organization, the International Bank for Reconstruction as well as all international organizations will have to work in close cooperation if they want to achieve their common goal which is to help the world economy "to rise and move forward again".

Speaking of the various difficulties which hampered progress in world recovery, Mr. Gutt affirmed that it was important that all economic problems should be tackled "boldly and with good will" by the countries themselves and by all international organizations. Otherwise, he said, there was great danger that the present crisis would generate a series of restrictive measures that will hamper world recovery and the restoration of world trade. Mr. Gutt said that the establishment of the ITO would be a helpful safeguard minimizing this danger.

The Chairman of the Fund said that the Fund did not wish to limit the scope of the ITO but rather to emphasize the common interest of the two organizations in certain aspects of trade and payment problems.

In Mr. Gutt's opinion it was a wise thing to prepare a draft charter, even if the present text was not perfect. What was important, he said, was not the text but the spirit which guided the men working in the organization. The ITO, he added, will be what the men who run it make it, and if they act in a sensible, practical and cooperative spirit, the organization will be a success.

The purposes of the International Trade Organization, said Mr. Gutt, are also the purposes of the Fund. Therefore, he said, the cooperation between the two organizations must be wholehearted and mutual. The organization to be created, concluded Mr. Gutt, will become an effective instrument for international cooperation and will contribute to the attainment of the ultimate purpose shared by everybody, the establishment of a peaceful and prosperous world.
On behalf of the International Labour Organization, Mr. D. Christie Tait expressed hope for the success of the Conference.

The ILO, he said, having as its fundamental purpose the raising of living standards, was vitally interested in the work of the present conference. He welcomed in particular the fact that the draft Charter of the ITO included a chapter dealing with mutual undertakings in relation to employment, production and effective demand, saying the ILO, too, attached the greatest significance to this matter. Mr. Tait pledged the fullest cooperation of the ILO with the ITO in connection with the development of Fair Labour Standards and economic development. In conclusion, he expressed the ILO's pleasure at the progress already achieved in the drafting of a Trade Charter and said the ILO would do all in its power to help complete the task at the present conference.

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Next, a message from the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) was read to the Delegates. Wishing the Havana Conference every success, the FAO message stressed the great importance of this gathering for all the nations of the world. The message said that most of the problems being tackled by the Delegates at Havana were of direct concern to the FAO, adding:

"The improvement of agricultural production and the food situation depends to a large extent upon the degree to which a freer world trade will be developed."

The FAO Council, the message continued, was particularly interested in the chapters of the Draft Trade Charter which dealt with inter-governmental agreements on basic products, employment and economic development. The FAO message concluded on this note:

"Agriculture, like industry, can prosper only in an expanding world economy and the International Trade Organization, together with other international organizations, can contribute greatly to that expansion. May therefore the International Trade Organization of the United Nations be rapidly established!"

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The Draft Charter of the International Trade Organization was introduced formally by Dr. Max Suetens (Belgium), President of the Preparatory Committee. After briefly summarizing the steps leading up to the drafting of the document now under consideration, Dr. Suetens said the Draft Charter had four distinctive and well defined objects:

1. "To give international trade relations, by means of a universally recognized code of rules, the security they require."

2. "The establishment of an Organization, including on the one hand bodies meeting at regular intervals, and, on the other, a permanent administration seeing to it that the rules laid down by the Charter were respected and settling any disputes or claims which might arise in international economic relations, either by mutual agreement or by means of legal proceedings. In this sphere, among other things, the Draft Charter calls for the constitution of an International Trade Organization and establishes its statutes."

3. The third objective concerns negotiations for the substantial reduction of tariffs and other charges on imports and exports and to the elimination of references. In this connection Dr. Suetens recalled that the nations represented on the Preparatory Committee had already begun to put this part of the program into effect, having concluded among themselves some 100 bilateral negotiations, affecting thousands of tariff items and involving trade amounting to about ten thousand million dollars (10 000 000 000)."

4. Definite Cooperative Action in all fields governing trade production, consumption, employment and general economic development, particularly of under-developed countries.

Dr. Suetens said that successful as had been the work of the Preparatory Committee, it had not been complete; unanimity could not be reached on a number of points and some questions were left open altogether, the Committee recognizing that only the Plenary Conference was qualified to settle them, possibly on the basis of alternative proposals submitted on such points by the Committee.
Dr. Suetens then dealt with two specific criticisms that have been levelled at the work of the Preparatory Committee. The first of these deplored the fact that the draft Charter was not comprised of a combination of strict rules, that it contained many exceptions, reservations and even escape clauses so that it "does not afford any real assurances but only precarious and hazardous guarantees." Dr. Suetens said criticism on this point was "well founded". He pointed, however, to the enormous variety of economic systems and constitutional requirements of the countries involved, saying that this variety could only be reconciled and harmonized by compromise. He expressed the hope that any weakness inherent in the Charter would eventually disappear with the growth of the proposed ITO.

A second criticism -- that the Charter was "academic" rather than realistic -- was rejected by Dr. Suetens as unfounded. In support of his view he pointed to the General Tariff Agreement whose conclusion, he said, "fully demonstrates what may be expected of the Charter and of those who have signed it."

In conclusion, Dr. Max Suetens declared:

"Our (i.e., the Preparatory Committee's) work is one of good faith in every sense of the term. We should be happy if you would accept it as such, and even happier if you could find solutions to the particularly controversial issues involved which are superior to our own. On my own behalf and on behalf of the countries represented on the Preparatory Committee, I wish the Plenary Conference good luck."

Mr. Miguel G. Gonzalez-Munoz, Minister of State of the Republic of Cuba, presided over the inaugural meeting of the Conference as honorary president.