Mr. Chairman,
Your Worship,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the absence of Mr. Andre Philip who is now completing a series of lectures in the U.S.A., I have the honour and great privilege of expressing to the British Government and to His Worship, the Mayor of Torquay, our appreciation for the pleasant welcome we are receiving today in these beautiful surroundings, which Phoebus has benevolently smiled up for a few moments today, while we know that sooner or later all the treasures of beauty of this southern British coast-line will be revealed to us in their lovely colours.

For the third time since the war we are undertaking a series of tariff negotiations aimed at facilitating a freer flow of goods throughout the world. In this respect, other delegations are fully aware of the good will - or shall I merely say the will - of France which, as an importer and exporter of practically every item included in the wide range of agricultural and industrial products, is highly interested in trade expansion.

The results of our negotiations here will be of such importance to the French Government that as early as the beginning of 1950 a Special Commission was set up with a view to revising the whole of the French tariff as a preliminary step for the discussions that are going to take place. This Commission completed its work on the 23rd September, that is, quite recently, and I am not, of course, in a position to make known to you the results that it has achieved, because the proposals that it has framed are being submitted to the French Government. I can say, however, that the work it has achieved has been particularly careful and thorough. It concerns the present situation of every branch of activities and includes a comparative analysis of foreign and domestic prices which brings out the proportion of raw materials, labour, and various items entering into the cost of important commodities.

The studies which have been conducted by this Committee will serve as a basis for the negotiations that the French Delegation will enter into with practically every country represented in Torquay. I, for one, have no doubt that such a firm basis will enable us to reach a happy conclusion in our work. The French Delegation, however, is not blind to the difficulties that this will raise not only for us but also for those delegations which have previously negotiated concessions that in many cases they granted to the limit of their possibilities.
Furthermore, ever since 1947 when negotiations first took place between the principal countries, the economic situation has considerably changed and now raises new problems. A number of devastated industries have been reconstructed, wholly or in part, and others less directly affected by wartime dislocation have had to be modernized but in many cases modernization and reconstruction work has not yet been completed. This, at a time when we strive to eliminate to the greatest extent possible existing quotas, stresses the importance of tariffs, the application of which normally implies the existence of wholesome international trade competition and the abandonment of indirect protectionist practices which very often hamper international trade much more than tariff duties themselves. This is another aspect of the present concern of the representatives of the Governments participating in the GATT; this is of course neither the place nor the time to dwell at great length on such matters but it is undoubtedly one of the problems that we should do well to bear in mind. It is also essential to remember that our negotiations rest on a fragile basis since the Havana Charter has not yet been ratified and the General Agreement itself is only a provisional instrument. I believe that during this Session of the Contracting Parties which will open here on November 2nd we shall have to examine the question as to whether such a situation does not call for important decisions. No doubt, such matters are difficult and complex ones but we must squarely face the issue if we want to carry on in the best possible conditions the work of economic cooperation so happily initiated in London in 1946 and that everyone of us, I am sure, firmly intends to pursue.

Mr. Chairman, Your Worship, Ladies and Gentlemen; I cannot conclude without recalling the memory of a great official who was the most active worker in our midst, Mr. Shackle, whose sudden disappearance in Geneva has been a cause of deep mourning for the British Delegation and the many friends he had among other delegations. The French Delegation in particular wishes on this day to express their warm and everabiding memory of their late friend and colleague.