CONCLUSIONS

The Committee, having regard to the desire of all participating countries that the negotiations make the maximum contribution towards the attainment of the objectives of the conference, considered the extent to which this result could be foreseen on the basis of the initial offers and the initial review conducted by the Working Party. On this basis and without taking into consideration any improvements in offers that may have taken place during the bilateral negotiations it seemed doubtful at the present time, for the reasons given in paragraphs 8 and 12 of the Report of the Tariff Negotiations Working Party, that the negotiations would make more than a limited contribution to the principal objective of the conference, that is the general reduction of tariff barriers. Moreover, it was difficult at the present stage to assess whether sufficient attention was being paid to the principle that the binding of low duties or duty-free treatment should be considered equivalent in value to the reduction of high duties. Moreover, the Committee took note of the general absence of offers on agricultural products as compared with other sectors.

In an effort to bring about a maximum improvement in progress toward the objectives of the conference, therefore, the Committee decided to address the following recommendations to governments.

1. Participating governments should promptly examine their offers lists in an effort to supplement them with additional or improved offers and to make firm offers on items previously reserved for future discussion with a view to achieving a balance of concessions at the highest possible level. In this connexion particular attention should be paid to sectors of trade where no offers or meagre offers had initially been made, for example in the agricultural sector.

2. An effort should be made without further delay by all participants to take full advantage of multilateral negotiations for the purpose of enlarging the scope of the negotiations. For example, cases in which the trade in an item is divided among several exporting countries should provide an opportunity for fruitful multilateral discussions. Moreover, groups of countries with particularly close trading relationships in particular commodities should use the opportunity presented by this Conference to negotiate among themselves for the reduction of rates of particular interest to each other. Participating countries should also be on the alert for any other opportunities to expand the scope of the negotiations.
through multilateral discussions. Although responsibility for promoting multilateral negotiation should rest with both the importing and the exporting countries, the Committee suggests that the initiative be taken in the first instance by exporting countries. This should not, however, preclude importing countries from initiating such negotiations, and if neither of these approaches proves fruitful such possibilities should be brought to the attention of the Committee.

The Committee particularly noted that the abstention of France from the negotiations was having a limiting effect on the scope of the negotiations of some participants. They took cognizance of the reasons for this abstention which had been presented by the representative for France at the opening meeting of the conference and subsequently referred to in connexion with the review. But they felt that the problem was of sufficient importance for them to call attention to the recommendation of the Council of Ministers of the OEEC to the effect that member countries should intensify their cooperation in the GATT tariff negotiations, and decided to reaffirm the appeals previously made by contracting parties to the Government of France and urge that Government to reconsider its decision and to make every effort to participate in the negotiations.