CONCLUSION OF THE FOURTH GATT TARIFF CONFERENCE

At Geneva on 23 May the representatives of twenty-two countries formally concluded the fourth general round of GATT tariff negotiations and the completion of some sixty inter-governmental negotiations for the stabilization or reduction of tariff barriers. Import trade of the negotiating countries in the items affected by concessions granted in these negotiations is estimated at about $ ... .

The 1956 Tariff Conference, just concluded by twenty-two countries which are contracting parties to the GATT plus the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community is the first of its kind since 1951. At the time of the three earlier conferences the full effect on trade of tariff concessions granted by most countries was deferred because of the widespread use of other import restrictions during the reconstruction period following the war. Since 1951 many of these earlier concessions have become effective following the removal of these other trade barriers. The supplementary tariff concessions granted at the 1956 conference extend this process by further reductions in the general level of tariffs and by an extension of the area of trade covered by tariff bindings.

The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade is a multilateral agreement through which thirty-five countries, including all the leading trading countries, co-operate in the reduction of trade barriers and in the solution of international trade problems and thus contribute towards the expansion of world trade. The 1956 GATT Tariff Conference, which the Contracting Parties decided to hold after the Congress of the United States granted additional negotiating authority to the President in 1955, is the latest step in a process of tariff reduction and consolidation that was inaugurated at the first negotiating conference at Geneva in 1947. That process was continued at the tariff conferences at Annecy in 1949 and at Torquay in 1950-51. Further negotiations were conducted in 1955 in connection with the accession of Japan to the GATT. The multilateral agreement which incorporates the results of these tariff negotiations has stabilized trading relations among thirty-five countries; an equivalent result would have required more than five hundred separate agreements if they had been negotiated bilaterally. The rates of import duties on tens of thousands of items entering into world trade have been reduced or bound against increase. Under the rules of the
General Agreement these rates of duty will continue to be bound for fixed periods, thus assuring business firms conducting international trade against sudden tariff increases.

At a public ceremony on 23 May at the Palais des Nations, Geneva the end of the Conference was marked by the opening for signature of a Protocol of Supplementary Concessions to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

Time is now required for the technical work of printing the schedules of concessions (about 500 pages) and for the participating governments to prepare them for presentation. The schedules will therefore be released on 7 June simultaneously in the various capitals and at Geneva, at 16.00 hours Geneva time.

The following took part in and completed negotiations:

Australia
Austria
Benelux Customs Union
   (a) Belgium
   (b) Luxemburg
   (c) Kingdom of the Netherlands
Canada
Chile
Cuba
Denmark
Dominican Republic
Finland
France

Federal Republic of Germany
Haiti
High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community
Italy
Japan
Norway
Peru
Sweden
Turkey
United Kingdom
United States