FOURTEENTH SESSION OF GATT COMPLETES ITS WORK

The GATT fourteenth session which opened on 11 May 1959 ended on 30 May.

During the session important advances were made towards reducing barriers to world trade.

The three-pronged GATT programme for the expansion of international trade made new progress. Arrangements were agreed for holding a world conference for the lowering of customs tariffs, to open in September 1960. Plans were settled for the examination of the agricultural policies of each GATT member country with a view to tackling the problem of agricultural protectionism. During the session the less-developed countries proceeded with the task of examining the difficulties which face the expansion of their export trade.

Consultations were held during the session with France, New Zealand, Union of South Africa and the United Kingdom on the import restrictions these countries apply on balance-of-payments grounds, against the background of the recent moves by many countries towards the external convertibility of their currencies. When the consultation with the United Kingdom was completed the United Kingdom Government announced that restrictions on many consumer goods from the dollar area were removed forthwith.

A major achievement of the session was the negotiation of a settlement of the difficult problem of the maintenance by the Federal Republic of Germany of import restrictions on a number of products although she no longer has balance-of-payments difficulties and, consequently, is no longer entitled to restrict imports under the General Agreement. Under the terms of the decision taken by the CONTRACTING PARTIES Germany will remove all non-tariff restrictions on a wide variety of goods as of 1 July this year and other moves will be taken in stages during the three year period of the decision. For the goods remaining under licensing, mainly those covered by the Agricultural Marketing Laws, Germany will endeavour to increase the opportunities for the sale of imported goods, without regard for country of origin.

Another significant development during the session was the association of two additional countries to the thirty-seven which currently form the CONTRACTING PARTIES. Israel's provisional accession was approved, with full access to take place after Israel has undertaken tariff negotiations during the 1960-61 tariff conference. The conference also agreed a form of associate membership for Yugoslavia. In addition, Poland's application for association with the CONTRACTING PARTIES will be studied before the next session.

In addition to these major developments a number of other matters were dealt with during the session. The CONTRACTING PARTIES adopted a recommendation recognizing the desirability of avoiding restrictions on the purchase of transport insurance. Recommendations on anti-dumping matters, subsidies and State-trading were considered and accepted. Requests of countries to alter their tariffs were heard and after careful consideration were approved with provisions limiting the adverse effects on other countries.

The fifteenth session of the CONTRACTING PARTIES will open at Tokyo on 28 October and will last four weeks, the opening days being devoted to a meeting of Ministers of Trade.

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