FIFTEENTH SESSION OF THE
CONTRACTING PARTIES TO THE
GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE.

1. Following the acceptance of an invitation by the Government of Japan, the Contracting Parties will hold their fifteenth session at Tokyo.

The session opens on Monday 26 October and will close not later than 21 November.

The conference site for this session is the Sankei Kaikan building, located near the Imperial Palace.

2. Meetings of Ministers of Trade and their representatives will be held on 27, 28 and 29 October. The number of Ministers and Ministerial Representatives is expected to be over twenty. It is expected that Ministers and Ministerial Representatives will make statements for publication. It is also expected that these meetings, as well as the opening ceremony on 26 October, will be open to the public. All other meetings will be held in private, as is customary in GATT sessions.

The agenda for the ministerial meeting is likely to include the following points: current trends in international trade; perspectives for international trade and commercial policy in the light of the restoration of external convertibility in the currencies of a number of contracting parties; progress in the implementation of the GATT programme for trade expansion; programmes for economic integration on a regional basis and the harmonization of these programmes with the world-wide objectives of GATT.

3. The fact that this Session is being held in Tokyo will bring into prominence the item of the agenda dealing with the application by certain contracting parties of Article XXXV of GATT towards Japan.

In September 1955 Japan acceded to the General Agreement and at that time a number of contracting parties invoked Article XXXV, thereby refraining from undertaking GATT obligations towards Japan. Consultations between Japan and the governments concerned were initiated and at each session since that time the Government of Japan has reported on the situation.

At the present time there are fourteen contracting parties which invoke Article XXXV, namely: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Cuba, France, Spec(59)163 MORE
Ghana, Haiti, Luxemburg, Federation of Malaya, Kingdom of the Netherlands, New Zealand, Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Union of South Africa, United Kingdom.

4. At this session the Contracting Parties will review the progress achieved in the GATT programme for the expansion of international trade.

The programme has three parts:

a) in the field of customs tariffs it has been decided to convene at Geneva a tariff negotiating conference, commencing in September 1960. At this session the technical arrangements for the tariff negotiations to be conducted during the conference will be finalized;

b) a start has already been made in undertaking consultations with each GATT member country on its agricultural policies, and in particular on the effects of protective agricultural policies on international trade. A further group of countries will consult on their agricultural policies during the session at Tokyo. These are Burma, Ceylon, Chile, Indonesia, Malaya, Pakistan and the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland.

c) in the third part of the programme the difficulties faced by underdeveloped countries in expanding their export trade are being examined, on a product by product basis. Further work on this aspect of the programme has been undertaken at Geneva, from 28 September to 6 October. The progress made in this part of the programme will be examined at the fifteenth session.

5. The Rome Treaty (which established the European Economic Community) is on the agenda. It is not yet known what particular aspects will be discussed.

The European Free Trade Association (the so-called "Outer Seven") is not on the agenda. It is, of course, possible that this item might be put on the agenda at a later stage.

6. The Latin American delegations have introduced an agenda item regarding their plans for Latin American economic integration.

7. In the field of import restrictions maintained for balance of payments purposes a further series of consultations with certain GATT member countries
which apply such restrictions will be held in Tokyo, before the session opens, from 12 to 24 October. These are Australia, Italy, Japan, Malaya, Norway, Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland and Sweden. During the session the reports on consultations held since the fourteenth session will be considered and arrangements for further consultations in 1960 will be made.

8. During the session the contracting parties will review the progress made in dismantling import restrictions by the Federal Republic of Germany (under the Decision taken at the last Session) and by Belgium respectively. They will also review the agricultural import restrictions maintained by the United States, as at previous Sessions.

9. A number of member countries are proposing to reform or modernize the structure of their customs tariffs and proposals of this nature by Cuba, Finland and Greece may be considered at this session.

10. Since the last session a working party has put forward a proposal in order to meet Poland’s request for closer association with the GATT. This proposal will be considered by the Contracting Parties. It is also possible that the status of Tunisia and Guinea may be considered at the Tokyo session.

11. Mr. Fernando Garcia Oldini, Chile, remains chairman of the Contracting Parties until the end of the session, when a new chairman will be elected.

12. The total number of the GATT party going to Tokyo from Geneva is 60. The majority will fly by charter plane over the Polar route, leaving Geneva on 22 October, at 18.00 hours. There will be a charter plane for the return journey, probably on or about 22 November.