I wish first of all to say how deeply honoured I feel to represent the Government of my country at the fifteenth session of the CONTRACTING PARTIES which are meeting in the capital of Japan, a large, beautiful and hospitable city. Although Japan is, from a geographical point of view, far away from my country and other European countries, it is, however, very close to us by reason of the solid bonds of a friendship which has now become a real tradition.

I also wish to bring to all the contracting parties the greetings of the Government of Italy, and of the other members of the European Economic Community, which is determined, above all, to provide a valuable instrument for co-operation and solidarity at an international, and not merely a European, level also for the expansion of international trade.

To this end the contribution which the fifteenth session is going to make might be particularly important as this session will pursue the excellent work which has been done in common, after the very valuable contribution of, and the collection of data included in, the Report on International Trade - 1957/58.

We have followed with the closest attention and the greatest interest the development of the initiative taken two years ago on the subject of a thorough examination of the steps that might best favour an expansion of international trade.

No doubt the progress achieved hitherto in the field of a greater multilateralization of international trade is gratifying, thanks to the international co-operation to which it has given rise. The liberalization of trade has been gradually increased to a substantial level. Tariff levels have been reduced as a result of several multilateral conferences. Progress has been achieved, even though not always on a far-reaching scale, thanks to the elimination of other obstacles to trade.

May we affirm henceforth that all the prerequisites for the determination of new objectives and new stages in international economic co-operation are met? We, for our part, are convinced that such requirements of a general nature are fulfilled and it is not only desirable but also indispensable to establish a joint programme of action on a world-wide scale directed towards the eventual reduction of obstacles which still hamper the expansion of international trade.
1. In this respect the European Economic Community has decided to bring their contribution to the tariff conference proposed by the United States. We earnestly hope that this far-reaching initiative may be approved by the greatest possible number of countries.

As far as primary commodities are concerned, we are convinced that the limitations of the application of measures intended to bring about a reasonable expansion of international trade, to assist towards the reduction of quantitative restrictions and the rationalization of other measures having equivalent effect, can be determined as soon as consultations on the domestic agricultural policies (which in effect have already been initiated within Committee II) have been completed.

2. Coming now to other matters of primary importance which will have to be examined during this session, I would first of all wish to call attention to the vital problem of assistance to the less-developed countries. We are fully aware of the increasing importance of trade with the less-developed countries. Italy also realizes their desire to secure, through their export earnings, the means to finance their development projects. Our Six countries are therefore prepared, both directly and through the international bodies of which they are members, to do their utmost to assist the less-developed countries by every possible means, including technical assistance and arrangements for the stabilization of prices of primary commodities.

I would wish on this occasion to announce that at their meeting of 13 October 1959 the Ministers of the Member States of the European Economic Community have agreed to set up an ad hoc committee to study the general question of any action in favour of the less-developed countries which the European Economic Community could initiate. The Committee will start work in the forthcoming weeks.

However, it is of the utmost importance that throughout the development of this enterprise of international co-operation and solidarity, the limits of sound normal competition should not be exceeded. That is, in fact indispensable, at least in the interest of exporting countries, which are anxious to maximize their export proceeds, so as to be able to finance the maximum volume of imports.

The arrangements we shall endeavour to negotiate should be based on such major principles as the harmonization of producers' and consumers' interests, the efficiency of the provisions intended to mitigate cyclical fluctuations and to ensure the necessary flexibility in order to avoid that the structural causes of disequilibria should be unduly prolonged.

3. Another related problem is the question of exports of goods manufactured by countries having exceptional production conditions.

We believe that it would be in the interest of the less-developed countries and all other contracting parties to GATT to find, by joint agreement, an adequate solution to these problems.

Current developments in international trade seem to facilitate an equitable solution in this field and we, for our part, would be quite prepared to participate in any effort likely to bring about an expansion in the exports of other contracting parties on a reciprocal and mutually advantageous basis.
The normalization of competition and the establishment of permanent criteria would make it possible to expand trade as desired with countries having exceptional production conditions, while avoiding the possibility that the importing countries might suffer economic and social disruptions.

4. In opening consultations on the agricultural policies of the contracting parties and on the non-tariff aspects of such policies the CONTRACTING PARTIES have in fact taken up the problem which the expansion of international trade in agricultural products certainly raises. The European Economic Community and Italy, which is essentially an importer and an exporter of agricultural products, attach the greatest importance to the exercise we have just started and are convinced that the results of the consultation will allow a fruitful examination of this fundamental problem.

Mr. Chairman, what I have just said expresses, in its main lines, the desire of the European Economic Community to contribute in a positive manner to efforts directed towards a progressive expansion of international trade.

May I, in concluding, express the earnest hope that this session may, thanks to the goodwill of all participants, bring a substantial contribution to the attainment of this objective. The spirit of co-operation which has always been the hallmark of our work inspires me, Sir, with the confidence that this session will enable us to take a new step forward along the road that we are all determined to follow.