Mr. Chairman, fellow delegates, it is a great pleasure for me to participate for the first time in a session of the CONTRACTING PARTIES to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

The Cambodian delegation has listened with considerable interest to the statement made by the distinguished speakers which spoke before me and dealt so competently with the different problems relating to international trade.

The Kingdom of Cambodia is one of the less-developed countries. Its economy is essentially an agricultural one; its foreign trade, at present, mainly depends on exports of rubber and rice. But other resources can be tapped if we can find wider outlets. I would wish, in this respect, to mention in particular timber and forestry products, maize, kapok and the fish from our great lakes, etc. Our salt marshes also yield substantial quantities of sea salt.

Our foreign trade amounts to about 2,000 million Riels, a very small amount indeed compared with international trade as a whole. But Cambodia is fully aware of the part it must play in international trade co-operation. For the time being, we have to maintain controls on our foreign trade and payments because it is our determination to control and expand our trade by means of a provisionally managed economy, in order to maintain the value of our currency, and this to ensure our national independence together with the maximum welfare for our people, eliminating superfluity to concentrate on essentials and ensuring that any outflow of national wealth and subsistence is offset by corresponding inflow.

Nevertheless, Cambodia does not lose sight of the ideal outlined in the national law which provides a status for the National Bank, i.e. maximum freedom of trade, free convertibility and full transferability of currencies.

Until our economy enables us to meet without fear free international competition in the commercial and financial fields, Cambodia, under its policy of neutrality, readily trades with any country that is prepared to buy our own goods in return. As a result of this policy, while maintaining our relations with France, the United States and the sterling area, we have, to our satisfaction, signed a number of trade and payments, and other agreements, over the last few years with the People's Republic of China, the Czechoslovak Republic, the USSR, the People's Republic of Poland, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and, more recently still, the Kingdom of Laos and the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia. Other agreements with France, Japan and the UAR are in preparation.
Cambodia has to meet the same difficulties as many other of the less-developed countries. The impossibility for us to equilibrate our balance of payments is due, inter alia, to excessive fluctuations in the prices of primary commodities and to quantitative restrictions upon imports maintained by certain industrialized countries. It has been possible until now to achieve equilibrium in our balance of payments only through the generous and unconditional assistance extended by friendly countries.

Cambodia places all its confidence in the General Agreement which is intended to facilitate commercial and economic relations between the various countries with a view to raising standards of living, ensuring full employment and expanding the production and exchange of goods.

The fact that the highly industrialized countries have recognized the need and the urgency to promote the export trade of the less-developed countries is one of the reasons why we have placed such confidence in the General Agreement, and the way in which the CONTRACTING PARTIES have consistently endeavoured to formulate a programme for the expansion of international trade strengthens this confidence.

The examination of this programme, which was initiated at the thirteenth session, has fortunately led, at the fourteenth session, to the establishment of three committees: Committee I, to examine the possibility of arranging for a further general round of tariff negotiations; Committee II, to study the agricultural policies of contracting parties, and Committee III (to which Cambodia attaches the greatest importance), to study the difficulties with which the less-developed countries have to contend in increasing their export earnings. In this respect Cambodia wishes to join with those who, at the recent annual meeting of the Board of Governors of the International Monetary Fund, expressed some concern as to the repercussions which might result for the economies of producing countries from the disposal, even on an instalment basis, of the important rubber stockpiles of the United States and Great Britain.

Cambodia has noted with satisfaction the increasing tendency for GATT to become a world-wide organization. GATT has always endeavoured to meet changing circumstances. It does everything possible to ensure successful economic co-operation. In this respect, I highly appreciate the determination of the CONTRACTING PARTIES to study the situation of countries which are in special conditions, such as the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia and the People's Republic of Poland.

It is also in this spirit that Cambodia has been invited, since the thirteenth session, to participate in the work of the CONTRACTING PARTIES, although we have not yet conducted tariff negotiations. I take advantage of this opportunity to inform this Assembly that the Cambodian customs tariff was promulgated on 13 August, 1959, and that Cambodia is prepared to enter into negotiations in 1961 following the recommendations of Committee I on the expansion of international trade. I wish to recall, however, that Cambodia, in its declaration on the occasion of its application for accession, renounced the benefits of Article XXVI of the General Agreement, which would have permitted it to become a contracting party upon sponsorship by the Government of France, and chose a more arduous way through the conduct of negotiations,
simply because we were of the opinion that the schedule of the former Indo-Chinese Union, which had been negotiated by the French Government, did not meet with our economic situation after the attainment of our independence. On this point also I feel convinced that I can rely on the spirit of realism and flexibility which has long been a well-known feature of the CONTRACTING PARTIES to GATT.

Before I conclude, Mr. Chairman, I would wish to join with other delegations in expressing my heartiest thanks to the Japanese Government for the generous hospitality which they have so kindly extended to the Cambodian delegation on the occasion of this session of the CONTRACTING PARTIES.