QUESTION OF JOINING "FICSA"

At the last Staff Assembly the question was raised as to whether it would be appropriate that our Staff Association should be associated with the other staff associations of international organizations which have joined within the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations (FICSA).

The aims of this Federation and an estimate of its value can be found in the statutes of the Federation and the summary records of its sessions. The preamble of the statutes summarizes in one sentence the aims of the Federation, namely: "... to seek together the development of an international civil service animated by the highest traditions of public service". That those aims of the Federation go far beyond the development of material advantages for its members can be seen from Article 3 of the statutes, which reads:

"Article 3. The purpose of the Federation shall be to enable the member associations to co-ordinate their policies and activities, in order, among other things:

a) to help to attain the aims set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and the Constitutions of the specialized agencies and in the agreements between those organizations;

b) to promote the development of an international civil service;

c) to protect the interests of international civil servants and, in particular, their status and their conditions of employment in order to attract and retain the most competent staff;

d) to enable member associations to co-operate in the formulation of co-ordinated policies."

It should be noted that these objectives are exactly the same as those sought by the individual member staff organizations and that the Federation does not go beyond those aims. The essential task of the Federation is to co-ordinate the actions of the member organizations.

A perusal of the summary records of recent sessions of the Federation show how diversified, and at the same time, how successful the action taken by the Federation has been, in dealing with problems of great interest to the personnel of international organizations. The following are a few examples of action taken by FICSA, which resulted in an improvement in matters affecting the interests of the staff: the improvement of conditions of employment in relation to sick leave, the development of the definition of "dependant persons", various questions relating to the education grant for students, and in particular, the improvement of salaries in the General Service category.
The summary records show that the Federation also deals with questions of interest to the international organizations and participates in the discussions of questions such as the most successful methods for the training of employees or the best way to recruit them. The Federation is also very active in the strengthening of the status of international employees and it collaborates with a number of lawyers who are particularly concerned with the study of this problem. The Federation also pays special attention to pension matters, health insurance for retired officials etcetera.

It is hoped that this brief indication of the functions of the FICSA will show the value of belonging to the Federation, particularly for an Association such as ours which consists of comparatively few members. In particular, the members of our Association should, it is felt, be interested in the participation of our Association in the work of the FICSA, since GATT personnel belongs de facto, although not de jure, to the family of the United Nations employees.

In this connexion it is of interest to note that the staff associations of many important international organizations are members of FICSA, such as: United Nations, New York; United Nations, Geneva; ILO, Geneva; WHO, Geneva; FAO, Rome; UNESCO, Paris; ICAO, Montreal; ITU, Geneva.

It is hoped that this outline of the aims and functions of FICSA is a satisfactory basis for our staff members to form an opinion about the value of the adherence of our Association to the Federation; the following suggestions will therefore be put to a vote at the next Staff Assembly:

- to decide that the GATT Staff Association may ask FICSA to accept the GATT Staff Association as a member; and

- to accept the financial obligation deriving from such adherence in the name of the GATT Staff Association provided, however, that this obligation shall not lead to a payment by the individual staff member exceeding Sw.fr. 3.00 per year.

The Statutes of FICSA and the reports of its recent sessions may be consulted at Mr. Liebich's office by any member of the GATT Staff Association.

THE STAFF COUNCIL