At the seventeenth session the CONTRACTING PARTIES took a Decision which afforded newly independent States a breathing space in order to determine their attitude towards accession to the General Agreement and also provided for the de facto maintenance of GATT treatment during that period on a basis of reciprocity. Whilst this Decision is helpful it seems to me an inadequate response by the CONTRACTING PARTIES to the problems of the newly independent States. These countries, quite apart from their manifold problems in other fields, have to face a wide range of extremely difficult and important questions of commercial policy including tariff structure, customs administration, the framing and application of export and import policies etc. These problems would in any circumstances be difficult enough, but they are even more complex in the context of change and movement in international trade today. The newly independent countries may also be handicapped by the absence of a sufficient number of trained administrators. In this they have been helped in some small degree through the existing Fellowship Programme. They also receive considerable technical assistance from the United Nations. But in the area of commercial policy I feel that the CONTRACTING PARTIES could provide valuable additional assistance to these countries which would also be beneficial to the international trading community as a whole.

Accordingly, I would like to put forward the following as a basis for discussion by the Council in the hope that if these ideas gain wide acceptance the Council would be prepared to propose and submit more detailed recommendations for consideration by the CONTRACTING PARTIES at their eighteenth session.

(a) The CONTRACTING PARTIES should establish a Panel of Experts in commercial policy and trade administration.

(b) For this purpose they should invite contracting parties to designate experts for inclusion in the Panel.

(c) Upon the request of any of the countries covered by the Decision of 18 November 1960 (seventeenth session) the CONTRACTING PARTIES will arrange for the despatch to the said country of an advisory mission of not more than three experts chosen from the Panel plus one member of the secretariat.

(d) The Executive Secretary shall immediately thereafter provide the mission with the background material necessary for this mission to prepare its work.

(e) After a suitable period during which the designated experts could familiarize themselves with this background material (say three months) the mission should proceed to the capital of the requesting government which would have made all the necessary arrangements to facilitate the work of the mission.
(f) The mission would normally spend two/three weeks in the territory of the requesting country and a further week in the preparation of its report either on the spot or in Geneva.

(g) The report would be made to the requesting government, a copy also being deposited with the Executive Secretary. If the requesting government so desired the report would also be circulated for the information of the contracting parties.

(h) In the initial stages - in order to reduce the charge on the budget of the CONTRACTING PARTIES - the selected experts would be seconded by the nominating government to the secretariat for the period of the mission without reimbursement. The CONTRACTING PARTIES would discharge the travel and subsistence expenses of the experts whilst on mission. These charges might be reduced if the requesting government were prepared to provide accommodation and subsistence for the experts whilst in its territory.

Clearly these suggestions would have to be elaborated in greater detail if the proposal were adopted by the CONTRACTING PARTIES. However, the indications given appear to me to be sufficient for the purpose of an initial discussion.

It is also for consideration whether, if the CONTRACTING PARTIES were to adopt such a proposal, the facilities suggested should not, at any rate eventually, also be made available to contracting parties entitled to invoke Sections A, B and C of Article XVIII.