GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

Meeting of Ministers

STATEMENT MADE BY H.E. U HLA MAUNG, AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY TO THE UNITED KINGDOM, REPRESENTING THE MINISTER OF TRADE DEVELOPMENT, BURMA

ON 18 MAY 1963

Item 1: Measures for the Expansion of Trade of Developing Countries as a Means of Furthering their Economic Development

I consider it a privilege to have this opportunity of addressing you on a subject which is vital to the economy of all less-developed countries, particularly my country - Burma. Before I proceed, I would like to say that the Burmese Trade Minister, Col. Chit Myaing, himself had intended to take part in the present deliberations, but due to urgent and important problems at home, he has not been able to attend this meeting personally, and I have been asked to represent him.

I have listened with great interest to the various speakers who have spoken before me, especially those speakers from the highly developed countries, and I am convinced that all of them have only one desire - the desire to see less-developed countries advance their economies and improve their standards of living. However, in spite of all their best wishes and promises of sympathetic consideration, poor countries have remained poor while the rich countries have become richer. The economic gap between developed and less-developed countries is growing wider instead of getting smaller. One reason
for this state of affairs is that the demand for primary commodities has tended
to grow more slowly than the demand for manufactured goods. This is because
the developed countries are now producing cheaper synthetics and substitutes
and also applying tariff and non-tariff barriers to the exports of less-
developed countries. Prices of agricultural and primary products are
decreasing whereas the prices of manufactured goods are increasing. This trend
should be stopped and reversed. Various reports and recommendations have been
made by various United Nations bodies but no practical measures have been taken.

About 80 per cent of our export earnings, which average over Ks.100 crores
per year, is derived from the export of rice. Our other exports are cotton,
pulses, rubber, oilcakes, metal and ores and timber. What Burma requires, as
do all other developing countries, is stable markets for the primary products
which constitute their main export. Some countries indulge in stockpiling and
releasing these stockpiles. This practice seriously undermines such stability.
Release of stockpiles of tin and other practices which disrupt the stability
of primary products such as rice should be stopped. I would suggest that
international commodity arrangements providing for increased trade and con-
sumption thereby creating stable markets and stable prices and comprising all
the countries of the world should be created.

Regarding the economic integrations in Europe and other regions, I wish
to mention here that we are not opposed to such regional groupings if they
adopt liberal trade policies. However, we have our anxieties over the possible
adverse effects of preferences created by the EEC's associated States and
territories, and also for the possible adverse consequences of the EEC's
agricultural policy which may seriously impair our potential as well as the
existing trade. We consider that the levels of agricultural protection in
the EEC countries are already very high. As a rice producing and major
exporting country, Burma is concerned over the proposed organization of rice
market in the Community. We welcome therefore the assurances of the Community
that they would follow liberal trade policies.

Mr. Chairman, I am not going to take much of your time. It is the sincere
wish and fervent hope of all the developing countries that the organization of
GATT will rise equal to the occasion and help in solving the problems to bring
about economic parity amongst all the countries.