GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

Meeting of Ministers

STATEMENTS MADE BY H.E. Mr. E. STOPPER,
AMBASSADOR, DIRECTOR OF THE TRADE DIVISION,
FEDERAL DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC ECONOMY, SWITZERLAND,
ON 16 AND 18 MAY 1963

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

Item II: Arrangements for the Reduction or Elimination of Tariffs and Other Barriers to Trade, and Related Matters

and

Item III: Measures for Access to Markets for Agricultural and Other Primary Products

I. Item I:

We shall take part with conviction in the efforts made to encourage exports by the developing countries. I should like briefly to state my country's attitude regarding the principal topics included in our agenda. We are certainly prepared to maintain the standstill together with the other industrial countries until the end of the negotiations. We would agree on a decision eliminating quantitative restrictions on tropical products. In the context
of joint action, it seems to us that customs duties could in practice be
eliminated on many products, or they could be included in the forthcoming
tariff negotiations. We note that a special study will be made on oilseeds
and oils in the context of fats and oils in general. We can declare ourselves
in favour of the inclusion of semi-manufactured and manufactured products in
the forthcoming tariff negotiations and shall devote particular attention to
them. We shall participate in the examination of general action by the
industrialized countries to reduce or limit fiscal charges on tropical products.
Annual progress reports as proposed in the agenda could prove very useful.
On the other hand, we would hesitate to introduce a new system of preferences
for certain products. We would see the solution as lying rather in a general
and massive lowering of tariffs.

II. Items II and III:

We associate ourselves with all who have expressed their desire to con­
tribute to their utmost ability to the success of the forthcoming tariff
negotiations. The basic principles formulated by the Working Party and set
forth on page 12 of our agenda seem to us appropriate. We should like merely
to make three remarks. The main objective of the forthcoming tariff negotiations
is, in our opinion, to achieve maximum liberalization of world trade. Consequently,
in determining the method to be followed, we should decide on the one most
appropriate for achieving this end. Furthermore, the conference should aim
at a reduction of preferences and discriminatory measures which might threaten
the rational structure and the volume of world trade. In this perspective,
we would agree that the linear reduction should apply to the complete levy.
Furthermore, we share the view that low tariffs as well as particularly high
tariffs can present special problems. We believe, however, that these
disparities should be taken into consideration in assessing general reciprocity.
It is certainly not easy to find just and equitable criteria to take account
of this objective. In seeking for such a formula, any dogmatism must be
avoided. Negotiations in the agricultural sector will certainly be a complex
and difficult process. Our agricultural production is only of limited
proportions, and consequently production costs are very high. This policy enables
imports to be maintained at a high level but requires a complicated system of
protection. These difficulties will nevertheless not prevent us from including
agriculture in the forthcoming discussions and from envisaging substantial
concessions, as well as supporting efforts for the conclusion of commodity
agreements.

END