At their meeting in May 1963 the Ministers decided that comprehensive trade negotiations, covering agricultural products, should take place in 1964. The Ministers gave directions for the elaboration of the rules to govern and the methods to be employed in the creation of acceptable conditions of access to world markets for agricultural products in furtherance of a significant development and expansion of world trade in such products. The Ministers considered that for meat general arrangements might be required and they entrusted to the Group on Meat the task of negotiating appropriate arrangements. The Ministers requested that the Group should convene at an early date.

The Group met in Geneva from 1 to 5 July 1963 under the Chairmanship of Mr. E. Wyndham White, Executive Secretary.

The Group had before it documents submitted by Argentina (Spec(63)206), Australia (Spec(63)197), New Zealand (Spec(63)203) and the United Kingdom (Spec(63)190) as well as a paper submitted by the secretariat (Spec(63)208/Rev.1). During the discussion, these delegations, and other members of the Group, outlined their positions on various matters.

With respect to the European Economic Community, the following communication had been received by the Executive Secretary from the Community:

"As regards the Group on Meat, it is clear, as the other members of the Group recognize, that in the absence of established common policy rules on this product, the Community cannot in any case participate in pre-negotiations of any form. It is, however, prepared to co-operate to the
fullest possible extent in the preparatory work which the Group must necessarily undertake in order to be able to achieve the objectives of Section B, paragraph 3(d) of the ministerial resolution."

The representative of the Community stated that the fact that the Community was unable to express any position in the discussion of the various views put forward at the present meeting of the Group, did not prejudge the Community's position in this connexion. The term "the Group" in this note should therefore be interpreted in the light of this statement.

The Group agreed that its discussion would concentrate on meats of cattle and sheep, it being understood that live animals and other types of meat would be borne in mind and might, as appropriate, be brought into discussion at a later stage. The Group discussed questions relating to agricultural policies (including both internal measures and measures at the frontier) and to international trade (including access and international prices). A number of other matters were also brought to the Group's attention.

It was pointed out in the course of the discussion that the volume of meat entering into international trade constituted only a small part of total world production of meat and of meat production of the large importing countries and that, even taking into account possible increases in consumption, a relatively small increase in production in the large importing countries could have a disproportionately large adverse effect on international trade.

Concern was expressed that the present trends of unchecked increases in production, in particular in certain importing countries, were likely to have such adverse effects on international trade.

It was considered that, with a view to achieving the general objective described in the directions given by the Ministers at their meeting in May 1963, it was essential that countries affording government assistance to producers, by means of internal measures or tariff or non-tariff measures applied at the frontier, should be prepared to enter into discussion and negotiations on such measures. The view was expressed that the objective should be to maintain and expand the import markets for meat, so that internal prices in import markets should be consistent with this objective in relation to their effect on production and consumption.
Representatives of exporting countries emphasized that the question of improved terms of access to markets, where imports were now impeded to a greater or lesser degree, and the possibility of developing new trading opportunities, would largely determine the extent to which these countries could participate in the trade negotiations as a whole.

Various members of the Group considered that meat was among the commodities in respect of which, in the present market situation, there was the least justification for the maintenance of import barriers inconsistent with the provisions of GATT.

The Group was of the opinion that future discussions should include questions of restraint on price and/or income support, production subsidies, and generally any other measures affecting price and production policies, which unduly encourage domestic production or discourage increases in consumption. Such discussions should also include the question of the negotiability of inter alia variable levies, quantitative restrictions, minimum import prices and other import barriers.

Attention was drawn to disparities in consumption levels in different countries. A relatively small increase in per caput consumption in importing countries, if it were reflected in increased imports, could result in an expansion of demand that could prove of great importance to the development of the meat trade. It was, therefore, suggested that in future discussions the factors leading to such disparities of consumption levels should be included.

It was suggested that future discussions should also cover the question of veterinary restrictions. While the legitimacy of such restrictions was not questioned, the view was expressed that consideration should be given to ways and means of ensuring that the regulations, in their operation, would not have unduly restrictive effects.
It was emphasized that the work of the Group should lead to appropriate arrangements to mitigate fluctuations in international prices and to levels of international prices that were remunerative to efficient producers.

A number of exporting countries expressed readiness in the light of the total arrangements that might come out from the work of the Group to consider obligations, for example, obligations to make every endeavour to avoid disruption of import markets both in terms of quantities and phasing, and to undertake commitments as regards an orderly supply.

It was pointed out that there should be an understanding that countries participating in the discussions should not take measures which would further restrict international trade and which might give rise to difficulties on other import markets which allowed imports to enter virtually without impediment.

The Group attached great importance to the next meeting being held in the autumn in order to discuss elements which would have to be considered in any future negotiations, so that the following stage namely the negotiation of arrangements might start in the beginning of 1964.

The Group agreed that the actual date of its next meeting should be determined by the Chairman in consultation with the members of the Group but that the aim should be, as mentioned above, for the next meeting to take place in the autumn of 1963.