MEETING OF MINISTERS - 16-21 May 1963

Order of Business and Procedural Arrangements

Note by the Executive Secretary

The Executive Secretary wishes to meet informally, at 4.30 p.m. on Wednesday 15 May, with officials of contracting parties in order to discuss with them certain questions of programme and procedure to be taken up by the Chairman at the opening of the Ministers' meeting. The meeting will be held in Conference Room VII in the Palais des Nations and the discussion will be based on the preliminary consideration given to these matters in the last meeting of the Council.

It will be recalled that the Council was instructed by the CONTRACTING PARTIES at the twentieth session to make adequate preparations for the meeting of Ministers. In pursuance of this mandate the Council has drawn up a provisional agenda as set out in document MIN(63)1 which incorporates the matters to be placed before Ministers for their consideration. So far, no additional submissions have been received from individual contracting parties.

It is hoped that by holding these informal discussions the day before the Ministers' meeting begins, the following organizational matters can be so prepared that they can be quickly disposed of at the opening meeting and that Ministers will be able to proceed with substantive discussions without delay:

(i) Election of Chairman
(ii) Adoption of agenda
(iii) Procedural arrangements and order of business.

Procedural arrangements

At its last meeting the Council engaged in some discussion of procedural arrangements. The Council felt that, in view of the limited time available to Ministers, statements of a general nature should be avoided if at all possible. On the other hand, some Ministers may wish to submit to their colleagues statements concerning their national problems and policies or on the international trade situation in general; such statements could be handed in writing to the secretariat, which would arrange for copies to be distributed.

1After his election the Chairman will deliver a short opening statement. Until this statement has been delivered the meeting will be open to the press and photographers, but thereafter the meeting will proceed in private.
This, however, would not exclude the possibility that Ministers, if they so wish, might combine in one statement their comments and suggestions on the various items on the agenda when speaking to the item in which they are principally interested.

As for the timing of the plenary meetings of Ministers, it was suggested at the last meeting of the Council that these should be of relatively short duration, for example, Ministers might meet for 1\frac{1}{2}-2 hours each morning and afternoon, with the possibility of a third meeting if necessary in the early evening. This would allow time for informal meetings of Ministers and also for meetings of officials to carry out tasks assigned to them by the Ministers and to draft texts as directed for further ministerial consideration.

It is suggested that plenary meetings be held on Thursday, Friday, Monday and Tuesday. If necessary a meeting could be arranged for Saturday morning, but it would be preferable to leave Saturday as well as Sunday free for informal talks among Ministers and for meetings of officials.

Order of business

At the last meeting of the Council a number of less-developed countries requested that the item "Measures for the expansion of trade of developing countries as a means of furthering their economic development", which appears as Item I on the provisional agenda, be the first item to be discussed by Ministers. If this is agreed, it might be suggested, in view of the limited time available, that the Thursday morning and afternoon and Friday morning be allocated for the discussion of this item. Ministers might be invited to take a firm decision that this discussion will not extend beyond noon on Friday, on the understanding that the item will be taken up again on Tuesday to finalize the discussion and to draw up conclusions. If found appropriate, Ministers, at the end of the discussion on Friday morning, might establish a group of officials to prepare drafts for consideration on Tuesday. The Ministers' meetings on Friday afternoon and Monday (and also, if necessary, on Saturday morning) could then be devoted to Items II and III.

Technical facilities will be provided for meetings of officials in Conference Room VII to be held at the same time as plenary meetings of Ministers in the Assembly Hall, if this should be found desirable.

Conduct of the discussions

In submitting the various items of the agenda for consideration the Chairman might propose that the discussions proceed in the following manner.

In submitting Item I to the Ministers the Chairman might analyse the various matters requiring consideration and then invite discussion. At the end of the meeting on Friday morning the Chairman would summarize the trend of the debate and propose further action.

In submitting Items II and III on Friday afternoon the Chairman might suggest that there be a preliminary discussion of the matters submitted in their totality, reserving for Monday the more detailed examination of the various elements.