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

The Central African Republic, a few days ago just became the fiftieth contracting party of the General Agreement. For my country it is a source of great satisfaction to be more closely associated with the activity of this organization at the very time when GATT is becoming more attentive to the problems of the so-called "third world". The Minister of National Economy and Rural Activities, who is very sorry that he personally cannot be attending this meeting, has instructed me to thank you for your welcome, and he has also instructed me to inform you of certain comments and observations with respect to the proposals drawn up by Committee III.

The resources of my country, which has been handicapped because of its geographical situation, are very modest. Our difficulties are overwhelming in trying to have an access to the world market. It has been said of GATT that it was a realistic instrument and a practical one and we hope that it will turn out to be so in the setting up of a programme of which we are expecting fortunate results for the standard of living of a country made up of farmers. However, I must inform you that the measures proposed by Committee III in so far as we are concerned do give rise to certain apprehensions. Of course, it is necessary that action be undertaken among certain industrialized countries who seem to overlook our export problems and who still levy duties...
upon our countries with other fiscal taxes and outmoded charges. These countries seem to be sticking to a point in the history where their products, so-called colonial ones, were reserved for the consumption of the so-called well-to-do classes. But we feel that they are outmoded, and should be replaced by a liberal abolition of barriers, the only remedy to under-development.

In so far as the Central African Republic is concerned, and any other country which has not gotten off the ground economically, the problem of paramount importance is the one of stabilization at the world level of the prices for tropical products. Nothing will be possible so long as there is no guarantee of a fair remuneration for the work done by the African countries.

It is this conviction which has determined the attitude of our delegates in the negotiations we carried out with France as well as with the European Economic Community, and which led to solid agreements. This is an economic and political reality of which GATT must take full account. The attainment of this community of interests has nothing exclusive about it. On the contrary, we look upon it as the first phase towards a broader association.

Parallel efforts have led us on an African level to make our links even closer with our neighbors in the Equatorial Customs Union, and with all our brothers in the African and Malagasy Organization for Economic Co-operation. But we must give these unions the time to strengthen themselves. At present the disproportion of economic forces throughout the world is such that the hasty liberalization of trade would greatly harm our interests.

It is also necessary to take into account that there does exist various degrees in under-development of countries who are affected by the proposed measures. The Central African Republic's economy, in particular, needs much more care than the Brazilian economy or the Nigerian economy. We are at the very beginning of our endeavours in the renovation of our economic framework starting with the diversification of our crops and with the education of a population which is very ill-acquainted with market economy. Now we would have great dangers if these realities were not taken into account. That is why we are fully convinced that within this flexible instrument known as GATT a reasonable solution will be found. We must take into account the impatience of certain countries which are large producers of tropical products who are still subject to obstacles. But we must not forget the concerns of other, more moderate producing countries, who, before considering an expansion of their sales must find a guarantee of a fair price. It would be desirable that we find a constructive solution to the problems of these less well-provided for countries. We devote great importance to the fact that this conference should not end without having a realistic Action Programme adopted within the framework of GATT.

It is with this same spirit in mind that we shall support the proposals made by the Committee in order to carry out rapid structural changes in GATT. This means to start with a change in the text of the Agreement, in particular in the text of Article XVIII.