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

The Minister of Finance, Economic Affairs and Planning, who was to have led my country's delegation to this important GATT Meeting of Ministers, has, to his regret, not been able to attend. He has asked me in the name of the Government and in his own name personally to present his apologies to the meeting.

Speaking on behalf of my Government, I am glad to acknowledge the rôle which GATT has played since its creation in international trading relations between States. We therefore hope that in the near future we shall be in a position to become a contracting party. As representative of a developing country, I would have shared the hope of all the other developing countries that GATT would act to accelerate matters and guide them into another direction; but since the train is on the rails we have every reason to expect matters to follow their course. As some of my friends have said, we think that something must be done to GATT, but I believe that the GATT forum enables the industrialized States as well as those in the process of development to
maintain the contact which, for my part, I consider essential if we want to avoid the worst and all its consequences. While I am glad to acknowledge that the industrialized States have done much, particularly in recent times, for the developing States, may I also note that much remains to be done and that we rely on them to continue to give sincere attention to our problems with a view to helping us to find a solution consonant with the concerns of the world of today.

As regards the preferences granted to eighteen States associated with the European Economic Community, I do not sincerely believe that they run counter to the interests of GATT, particularly since the measures in question are transitional ones to enable these eighteen States to develop and maintain their export earnings, pending the diversification of their production, and stabilized prices on new markets. Despite this situation, we had no hesitation in agreeing to the application by the European Economic Community of certain duty reductions upon the entry into force of the Convention. It was for me a real pleasure to note that over the past four years exports from the associated States to the European Economic Community have risen by 9 per cent, while those from the Latin American States have risen by 36 per cent and those from the African States not associated with the EEC by 16 per cent. This proves that relations exist, are improving and are continuing normally and I am also glad to see this for I find that basically the club is not a closed one, but a club which is developing to the advantage of all.

I should like to congratulate the Special Group on Trade in Tropical Products on the importance of its work here. But I think it desirable that the reports should take account of all aspects of the problem of the developing countries, and in the name of my Government I propose, firstly, that one should examine the possibility of organizing markets for tropical products, with a view to maintaining and developing the earnings of the developing countries. Secondly, that one should give attention, either in GATT or in another institution of the United Nations family, to the stabilization of prices of tropical products in order to protect us from unpleasant surprises on the economic as well as the political level. Thirdly, as everyone can see, we have not clung to these preferences; on the contrary, we believe that they should gradually disappear, having regard to all the interests involved. Fourthly, that the highly industrialized countries should find a formula for creating appropriate conditions to encourage private investments in the developing countries in order to accelerate their development, for we note with regret that confidence is lacking. Now, the industrialized States must help us to win that confidence, and must encourage their private investors to take an interest in the developing countries.

Those were the few remarks which I wished to make in the name of my Government regarding the first item on our agenda. I trust that the committee to be established will find a solution that takes account of all the interests involved.