My delegation welcomes the fact that this important topic of the relationship between environmental measures and trade is again being discussed at this meeting of the Council. We are particularly satisfied that the informal consultations conducted since last February have now enabled us to deal with this issue with more and better background information, as indicated by the recent outline of points for a structured debate resulting from those consultations. The prospects for our future work in this area seem much more favourable now than a few months ago, which is a very good thing. GATT, and its members, must clarify, specify and regulate the interrelationship between trade and the environment. The need to overcome the apparent incompatibility between the two issues and work towards a peaceful and fruitful coexistence between them becomes clearer every day.

Mexico has supported the consultations that have been held. Thanks to them it has been possible to begin the discussion, at least as regards form, dispelling misunderstanding or suspicion. We shall soon be discussing these topics in full, with a broader, fuller and more structured view of the relationship between trade and the environment.

My delegation is in favour of these issues - the relationship between trade and environment - being discussed within a Working Group. To that end, however, we must find the appropriate form and time. If we are to take up this problem, we must do so properly, and that requires solid and sound progress, and therefore a favourable time and context.

With regard to the substance of the issue, it is worth recalling that for the time being we have materials that will guide our work in the right direction: I have already referred to the outline of points for a structured debate, and a number of delegations have already contributed useful, high-quality texts.

There is a need to generate further materials and learn what other organizations - multilateral, governmental, ecological and academic - have produced. In this connection, during the discussion of this issue both in the past and during this Council, we have heard suggestions that we endorse: the GATT secretariat should prepare technical background notes and engage in a work of compilation. In particular, there must be close co-ordination and a permanent exchange of information with the secretariat of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.
All these inputs will add to our store of materials, and help us to situate ourselves in the current context of the problem, without forgetting that our responsibilities are in themselves limited by the contractual relationship that binds us under the General Agreement.

The objective is not to create commitments and fit them into the framework of the General Agreement. That is not our job in this forum. On the contrary, what we must seek to do is, within the framework of the GATT itself, better to define and manage rationally and equitably the various provisions of the General Agreement which cater for ecological measures, or should do so. We must try to scotch the idea that GATT is structurally anti-ecological, as I have heard it said.

Finally, the delegation of Mexico considers that, for the time being, it would be productive to continue this structured debate under the auspices of the Council, as it will smooth our future work by averting procedural discussions. Nevertheless, to avoid this being construed as procrastination, we propose that specific dates be set so that at the meeting of the Council in September or October of this year, in other words—when we share a clearer idea about the complexity and scope of this issue, and have the technical studies requested from the Secretariat and from other sources, we should then examine in detail the steps to be taken for the future. At that time, during that discussion we could, for example, take a decision as to the most appropriate terms of reference and purposes of the Working Group. The GATT Council should send a clear signal to the outside world that its members have the political will to face up to their responsibilities with regard to this problem.