The Working Party might be tempted to conclude from the statement made by the Belgian delegation on the need to maintain protective measures for the products for which they are requesting a waiver that Belgium is faced by a structural problem which could not be solved within a brief period. In fact, Belgium has never affirmed that it would definitely renounce any alternative protective or quota measures, whilst still retaining the hope that they would not need to have recourse to them in most cases. From this point of view it seems possible that a solution for the problems of a structural character can be found within the period requested.

If the waiver were granted, Belgium would have respite essential to enable it to obtain the agreement of public opinion and interested producers to either the necessary measures to make Belgian agricultural prices competitive with Netherlands prices and others, or to alternative measures of protection. In this connexion it must be stressed that the Belgian Government has here and now established the essentials of the legislative and administrative machinery required for the achievement of the objective. To this end, it has obtained the ratification by Parliament of the Benelux Agricultural Protocols of 1947 and 1950 which institute a particular system for trade within Benelux for a certain number of products, whilst stressing its transitory character.

The Benelux Committee on the harmonization of agricultural policies has been instituted and has begun its work. This Committee has been charged with the annual submission to governments of proposals concerning the measures to take for the following year. In addition, and this is the essential factor, the Belgian Government in obtaining a favourable vote for the law instituting the Agricultural Fund has received the powers required to permit it to carry out whatever undertakings it might make towards the CONTRACTING PARTIES. This law provides the framework within which executive measures of an administrative character can be taken and assures the necessary financial resources. Attention should particularly be drawn to the fact that the law instituting the Agricultural Fund represents an important turning-point in Belgian agricultural policy and breaks with the firmly entrenched traditions in this matter.