It is in my capacity as representative of the country presiding over the Council of the European Communities that I am taking the floor on the occasion of this twentieth anniversary of GATT to refer to the work accomplished by our organization since its inception and to present some considerations as to what its future task might be.

This year, 1967, also marks the tenth anniversary of the EEC; and I mention the date because in our opinion there are close links between the two events. Indeed, without the brave endeavours launched in the context of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade in furtherance of liberalization and multilateralization of trade, it would have been much more difficult to arrive at more advanced stages of regional integration such as that attained by the EEC and those that have been achieved or are in course of achievement in other regional groupings. I would like to stress in this connexion that so far as the European Economic Community is concerned, the existence of rules and principles established in the context of GATT and accepted by all the member States has constituted a common basis enabling us gradually to shape a common approach to problems of trade policy.

At the present time, the General Agreement is the only legal instrument that, in a set of rules, defines the criteria to be observed in the field of international trade, and yet it has managed to keep these rules sufficiently flexible so that they can be adjusted to the constant evolution of the basic components of international trade. The keynotes of the system instituted by the General Agreement are the principle of most-favoured-nation treatment, the principle of non-discrimination but also the principle of consultation in the event that problems arise and the possibility of having recourse to waivers in special situations. It is without doubt because of this pragmatic and realistic approach that in very numerous cases GATT has been able to afford a mutually satisfactory solution to the diverse problems with which it has been confronted.
Of course, it has not been possible to attain all the objectives set forth in the General Agreement and many problems still remain to be solved. Nonetheless, I believe that we can look with some pride on the work already accomplished.

The five rounds of tariff negotiations held between 1947 and 1961 made a substantial contribution to the progressive lowering of customs barriers of the participating countries. As for the Kennedy Round to which we have bent all our energies in the past several years, I think we must recognize that it was a major undertaking and a major success. Far from constituting a negative element, the fact that the negotiations were protracted and sometimes difficult must be considered as proof of the serious manner in which all concessions that could be envisaged were discussed and of the detailed manner in which the various aspects of international trade were examined. It is beyond doubt that the negotiations afforded an occasion for confrontations of ideas that will prove to have been fertile for the future, even if in some cases they have not yielded immediate results.

Here again, it is probably one of the very positive characteristics of GATT that each step forward, each measure taken has been sufficiently well weighed and concerted beforehand so as to preclude any subsequent and larger step backwards. We hope that this method, based on the general concurrence of the Contracting Parties, will be continued in future.

After these brief remarks, I should like to present a few considerations concerning the future activities of our organization. Before taking up that item of our agenda, however, I should like to address a few words to the Director-General. I believe that everyone here is well aware that it is largely due to the person who has directed the secretariat of our organization since its creation that GATT has become what it is today. We all remember how, in situations where the success of the Contracting Parties' activities was hanging by a thread, the Director-General was able to guide their efforts to a successful conclusion, through the wisdom of his suggestions.

On this twentieth anniversary of GATT, we should like to express to Mr. Wyndham White our heartfelt gratitude.

In considering what the task of our organization should be in coming years, I should like first of all to mention the safeguard and consolidation of what has already been achieved. The task is far less modest than it may seem at first sight. It is almost to be expected that the scope of the tariff reductions negotiated in the Kennedy Round, taken together with the inevitable fluctuations in international economic life, should give rise everywhere, in both large and small countries, to reactions from one or other sector of the economy desirous of obtaining additional protection. It will, therefore, be a considerable task for our organization to help and encourage us all, at government level, to withstand such pressures and the facile temptations that recourse to such measures
might seem to afford. What would be the use of the considerable efforts made in the past few years with a view to implementation of the 1958 action programme and to the success of the Kennedy Round, if the result of these efforts was not consolidated and if new trade restrictions were to be introduced in one form or another, or if remaining restrictions were to be made more stringent? Only to the extent that the results of these efforts are definitively assured will it be possible to envisage new initiatives at a subsequent stage.

A second category of problems concerns possibilities for new activities by the Contracting Parties. Here we are in agreement with those who consider that we must maintain our organization's forward momentum, and we recognize that in order to do so it is not sufficient simply to safeguard what has been achieved. On the other hand, however, we must also be very realistic: we have just made a great effort in the context of the Kennedy Round and I believe that we have all, so to speak, exploited to the full the negotiating possibilities that were open to us. Furthermore, we do not yet have any practical data as to what repercussions the implementation of the reciprocal concessions granted in the Kennedy Round will have on overall economic equilibrium.

We believe, therefore, that at this juncture one should above all reflect on and study what lines of action we might subsequently embark on, and this on the basis of the most concrete data possible. Only such thorough and detailed studies can equip us for seeking new lines of action in a subsequent stage.

The major topics that should be covered by such studies are already familiar to you: our Director-General has outlined them on several occasions and in addition I believe that the guiding principle should be, at least in the initial stage, not to be too restrictive and not to limit the field of work of those who will be called upon to carry out these studies, from the technical aspect.

Delegations of contracting parties are still continuing their consultations as to the possible orientation of GATT activities in this field. Consequently, I should merely like to give you an outline of the approach envisaged by the Community.

In the industrial field, it seems to us that the discussion that has already taken place at this session on item 3 of the agenda has shown clearly that studies of the post-Kennedy tariff situation should, a priori, not exclude any problem. It therefore seems to us important at this meeting to reach agreement on the principle of such a study and to leave the various GATT bodies to see to it that the study is carried out in the best possible conditions. The same approach seems to us to have emerged from the Contracting Parties' discussion on non-tariff measures. There too, it would be desirable to make a comprehensive and precise inventory that could serve as a basis for the future work of the GATT bodies.
Where the agricultural sector is concerned, there is no need to emphasize - and the unfolding of the Kennedy Round showed this - how interdependent and how delicate the problems are. I should merely like to stress that one must be assured that the Contracting Parties take full account of this. In such a spirit, the Community is prepared to take an active part in whatever activities are defined.

Turning to the trade of developing countries, I should like to state once again that these problems must rank high in the whole future programme of action of our organization. This does not mean that we should allow ourselves to neglect the efforts being made in other institutions or that, under the pretext that an important conference is in course of preparation and will be held early next year, we should neglect the possibilities for action in the domain of GATT. One possible line of action has already been brought out during the session, namely to intensify the activities of the International Trade Centre in order to assist developing countries to take full advantage of the concessions granted in the Kennedy Round. Furthermore, we believe that the proposed establishment of a joint GATT/UNCTAD Trade Centre deserves full support. We also believe that the initiative taken by developing countries to explore the possibilities of an exchange of tariff and trade concessions is an auspicious one. We hope that the negotiations to take place between these countries will rapidly yield mutually satisfactory solutions. Lastly, it goes without saying that in the studies envisaged, on a wider plain by all contracting parties, special attention must be given to specific problems indicated by developing countries.

In these brief remarks, I have tried to indicate what the Community believes to be a suitable outline for GATT's work programme. The problem before us today is essentially a problem of method: how should we embark on such studies effectively, in such a way that when the time comes they can afford concrete suggestions as to new activities that the Contracting Parties might agree to undertake in the field of international trade.