We, the Ceylon delegation are very sorry to inform this high-level meeting that our own Minister of Commerce and Trade was unable at the last moment to attend this final phase of the twenty-fourth session of GATT. I know personally he was keen on attending and was making every endeavour to do so but matters of urgent importance have precluded him at the last moment from coming to Geneva. The urgency is confirmed by the fact that our Minister of Agriculture and Food who was leading our delegation to the Food and Agriculture Organization Conference in Rome also returned to Ceylon before the termination of that Conference.

I need hardly emphasize the importance of GATT to Ceylon. Its proceedings are followed with the greatest attention and discussions on trade and tariff matters at the highest levels are often punctuated by the observation: "Is it in conformity with GATT" or "What would GATT have to say".

GATT has throughout its existence been treated by Ceylon as an important vehicle for international commercial policy. Indeed, Ceylon is one of a few developing countries who were founder members of the GATT. As I remember hearing the distinguished Minister of Economic Affairs for the Netherlands indicating yesterday that GATT was not intended to be a rich man's club. It was primarily intended to bring order out of chaos in international trade. Still the accidents of history have tended to make GATT a policy forum from which the major industrialized nations have derived greater benefit than countries primarily dependent on agricultural products and the developing countries.

The GATT has been alive to this imbalance in its operations and has from time to time attempted to redress the balance through Ministerial decisions and other initiatives which have helped in some measure to strengthen those areas of the GATT where such weaknesses existed. The process of reconstruction of the GATT has however not been as satisfactory as it could have been although the problems of developing countries have been recognized and the importance of increased access to markets in the industrialized countries has been given some consideration in the GATT.
It is heartening to note from the observations of the delegates of the developed countries and from the observations of the secretariat, at least the concern that the developed countries are showing towards the problems of the developing countries.

Another matter of importance in connexion with the recent history of GATT is the increasing interest that the countries with centrally planned economies have shown in the work of GATT. All countries I am certain welcome this new phase in the development of GATT.

A review of the work of the CONTRACTING PARTIES during the last two decades cannot be complete without a reference to the very important part played by the Director-General, Mr. Wyndham White, in the build-up and navigation of this international organization - GATT. On behalf of the Government of my country, Ceylon, my delegation expresses its sincere appreciation of the tremendous work he has done in the cause of international trade.

If I might make a few observations on the future work of GATT, the Kennedy Round had as one of its objectives the expansion of trade of the developing countries. However, as the distinguished Minister for Foreign Affairs for Denmark pointed out its results were considerably short of the expectations of these countries. Urgent and concerted action by the international community is therefore required to deal with the pressing problems of developing countries.

The honourable Minister for Trade of Canada, at the very outset of this high-level meeting brought into sharp focus the relationship between trade and aid and the somewhat illogical application of these concepts. As he very rightly pointed out the granting of aid which is intended to see the developing countries through their difficulties would be vitiated by the creation or the maintenance of barriers to trade whether they be tariffs or quantitative restrictions, internal duties, mixing regulations, price support schemes and the like, all of which inhibit the flow of trade from the less-developed to the industrialized countries.

Studies have been proposed during the last two weeks in the discussions of the CONTRACTING PARTIES of the problems facing the developing countries. What is more important is that these studies should be directed at finding solutions to these problems urgently.

In this connexion the developing countries met recently in Algiers and outlined a programme of action which they considered was necessary on the part of the international community if they were to emerge from the morass of under-development. This Charter of Algiers is we hope receiving the active consideration of the international community and we hope that meaningful negotiations will take place in New Delhi early next year. The GATT we feel has a vital rôle
as an instrument of international trade which would enable the developing countries to augment and strengthen their development and raise their standards of living. Many of the suggestions at Algiers had their origin in the GATT forum and it is but right that the CONTRACTING PARTIES show the way in tackling with imagination and courage the problems of trade of the developing countries.

Specific measures of action have been considered in great detail in the GATT and other international organizations. The CONTRACTING PARTIES themselves have at this session exercised their minds in delineating a programme of future work of the GATT in the field of industry, agriculture and the trade of developing countries. The statements that have been made so far at this high-level meeting confirms that while major new initiatives in the industrial sector may be premature, both the agricultural sector and the trade of developing countries require the immediate attention of the CONTRACTING PARTIES.

I shall merely enumerate some of the lines of action which in our view require the immediate attention of the CONTRACTING PARTIES in so far as they relate to the developing countries. Firstly, we would invite the developed countries to implement in favour of the developing countries without phasing and with effect from January 1968, the concessions negotiated in the Kennedy Round on items of export interest to the developing countries. Secondly, the CONTRACTING PARTIES should address themselves to those matters on which the developing countries did not obtain satisfaction during the Kennedy Round including the question of deeper tariff cuts. Thirdly, tariff and non-tariff barriers which impede access to the markets of the developed countries and which are of interest to the developing countries should be eliminated. Very serious consideration should be given to the removal of internal taxes on tropical products. Fourthly, we support the reactivation of the group on tropical products to examine in depth the particular problems both of a tariff and non-tariff nature and other restrictive practices deliberate or incidental which affect the trade in these products.

The question of preferences for the developing countries by the developed countries will be considered very carefully at the Second Session of UNCTAD in New Delhi. This will also include the examination of the ways and means of providing compensation for such developing countries as currently enjoy preferences in certain industrialized countries. The CONTRACTING PARTIES would, we consider, have to address themselves to whatever decisions that may emerge from the New Delhi meeting.

The International Trade Centre has, during the four years of its existence, performed an admirable service to the developing countries in their search for export opportunities. We welcome the creation of the joint GATT/UNCTAD Trade Centre. It is an imaginative and positive move anticipating the further export opportunities that we hope will emerge from the New Delhi meeting.
Solutions to the problems of developing countries are being sought in a number of forums and we do not consider that there is any conflict of interest. Indeed, the cross-fertilization of ideas through mutual co-operation among institutions would throw up new techniques and concepts, new approaches and attitudes directed at the needs of development through trade.

New ground has been broken with the inclusion of Part IV of the Agreement - what is required is the political will to infuse life into this Part in order to transform the GATT into a truly dynamic instrument of international trade policy.