

24 June 1955

SPEECH BY MR. DANA L. WILGRISS, CHAIRMAN OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES
VILLA "LE BOCAGE", FRIDAY, 24 JUNE 1955

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today I have a most happy duty to perform, namely to proclaim the establishment of the headquarters of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade in this splendid villa. In spite of one or two temporary migrations to such places as Torquay and Annecy, Geneva has always been the centre of GATT activities and it is appropriate that a permanent headquarters for GATT has now been established here.

In its original form the Villa "Le Bocage" dates from the 18th century but it was enlarged about 150 years ago and that is how it remains today. For over 70 years the property was associated with the de Sellon family and during that time a number of historical figures stayed here. In 1826 the Duke of Orleans - the future Louis Philippe - was received here and a great ball was given in his honour. Later in the century Count Leon Tolstoy stayed here, and in 1872 Don Carlos, pretender to the Spanish throne, came here for two years.

Before I hand over the keys of the house to Mr. Wyndham White, I would like to thank publicly the Genevese authorities for the generous help they have given which has enabled the GATT to establish its headquarters in this house. I should also like to thank the United Nations, and particularly the European Office, which made possible the reconditioning of the property and its leasing to the GATT. I would also like to add a special note of thanks to all those who worked so hard to transform the house to the needs of the secretariat - the surveyors, architects, technicians and workmen, not to mention the enthusiastic participation of Mr. Renn and his staff.

And now I have much pleasure in formally handing over the keys of the house to Mr. Wyndham White.