

END OF THE THIRTEENTH GATT SESSION

The thirty-seven contracting parties to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) ended their Thirteenth Session at Geneva today with new decisions that international action is needed to stimulate world trade. The conference agreed on a programme of common action in three key areas of international trade - tariff reduction, obstacles to expansion of trade resulting from national agricultural protective policies, and the export problems of under-developed countries. Three committees have been set up to carry out this programme and they will start work early in 1959. (See Communiqué issued on 22 November.)

During the Thirteenth Session it was agreed to hold two sessions a year in future, in view of the increasing responsibilities undertaken by the Contracting Parties, and to deal with urgent matters between sessions through an intersessional committee.

The conference agreed to discuss some form of association between Yugoslavia and the Contracting Parties to GATT, and also agreed to the provisional participation of Switzerland and Cambodia in the General Agreement.

The Contracting Parties approved the approach regarding the European Economic Community which had been developed at the meeting of the Intersessional Committee in April-May 1958, with reference to the problems inherent in the association of overseas territories with the European Common Market. Generally, this approach recognizes that the details of a number of important features of the Treaty of Rome remain to be decided by the institutions of the Community and that it is not possible at this time to examine the terms of the Treaty in relation to the relevant provisions of the General Agreement. The Contracting Parties therefore agreed, without prejudice to the legal questions which may arise, that consultations shall take place between the Community and those contracting parties who believe that their trade may be damaged, or threatened with damage, as the result of specific measures decided on by the Community. Under the general consultative provision of Article XXII, consultations were begun at this Session on the problems of trade in coffee, tea, cocoa, tobacco, sugar and bananas which may arise out of the development of the Community. These consultations will continue.

The Contracting Parties agreed on procedures for the first series of annual consultations which the revised provisions of the Agreement require to be held with countries maintaining import restrictions to conserve foreign exchange. These consultations will be held next year with sixteen of those countries.

The Contracting Parties continued their discussion with the Federal Republic of Germany on dismantling its remaining import restrictions. During the current discussions the Federal Republic announced the end of restrictions on a variety of agricultural products. German restrictions on a number of industrial products will be removed on 1 January 1959; most others are scheduled to be removed by 1 January 1960. Consultations, under the terms of Article XXII, between the Federal Republic and countries whose trade is affected by the German import restrictions will be undertaken in the near future.

On the subject of adjustments in customs tariffs the Contracting Parties agreed to allow Peru to maintain temporarily, as an emergency measure, increases in duties which had been the subject of GATT concessions. The Contracting Parties established a Tariff Negotiations Committee to steer the various renegotiations on which Cuba expects soon to embark in connexion with its current tariff revision. The Session also approved the text of a Protocol to embody the results of the tariff negotiations conducted with Brazil, when completed.

The rules of procedure were altered so that the Chairman and two Vice-Chairmen will serve for one year from the close, not the start, of the session at which they are elected.

The Contracting Parties decided to appoint a group of governmental experts to study and make recommendations concerning restrictive business practices in international trade. The Contracting Parties will consider their report in 1960.

As at previous sessions the Contracting Parties discussed problems encountered in the disposal of agricultural surpluses, particularly the impact of the United States disposal programmes, and stressed the need for adequate consultation procedures.

The Contracting Parties received and examined reports on waivers of GATT obligations granted at previous sessions. They also dealt with a few trade problems under the conciliation procedures.

The Contracting Parties will hold their Fourteenth Session at Geneva, opening in May 1959, and their Fifteenth Session at Tokyo, opening on 26 October 1959.