At our meeting in Geneva in May 1963 it was agreed that a significant liberalization of world trade was desirable and that for this purpose there should be comprehensive trade negotiations beginning on 4 May 1964. We have now reached that date and the meeting we are beginning today marks the formal opening of these trade negotiations or of the Kennedy Round as we all know them. This is a day for history. What is agreed upon in these negotiations will set the pattern of international trade for many years to come. It is a great opportunity. If seized with courage and imagination we can establish the basis for a period of further expansion and prosperity for the whole world.

When we met last year it was our hope that by now it would have been possible to have elaborated a trade negotiating plan. While much progress has been made in this task agreement has not been reached yet on many important elements in the plan, and I would cite in particular the question of tariff disparities and the rules regarding agriculture. This is disappointing and it would be foolish to pretend otherwise. However, we have found that in the course of trying to elaborate negotiating rules we have inevitably been led into some of the basic issues which need to be resolved in the negotiations themselves. Now as we pass from this stage of preparation into the stage of negotiation it must be our first task to resolve the outstanding issues, many of which are at the very heart of the negotiations.

Last year we set the sights very high. We envisaged a degree of liberalization of world trade greatly exceeding in depth and scope anything ever achieved or even attempted before. Now that the negotiations are formally engaged we must bend ourselves to this task with renewed energy and with a determination to overcome the problems and difficulties that will confront us. There is no
ned for me to underline the political and economic significance of these negotiations and the challenge which they present to the whole concept of international economic co-operation of the sort that we have developed together over the years through the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. A heavy responsibility lies upon us all to bring these negotiations to a successful conclusion; it would be a fitting tribute to the noble statesman whose name these negotiations bear if all the governments represented here brought to this enterprise the political will that is necessary to ensure this success.