

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY

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Extracts from M. Jean Rey's speech on behalf of the  
EEC at the opening session of the Kennedy round,  
Geneva, May 4, 1964

Here we are, gathered together on the date scheduled for the opening of the most important of the tariff conferences held under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. The European Economic Community is glad that the phase of preparatory discussions is over and that we are coming to the heart of the negotiations.

Like all the other participants in this major undertaking, the EEC expects great things of these negotiations: we attach great value to them.

In our view the Kennedy round, to give it the name by which everybody knows it, must achieve four objectives, each of which is of considerable importance:

1. It must bring about a substantial reduction in the obstacles to world trade.
2. It must lead to a better organization of world markets in farm products and to the development of agricultural trade.
3. It must make a contribution towards solving the problems of trade inside Europe.
4. Last but not least, it must create better conditions for the exports of the developing countries.

These are great aims. As the conference opens we must set them before us to guide our actions and encourage our efforts.

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The problems we have to resolve are of considerable extent and complexity. So we must not be surprised that the preparatory work for the conference has taken so long and revealed so many difficulties.

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It would have been surprising if this had not been the case. Some knotty problems, such as exceptions and non-tariff barriers, have hardly been touched upon. We must not be surprised or upset about this. Still less should we call in question the success of the whole operation whenever we come across an unresolved difficulty. It will only be possible to work out comprehensive solutions and the necessary compromises as the negotiations take their course, and when all the problems have been explored.

The European Economic Community approaches these negotiations with the firm desire to make a substantial contribution to their success. The Community is fully aware, as a major participant and, to use technical language, as a "key country", of its responsibility in this respect.

It was the Community, you may remember, which, drawing on its experience of the Treaty of Rome, suggested the procedure on which the present conference is based - linear reduction of tariffs - as long ago as 1960. We believe in the value of this method, the benefits of which we have felt, and although we shall doubtless have to get down to specific cases in order to resolve problems such as exceptions or what remains at issue on disparities, this does not at all mean that the Community intends to fall back on the item-by-item approach.

The Community has also accepted the 50% across-the-board reduction as a basis to work on. The final result will naturally depend on all the decisions taken in the other elements of the negotiations.

Lastly, the Community has proposed a new approach to agricultural problems. We hope to convince our partners that our proposals are realistic and effective. The Community is not unaware that it still has its own mind to make up in this matter, and it will bend all its political energies to reaching decisions in good time.

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We often hear people ask how long the negotiations will last. At the moment, it is difficult to say. The problems we have to face are many, and unexpected difficulties may still crop up. The EEC Commission thinks, however, that the whole of 1964 should be devoted to a parallel exploration of all the factors arising in the negotiations: tariffs, exceptions, agriculture, non-tariff obstacles, aid to the developing countries. We must all join forces to ensure that by the end of the year all these problems have been examined

and that sufficient progress has been made for decisions to be taken. We could then devote the first half of next year to working out comprehensive solutions and technical and political compromises so that the negotiations can be brought to a close in about the summer of 1965.

Is this a realistic time-table? The Commission, as the Community's negotiator, believes so. It will spare no effort to see that the time-table is observed, as far as lies within its power.

Once again, on behalf of the EEC, I should like to say what great store we set by the success of these negotiations and how important we think it is that they should come to a satisfactory conclusion. To bring the Kennedy round safely into port is not only the duty of us all, it is also the last and best tribute we can pay to the memory of the great statesman whose name the negotiations bear and whose death was such a great loss not only to our American friends but to all who believe in the worth and in the future of the free world.

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