

Ministerial meeting of the EFTA Council, London, 27th-28th June, 1961

Extracts from the London Communiqué concerning the EFTA-EEC's relations

The aim of the European Free Trade Association has been, from the outset not only to create a free market between its members but ultimately also to achieve the economic integration of Europe as a whole in the form of a single European market comprising 300 million consumers, following liberal policies towards the outside world. This purpose is stated in the Stockholm Convention and has been reaffirmed at every Ministerial Meeting since July 1959. Ministers agreed that a generally increased awareness of the dangers of the present split in Europe has led to signs of willingness to make a new effort to bring to an end the division which during recent years has become an obstacle to European economic co-operation. An ending of this division would enable the European countries to give their full attention to the serious problems of economic relations between Europe and the rest of the world and in particular the relationship between Western Europe as an industrialised region and the developing countries of other continents. A new effort to bring to an end this European division will necessitate a readiness to make some modification of policy on all sides, but it must respect the basic political positions not only of the several states of Europe, but also of the European Economic Community.

Experience gained in recent years has provided a basis for a re-examination of the problems of European integration. This re-examination has shown that while some EFTA countries could not accept obligations of a political nature, all members of EFTA are willing to undertake, in order to achieve an integrated European market, obligations which go beyond those which they have accepted among themselves in the Stockholm Convention.

Ministers agreed that the aim of any solution must be to promote unity and solidarity in Europe; to strengthen the European economy and to build an integrated market upon solid and permanent foundations. To this end, Ministers agreed that there must be effective institutions to supervise the implementation of undertakings necessary to achieve a solution acceptable to all parties.

Ministers considered whether their common objective - a single European market embracing all the members of EFTA - could be achieved by way of negotiation for membership of, or association with the European Economic Community. They concluded that it was premature to judge whether this was possible or was likely to be successful. They decided to re-examine the question at their next meeting.

Ministers agreed that if such a course should then appear possible the members of EFTA should co-ordinate their actions and remain united throughout the negotiations. Ministers resolved that the European Free Trade Association, the obligations created by the Convention between the members and the momentum towards integration within the Association would be maintained at least until satisfactory arrangements have been worked out in negotiations to meet the various legitimate interests of all members of EFTA, and thus enable them all to participate from the same date in an integrated European market. They agreed that a partial solution which created new economic divisions within Western Europe could not in any circumstances be regarded as satisfactory.

