

Statement by Walter Hallstein (4 June 1964)

Caption: Statement by Walter Hallstein, President of the Commission of the European Economic Community, on the occasion of the signing of the Trade Agreement with Israel on 4 June 1964. After more than two years of negotiations conducted by the Commission on behalf of the Community, the Community signs its second trade agreement with Israel.

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Statement by Walter Hallstein, President of the Commission of the European Economic Community, on the occasion of the signing of the Trade Agreement with Israel on 4 June 1964

Your Excellencies, Gentlemen,

We have just brought to completion a task that has kept us extremely busy for more than two years. The Commission of the European Economic Community, too, is, sincerely delighted with this agreement; and sees in it a promise for the development of our mutual relations: it is well aware that what we have in common and what binds us together goes to the deepest roots of our being. Was not Israel one of the first countries to assume diplomatic relations with the Community, and thus to recognise it not only in international law, but also as a reality pointing to the future?

For the European Economic Community, the Agreement signed today with Israel – our second trade agreement – is further proof that we are in earnest with the promises contained in the Preamble and in the body of the Treaty of Rome to the effect that the Community will contribute to the progressive abolition of restrictions on international economic relations and will promote trade with non-member countries. It also shows that we are standing by our worldwide obligations, notably those contained in the GATT rules.

We believe that it is fair to claim that the results of our work are satisfactory. We know, of course, that the Agreement does not fulfil all the wishes of our Israeli partners. In assessing the result, however, it should not be forgotten that the negotiations brought us up against problems that were particularly intractable because, at any rate on the Community side, they were completely novel and raised questions of principle going beyond the specific issues involved. This Agreement is also one of the initial achievements of our Community and, as the German proverb has it, "All beginnings are difficult". The Israeli delegation has earned our gratitude for the great understanding it has shown of these problems. Its realistic, attitude doubtless made a substantial contribution to the success of the negotiations.

If I say that we can be satisfied with the results I do so because it is thanks to hard thinking on both sides and to the Member States' readiness to make concessions that we have eventually succeeded in working out what is, taken all in all, a quite considerable list of Community concessions to Israel. But it should not be deduced from this that the Agreement is a gift from the Community. Article 5 contains a declaration by the Israeli Government that it will give favourable consideration to any desire of the Community that Israel should facilitate imports from the Six; we also have the possibility of bringing up our problems in the Mixed Commission set up by the Agreement. Above all, however, we are convinced that, by improving the conditions for Israeli exports and thus easing Israel's foreign currency situation, the Agreement will contribute in the longer run to a growth in Israeli imports and therefore to better chances for Community exports. This notion is expressed in the Preamble to the Agreement, which states that the Contracting Parties desire to lay the foundations for the progressive development of trade.

I therefore have every reason to associate myself with what the President of the Council has said and to thank you, Madame Meir and Mr. Gevrin and the entire Israeli Government, both for myself and on behalf of the Commission, for your contribution to the success of the negotiations. Not least I thank Ambassador Najar, who, as leader of the delegation, had sometimes to cope with very difficult situations, for the friendly atmosphere which, thanks to his personal influence, distinguished the negotiations. My thanks go to all the members of the Israeli delegation, who have hammered out the principles of this Agreement with great ingenuity and tireless assiduity. I should also like to thank the representatives of the Member States and of the Commission working in the Community delegation for their fruitful efforts to bring this Agreement into being.

Lastly, I, too, would like on behalf of the Commission, to express sincere good wishes for the future welfare and good fortunes of your country.