

Madam Chair,

First a word to our hosts, our dear Kenyan friends: Minister Amina Mohamed - it is wonderful to be here . For many of us it is the first opportunity to visit Africa, a remarkable continent with a huge potential for development, and it is a wonderful experience. Many thanks for the warm hospitality!

Ladies and gentlemen, for a small island-like economy as Israel, navigating through the deep changes that are currently taking place in the world of trade is challenging. These are times of uncertainty. With the regional mega trade deals and with the proliferation of other FTAs, the focus, -- whether we like it or not, and regardless of one's position on the matter -- seems to be shifting from the multilateral arena to other negotiating platforms.

But at this point in which we mark 20 years of intensive activity at the WTO, we feel it is important to remind ourselves what an immense achievement this organization and the current set of agreements embody. I believe Israel serves as a good example for the benefits of open, free and stable global markets, becoming in the course of the last 2 decades a very active participant in some of the world's leading global value chains. We sometimes take it for granted, but one can easily imagine a global setting where this would not have been possible. We should keep this in mind when looking to the road ahead.

Israel has supported all the attempts to come to a comprehensive agreement of the DDA, including the recent attempts around the 2008 texts, and we sincerely regret that we couldn't come to a meaningful outcome. As it became clear in recent months that the DDA impasse is not likely to reach a breakthrough, some voices were calling for a period of reflection, and for focusing, at least in the meanwhile, on the impressive daily work at the WTO at monitoring and brokering the current set of agreements. Admittedly, we are concerned with what this voices might imply for the negotiating function of the WTO. A working platform for negotiating new multilateral agreements is for us a strategic need. Moreover, we believe it is a key function of this organization, and we are concerned that without it the WTO would gradually lose its relevance.

This concern has led us to adopt a practical approach embracing all platforms that have the potential to be fruitful. This is also why we have joined all the recent plurilateral initiatives, even sometimes without significant commercial interest on our side. We believe these initiatives need to become building blocks contributing to the multi-lateral trading system, not replacing it.

To conclude, we strongly believe in this organization and its key role in our world. We are committed to negotiating within the WTO framework, taking into consideration developing countries' concerns. We also remain ambitious and forward looking, and we are convinced that with 20 years of WTO's legacy in mind, we should continue to look for consensus wherever it could be found.

Thank you Mr. Chairman

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