



**Statement by H.E. Abeer Odeh
Minister of National Economy
to the 10th Session of the WTO Ministerial Conference**

[Thank you, Chair / Mr Chairman / Madam Chairperson]

Excellences, ladies and gentlemen,

This is the fifth time Palestine participates in a session of the Ministerial Conference as an *ad hoc* observer. It is our hope that our participation in future sessions will come as a result of our observership in the General Council.

Excellences, ladies and gentlemen,

Palestine is a trading nation, and proud of it. Our market is open, and our economy is fairly liberal. We believe in trade as a win-win proposition; not only for consumers and producers, importers and exporters, but also a force for good when it comes to sustainable development, the protection of the environment, climate change mitigation and adaptation, gender equality, and – not least! – peace, stability and security.

We also believe in the power of rules and the value of discipline. Palestine is already bound by many international trade rules through its bilateral and regional trade agreements. Many of their provisions integrate WTO disciplines. WTO is a good friend to us.

Our producers, farmers, traders and service providers are keen to see Palestine integrated into the Multilateral Trading System. There is no reason why their economy should stand apart. Palestine is not a special case. The WTO is about the facilitation of trade on the basis of agreed global disciplines. No trade-regulating government should remain outside of this system, which aspires to global coverage.

We are committed to our bilateral trade relations with partners and neighbours. But we are keen to diversify our trade in services, goods and ideas. Progressive integration into the Multilateral Trading System will provide a basis for putting our trade on a healthy, normal footing, avoiding artificial dependencies and



imbalances. Observership – and at some point: accession – are logical priority objectives for the Palestinian government. This will be a win-win also for our bilateral partners.

Over the past years we have undertaken serious steps to develop a modern trade policy. We have established a National Export Strategy; we have established regulatory and negotiating capacity on trade; we have worked heavily on customs modernisation and trade facilitation; and on intellectual property – to name just a few. Efforts are under way to formulate a comprehensive trade policy and upgrade our National Quality Infrastructure. But there is more to be done.

What we need now is to establish Observership in the General Council, and send a signal that we are serious in our efforts to ensure predictability of rights and obligations for our businesses not only in our market but also in your markets.

Let me be very clear: Palestine's interest in the WTO is genuine, profound and driven by economic considerations. We want to be part of the rules-based global trade system, nothing more, nothing less, because this is good for us and for everyone else.

Excellences, ladies and gentlemen,

At times when values are shaken, people flee their countries, and destructive ideologies reign supreme, in my region more than elsewhere, we need to provide hope and the prospect of sheer normality to our young generation. The WTO can play an important role in this.

Let me conclude by extending my government's congratulations to Liberia and Afghanistan for their accession. Their success is an inspiration to all of us still outside the WTO.

Finally: Thank you Kenya for a wonderful Ministerial!