

State of Palestine

Statement by H.E. Abeer Odeh

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The 11th Session of the WTO Ministerial Conference

Buenos Aires 10-13 December, 2017

Madam Chair, Excellences, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to represent the State of Palestine at MC11. Please allow me first to congratulate you, Madam chair, on your election to preside over this Conference. I greet you all on behalf of my government, and I want to thank the Argentinian government and the WTO Secretariat for their excellent organization.

This is the sixth time Palestine participates in a session of the Ministerial Conference as an *ad hoc* observer. Our persistent participation highlights the seriousness of my Government to join WTO and to get enrolled in an open, predictable, and rule-based multilateral trading system. The Palestinian government strongly believes that trade can significantly contribute in the advancement of the global sustainable development agenda; and firmly subscribes to the principles of the multilateral trading system.

Excellences, ladies and gentlemen,

The recent declaration regarding Jerusalem renders the two state solution unattainable and the prospect for economic development impossible.

Palestine, despite the significant constraints imposed by the military occupation, has taken important steps towards establishing a functional market economy, achieving macroeconomic stability; building our institutions and strengthening our governance capabilities.

Our hard work was recently acknowledged by the World Bank in the Doing Business 2018 Report, as Palestine advanced 26 points in the total ranking from the previous Doing Business 2017 Report. Jumping from 140 to 114. Currently, we are working on developing the legal framework and the economic infrastructure based on international best practices and in harmony with the WTO's rules and regulations.

While we are not yet actively participating in the rule-making processes; and not being able to reap all the benefits that derive from being a Member of the WTO, our Palestinian trade, by virtue of our sovereign commitments under the Paris Protocol with Israel, has, been *de facto* governed by the WTO rules and disciplines for a long time. Moreover, Palestine has adopted binding commitments in trade agreements with a number of WTO Members, which already commit us to implement the different WTO agreements.

We are now in the process of implementing our trade policy, in the areas of trade in goods, services and intellectual property rights. In

pursuing our efforts we have received very valuable technical cooperation from a number of WTO Members, which I would like to acknowledge. In this regard, I would like to note that Palestine is already bound by many international trade rules through its bilateral and regional trade agreements.

Madam Chair, Distinguished delegates,

The purpose of being an observer to the WTO General Council and its subsidiary bodies is to allow our government to better acquaint itself with the WTO and its activities, and to prepare itself for accession negotiations. To be first an observer to the WTO is exactly what the government of Palestine has been seeking for some time now; and we firmly believe that the time has come.

This decision follows a long period of reflection and consultation with different WTO Members and the international financial institutions, which have recommended us to take this important step. We recognize the strong support for our aspirations that we have received from an overwhelming majority of WTO Members.

Any opposition to our request should not be motivated by political considerations; which have no room in this forum; I am confident that our request will receive a positive response, and will be placed as soon as possible at the agenda of the General Council. We as Palestinian would like not to be left behind and to be part of the global trade system, pursuant to the inclusiveness principle of the

WTO as reiterated by the distinguished speakers during this Ministerial Conference session.

The government of Palestine is looking forward to participate, initially as an observer, more actively in the work of the multilateral trading system and at this important organization in the near future.

Again, the multilateral trading system should be positively reflected on the wealth and prosperity of its citizens,

Thank you for your attention.