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**STATEMENT BY H.E. MR OHAD COHEN
TRADE COMMISSIONER, MINISTRY OF
ECONOMY AND INDUSTRY**

ISRAEL

On behalf of the government of Israel, I would like to express our appreciation to Kazakhstan, Switzerland, and the WTO Secretariat for their excellent work in organizing this Ministerial.

It is clear that our world continues to grapple with the far-reaching consequences of the pandemic as well as the conflict in Ukraine.

Israel shares the concerns of many other Members over the trade disruptions, record prices and excessive volatility of food and agricultural supplies, which could undermine the food security of Members, particularly net food-importing countries and LDCs. We also express our solidarity with the global efforts to make vaccines, medicines and medical equipment accessible to all. Since trade is at the heart of the global economic recovery and ensuring food security, we would welcome meaningful outcomes.

A meaningful outcome in the response to the pandemic is necessary and we are strong supporters of including language relating to transparency and export restrictions. Although the WTO has monitored trade restrictions during the pandemic, we need to look to areas where improvements can be done that can help during the current, as well as in future pandemics.

Israel is a strong supporter of the WTO since its inception and we reaffirm our commitment to the core principles of the multilateral, rules-based trading system, namely: non-discrimination, transparency, and consensus-building. In the context of transparency, Israel is a keen supporter of the initiative to improve notifications and enhance transparency, which has gained strong momentum during the last few weeks. We urge other Members to join it.

We also attach great importance to a calibrated Special and Differential Treatment (SDT) for Developing Countries and in particular for LDCs, as a means to find a balance between rights and obligations and to foster sustainable development.

We are of the view that the WTO is in need of some revitalization and modernization, to make it more responsive to changing circumstances in world trade. This includes strengthening the WTO's negotiating arm and restoring a fully operational dispute settlement mechanism. We are encouraged to see that an effort to address dispute settlement seems to be underway.

Israel strongly supports and prefers the multilateral approach. However, we welcome pragmatic solutions to keep negotiations closer to international trade realities. Plurilateral initiatives are a tool to generate tangible results where multilateral progress has stalled. It is in this context that Israel has joined initiatives such as the E-commerce JSI, made new commitments in Domestic Services Regulation, and joined the declaration on MSMEs. We support the extension of the moratorium on e-commerce and the Work Program.

Another challenge we face is climate change, and Israel has joined the TESSD initiative. These discussions support the work of the Committee on Trade and Environment and we look forward to making inroads in tackling environmental challenges, consistent with WTO rules.

The ongoing Fisheries Subsidies negotiations are also important in this regard. Much progress has been made on this issue in the last few months. Although crucial points require further work, we are closer than ever before to reaching an outcome.

Israel supports a balanced outcome in Agriculture across the negotiating topics that must also include non-trade concerns, along with a meaningful outcome in exempting deliveries to the World Food Programme from any export-restrictive measures, as well as horizontal transparency elements in all negotiating topics.

Although the outcomes on Food Security and Agriculture are separate for the purposes of MC12, our deliberations are inextricably linked. As a net-food importing country, Food Security has always been a top priority for Israel. Less than 20% of our land area is naturally arable. But like Members have realized over the past two and a half years, countries need to be in a position to produce a considerable percentage of their own food requirements.

Furthermore, the detrimental effect export restrictions can have on the food security of importing countries is obvious. We have always been against imposing unjustified, unpredictable and non-transparent export restrictions and prohibitions. Together with other Members, we have submitted a technical analysis as well as concrete negotiation proposals over the past years in order to guide discussions. Now more than ever, Israel, as a net food importing country, is concerned about the negative impact of the conflict in Ukraine and export restrictive measures on prices and availability of products on international markets. We remain in favor of more stringent rules and disciplines in order to limit negative consequences of such measures.

In addition, we believe that the multilateral trading system and the fundamental rules that support it, are crucial elements in ensuring open global supply chains and a smooth and predictable trade flow.

Finally, Israel would like to express its sympathy with the suffering of the people of Ukraine and hopes for a rather soon end of hostilities in Ukraine.

Mr. Chairman, together we have to navigate the bumpy terrain ahead.

Israel stands ready to work towards delivering successful outcomes that have a meaningful impact on individual lives around the world.
