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JORDAN

Allow me at the outset to express the gratitude of the Government of Jordan for the efforts of the WTO Secretariat and the Swiss authorities in hosting and organizing the 12th Ministerial Conference in cooperation with Kazakh Government.

We meet today at a time where the world economy continues to face difficulties generated most notably by the COVID-19 pandemic and the current geopolitical challenges. Our economies have become firmly interconnected because of globalization and the multilateral trading system. Harmonious economic stability and growth in any region around the globe have become fundamental for the economic development and sustainability of world economies. Hence, our central goal remains at this juncture to provide measures to combat the ensuing economic calamity.

Jordan emphasizes the importance of strengthening the multilateral trading system's critical roles to ensure transparent and fair trade for all, which has proven to be a vital tool for regulating our trade relations; we should all remain committed to its principles, to enable economic growth and recovery.

Jordan is a strong believer in the multilateral trading system and is still committed to strengthening a free and fair global trade and supports the ongoing discussions on WTO reform and its role in transparency and inclusion. In addition, the development of a rule-based, equitable, transparent, and predictable environment could largely preclude unilateral and protectionist measures.

We attach importance to the collective goal of advancing the Doha Round and its objectives for international trade in general, and for developing countries and LDCs in particular. These trade negotiations have culminated in the successful conclusion of the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) in Bali, and in the formulation of the pressing needs of the developing countries and LDCs.

The single undertaking remains vital irrespective of trade negotiations. In this aspect, Jordan welcomes the recommendations regarding the TRIPS non-violation and situation complaints and the agreement to extend TRIPS transition period for LDCs.

Consensus remains the basis for reaching agreements and understandings. Jordan supports the WTO membership to conclude the fisheries subsidies negotiations, and extending the exemption of electronic transmissions from customs duties, and their endeavors to exempting World Food Program humanitarian purchases from export restrictions which is an obvious step to contribute to food security.

Jordan commends the WTO effort to tackle various difficulties and take the lead to advocate, coordinate, and collaborate with members and other international organizations to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic. To maximize this response, we remain committed to the proposed waiver from TRIPS agreement as the appropriate and effective way to address the meaningful, balanced and comprehensive access to new vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics.

Also, Jordan is delighted to be part of the large majority of the membership of the joint declaration on trade and women's economic empowerment. We realize the potential inclusive trade policies can

bring to increasing women's economics empowerment – as well as the added economic benefits it brings.

Continued unrest and turbulences in the Middle East have shadowed Jordan for many years, a country with limited resources including by hosting waves of refugees over the years with massive economic and social challenges.

At the time when the national economy was expected to recover from the slowdown trend which prevailed during previous years, the economic implications of Covid-19 drove the Jordanian economy to enter its first economic contraction in more than three decades, contracting by 1.6%, the unemployment rate rose to unprecedented levels, exceeding 23%. The external sector was one of the most affected sectors by the repercussions of the pandemic, as reflected by its main indicators, following the decline of both, travel receipts by 75.7%, and total exports by 4.5%, which contributed to widening the current account deficit to 8.0% of GDP.

Taking into consideration the economic conditions imposed by the repercussions of the pandemic on the national economy, the government took a wide range of measures to mitigate these repercussions on the economy in general and impacted economic enterprises and individuals in particular.

These measures played an important role in alleviating the contraction in the national economy in general. Also, the government took additional measures in terms of improving the investment environment and promoting Jordan as a preferable business enabling environment in the region.

It is worth mentioning that since Jordan acceded to the World Trade Organization in the year 2000, Jordan has undertaken all necessary actions and policies to fulfill its commitments despite the extensive concessions made upon joining the organization as a Recently-Acceded Member. Accordingly, Jordan supports the communiqué submitted by the Group of Article XII referring to the deep and extensive commitments made by the group members upon accession compared to early acceding Members.

On a parallel track, Jordan, as one of Net Food Importer Developing Countries, joins the calls for additional flexibilities within the agriculture negotiations to assure food security elements for developing countries and reaffirming the importance of an immediate WTO response to the food security crisis, especially in the light of high global shocks that lead to increases in the prices of foodstuffs and fertilizer.

On accessions issue, the accession process enriches the rules-based multilateral trading system and should not be overly burdensome for the LDCs and developing countries. Enlargement of its membership makes the WTO a universal organization indeed. In this context, I would like to draw Members' attention to the fact that there are eight Arab countries seeking accession and that expediting and facilitating their accessions will contribute to strengthening the Multilateral Trading System. In addition, Jordan supports the request by Palestine for observer status in the General Council and its subsidiary bodies.

I would like to seize this opportunity to stress the need for a set of revised objective guidelines for granting observer status for all International Governmental Organizations (IGOs) in the WTO, including the request of the League of Arab States.

In addition, Jordan supports the communiqué from the Arab Group and would like to highlight the need to add Arabic as an official language at the WTO, which will significantly increase Arab countries involvement and contribution in the work of the WTO.

Finally, we express our sincere appreciation to the Republic of Kazakhstan for chairing the MC12 and for the Government and people of Switzerland for their hospitality and excellent work in hosting this Conference and wish this Conference all success, and look forward to reaching our mutual goals and having a balanced package for the benefit of all.

To conclude, let me say that trade is not an end in itself, but should act as a driver of income growth and job creation to benefit people, the standard of living and stability across the world.
