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NEW ZEALAND

We are meeting at a time when the world is facing inordinate challenges to our security, health, food supply, and our climate. These challenges only serve to reinforce the importance of cooperation – of coming together in a multilateral forum like the WTO.

I would like to state at the outset that New Zealand joins with the international community in condemning Russia's unprovoked and unjustified attack on Ukraine.

Russia's illegal invasion has implications for every aspect of the international rules-based order – global peace, security, economic stability and international trade – actively undermining the work of the WTO and the multilateral cooperation underpinning it.

In light of such atrocities, it is vital that we as WTO Members come together to condemn and make clear that this blatant disregard of the international rules-based order will not be tolerated.

Russia's actions have compounded the impact of pre-existing challenges to food security, and are causing a food supply crisis. We know that this food supply crisis is causing significant challenges for the immediate needs, well-being and development of our most vulnerable Members.

We need to respond.

We should be agreeing to exempt from export restrictions food purchases by the World Food Programme. We must also focus on how trade and ongoing agricultural reform can ensure food systems are inclusive for all people and sustainable for the planet. New Zealand will, therefore, be seeking a work programme on domestic support reform.

COVID-19 has demonstrated the power of cooperation. We must continue to work together in our ongoing response to COVID-19. The pandemic has disrupted our lives in ways we never imagined and it continues to impact each Member differently. We must reach a meaningful outcome together at this conference that responds to the pandemic.

New Zealand supports an outcome on trade and health that responds to current pandemic realities and prepares us for future health crises. This outcome should include a TRIPS waiver on COVID-19 vaccines. We know this is important to many developing countries and we are happy to support it as part of the WTO's pandemic response.

It is crucial this week that we look beyond current crises to longer term issues including addressing climate change. Let's seize the opportunity of being together to start our work to limit and phase-out the use of environmentally harmful subsidies.

New Zealand is proud to lead a statement on fossil fuel subsidy reform, and we encourage all Members to join us.

It is also time for us to deliver an outcome on fisheries subsidies. We all know that the elements for conclusion are on the table, Ministers must now deliver on our MC11 promise. For the health and well-being of fish, our fishing communities, and indeed food security, we must not let another deadline pass.

Finally, we must reform, revitalise and strengthen the WTO, across all its functions. New Zealand is committed to WTO reform.

We will not achieve everything this year. However, as WTO Members we have an opportunity to demonstrate the WTO's relevance and contribute multilateral solutions to global problems.

Let us remain both practical and ambitious.
