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**STATEMENT BY H.E. MR ALI YOUNIS
PALESTINIAN AMBASSADOR IN UAE**

PALESTINE

(Speaking as an Observer)

On behalf of the State of Palestine, I extend my sincere honour and appreciation to the Chairperson, His Excellency Dr Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi, the WTO Secretariat, all Members, and the Government of the United Arab Emirates for their valuable efforts in organizing and hosting this 13th WTO Ministerial conference.

We meet today in light of truly exceptional circumstances and difficult times, yet it is a great honour to have the privilege to represent and speak on behalf of the State of Palestine, which has been witnessing one of the most brutal aggressions, causing devastating social detrimental consequences on the Palestinian people and leaving a lasting exacerbating impact on the overall Palestinian economy.

As a result of the current horrendous Israeli aggression, the Gaza Strip is being left under an unprecedented death toll and massive destruction, where all economic sectors became completely halted, had caused the mass displacement of people coupled with cutting electricity, water, fuel, and telecommunications. Moreover, Israel has inflicted additional restrictions where it blocked all commercial crossings into, and, out of the Gaza Strip and deprived access to humanitarian aid, food, and medical supplies which elevated serious health concerns to dangerous levels.

The current Israeli aggression has also adversely impacted the West Bank due to the ongoing unlawful imposed Israeli blockade on the movement of goods and people within the West Bank including East Jerusalem, hence projecting a steep collapse of economic activity and declining trade.

Estimates reveal sharp declines in GDP per capita, soaring poverty and unemployment rates, among other socioeconomic challenges. In 2023, GDP per capita in Gaza shrank by 26% and stood at one-third of its peak in 2005, with 80% of this loss occurring since the 7th of October. By the end of 2023, unemployment in Gaza reached 79.3%. This impact is not confined to the short term but indirect and long-term effects will reverberate through future generations.

Although Palestine is neither a Member, nor an observer, yet we strongly believe that WTO Members should seek a coordinated approach to solving all trade violations while equally working towards addressing future concerns. Contrary to the purposes and values of the WTO, Israel continuously stands in violation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement. We therefore recall that, as the fundamental goal of the WTO, among others, is to improve people's lives, ensure trade flows, and regulate trade ties, it is imperative to emphasize that there is a need to address any violation that lies in the heart of its trading system which will cause an imbalance to trade and eventually lead to drastic results which we are witnessing today.

It is crucial to remember that when one WTO Member state does not comply with WTO rules and fails to fulfill its obligations, this will negatively impact the interests of neighboring countries in the entire region. The WTO Members should acknowledge that the continuity of the Israeli violations and aggression on Palestine will cast a shadow on the Middle East and the world as well, as it already

reflected its detrimental effects on trade and investment thus hindering economic growth and development.

Therefore, I urge and call all Member states to hold Israel accountable for its violations, particularly to the Trade Facilitation Agreement, and take the required necessary measures within the WTO framework. Non-compliance not only hampers the potential benefits of international trade but also erodes trust and confidence among Members. Therefore, when all Member states abide by their commitments and fulfil their obligations under the WTO framework, we can ensure the viability and effectiveness of the WTO and foster a conducive environment for global trade that benefits all countries involved.

As we convene today, I would like to conclude by thanking you for the opportunity to participate as an Observer in this 13th Ministerial Conference. I also would like to thank all the Members who expressed their full solidarity with Palestine. Reiterating that this Ministerial Conference comes at a tough time, where the Israeli aggression on Palestine has far-reaching consequences on the Palestinian economy yet confident that, with the support of the international community and the WTO, we will overcome these challenges and eventually achieve tangible results to ensure economic recovery and have the ability to trade and operate normally and freely with the rest of the world. We underline that occupation and economic developments do not match, only trade partnership and openness in the globalization era is the way to the future.

Once again, thank you for your continuous support of my country's economic development plans, remain assured that Palestine continues to commit to WTO norms. Optimistic that it will lead to our integration into the global trading system.
