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General Council

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**JOINT COMMUNICATION ON SYSTEMIC ISSUES FROM ALBANIA; AUSTRALIA; CANADA;
CHILE; COLOMBIA; COSTA RICA; ECUADOR; GUATEMALA; HONG KONG, CHINA;
ICELAND; ISRAEL; JAPAN; KAZAKHSTAN; KENYA; REPUBLIC OF KOREA;
LIECHTENSTEIN; MALAYSIA; MEXICO; REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA; NEW ZEALAND;
NIGERIA; NORWAY; PARAGUAY; PERU; RUSSIAN FEDERATION; SINGAPORE;
SWITZERLAND; THE SEPARATE CUSTOMS TERRITORY OF TAIWAN, PENGHU,
KINMEN AND MATSU; THAILAND; TURKEY AND URUGUAY**

*Revision**

The following joint communication, dated 29 July 2021, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of Switzerland.

We, a group of 31 developing and developed Members that is strongly supportive of the Multilateral Trading System, seek to protect and strengthen the World Trade Organization (WTO) to address current and future challenges.

We confirm our commitment to a successful 12th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC12) in Geneva. We urge Members to engage constructively and to work towards pragmatic and tangible outcomes. It will be important that Ministers provide political guidance on outcomes for MC12, including on the WTO's future work.

We herewith share our contribution to the systemic part of a Ministerial outcome document for the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC12).

1. Reaffirm relevance of and support for the rules-based multilateral trading system (MTS)

We greatly value the WTO and reaffirm the principles and objectives set out in the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the WTO and the centrality of the rules-based multilateral trading system.

We note the major role trade can play in the promotion of sustainable development and the alleviation of poverty, as recognized in the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We recognize the WTO as the preeminent global forum for trade rules setting and governance, which contributes to fostering international trade and development, including through facilitating the peaceful settlement of trade disputes, and containing protectionism.

We call on Members to safeguard the integrity of the open, non-discriminatory and rules-based Multilateral Trading System embodied in the WTO and to work together to ensure its sound functioning. We reaffirm the central importance of development in the WTO. The WTO continues to be an essential tool for Members to achieve inclusive and sustainable global growth and development, including through the further integration of developing countries and LDCs into world trade.

* This revision is to add Ecuador and Guatemala as co-sponsors to the joint communication.

2. Importance and relevance of the MTS in the context of the global health crisis

The global health crisis has severely affected all our lives and economies. Devising an effective and lasting response to this crisis remains a priority of our respective governments. International cooperation and coordination is needed more than ever to fight the pandemic and make the system more resilient for the future. The WTO has an important role to play in maintaining well-functioning supply chains.

A predictable, transparent, non-discriminatory and open global trading system is crucial for broad-based, sustainable and inclusive economic recovery.

3. Need for WTO Reform

Since the establishment of the WTO over 25 years ago, the international trading environment has changed considerably and new challenges have emerged. It is critical that the WTO responds in an effective way, which calls for new and updated global trade rules.

We also recognize the need to reform the system in order to address the current and future challenges facing the organization and to ensure its sound functioning. We will therefore support continued and renewed efforts to reform the WTO.

We consider a productive negotiating function to be essential for the WTO to deliver meaningful outcomes for Members at all levels of development, reflecting current and emerging trade realities. We strive to make further progress in an open and inclusive manner on issues of interest to Members and to seek high quality outcomes. In this regard, we recognize that a range of approaches, including plurilateral negotiations such as the Joint Statement Initiatives, can ultimately support and contribute to the shared objectives.

We remain committed to fully participating in the important ongoing, regular work of the WTO. We underline the essential role of regular WTO bodies in ensuring oversight of the implementation of WTO agreements, and the importance of Members' compliance with notification requirements. We recognize that the WTO's trade monitoring work contributes to the effective functioning of the multilateral trading system, by enhancing transparency of trade policies and practices of Members. In this regard, we call on Members to fully comply with their notification obligations.

We reaffirm our commitment to abide by the WTO's rules in the conduct of our trade relations. The WTO's two-tier dispute settlement system and its binding nature is a central element in providing security and predictability to the multilateral trading system. We therefore recall our strong resolve to restore its effective functioning, including through necessary reforms, and call on all Members to constructively engage in finding solutions to identified concerns.
