



**General Council – Special Meeting
31 March 2022**

MINUTES OF THE MEETING¹

HELD IN THE CENTRE WILLIAM RAPPARD AND IN VIRTUAL FORMAT ON 31 MARCH 2022

Chairperson: H.E. Mr. Didier Chambovey (Switzerland)

**1 REVIEW OF THE OPERATION OF THE BALI DECISION ON TRQ ADMINISTRATION –
DECISION ON PARAGRAPH 4 OF THE UNDERFILL MECHANISM**

1.1. The Chair recalled that, at MC9, Ministers had adopted the Decision on Tariff Rate Quota Administration (WT/MIN(13)/39 – WT/L/914) which also required the Committee on Agriculture to review and monitor the implementation of Members' obligations established under the Decision.

1.2. The issue of the future operation of paragraph 4 of the Underfill Mechanism was mandated to be taken up during the Review exercise. He recalled that, although the Review was concluded in December 2019, Members had agreed to defer the timeline for a decision on the future operation of paragraph 4 of the Underfill Mechanism to the end of 2021. This matter had been taken up by the General Council at its November 2021 meeting. At that meeting, the General Council Chair had reminded delegations that, if Members were unable to reach an agreement at MC12, the General Council might have to revisit the matter, given the end-of-year deadline for a decision. He further recalled that, further to the postponement of MC12, and in light of the consultations conducted by the Chair of the Committee on Agriculture and the understanding reached among Members, at its urgent special meeting on 15 December 2021, the General Council had agreed to the exceptional extension of the deadline for a decision on paragraph 4 of the Underfill Mechanism until 31 March 2022.

1.3. The Committee on Agriculture had continued its work on this matter, and he understood that progress had been made and that Members might be in a position to take a decision on this issue. He invited Mr Marcos Da Rosa Uranga, Chair of the Committee on Agriculture, to report to the General Council about these developments.

1.4. Mr. Marcos Da Rosa Uranga (Uruguay), Chair of the Committee on Agriculture, thanked the General Council Chair for convening the special meeting of the General Council at the Committee's request in order for Members to endorse the consensual agreement reached at the Committee on Agriculture's reconvened 100th meeting on the issue of the future operation of paragraph 4 of the Bali TRQ Decision's underfill mechanism.

1.5. He said that, with this agreement, Members would successfully conclude a long process that had started in 2017, with the review of the operation of the Bali TRQ Decision, which was mandated by Ministers as per paragraphs 13-15 of the Decision, with the objective of promoting a continuing process of improvement in the utilization of tariff rate quotas.

1.6. He recalled that he had explained the details of the content of the draft decision at the meeting of the General Council held on 22 November 2021, as reflected in the minutes of that meeting (in document WT/GC/M/194). He noted that the draft decision in Annex to G/AG/32/Add.1 was in substance the same as the one the Committee on Agriculture had sent to the General Council in November last year in Annex to document G/AG/32, and that had been subsequently transmitted

¹ The proposed agenda was circulated in document WT/GC/W/843.

for the consideration of Ministers at MC12, when this was expected to happen in November/December 2021.

1.7. In terms of process, he said that after the General Council, at its special meeting of 15 December 2021, had agreed to an exceptional extension of the deadline for a decision by 3 months, as agriculture attachés would be able to confirm, work at a technical level had intensified in order to reach an agreement.

1.8. In addition to many, permanent consultations with delegations in different configurations, the Committee had considered the issue at its five informal meetings on 2 and 18 February, 4, 15 and 28 March 2022, as well as at its 100th formal meeting on 16 March 16th, reconvened on 29 March, where consensus had been finally reached. The exceptional extension agreed by the General Council in December 2021 had proved to be useful, as it had allowed those Members that had indicated they needed more time to conduct their domestic consultations to get a better understanding of the implications of the draft Decision, which in turn had helped them to successfully conclude their internal procedures. After constructive discussions with other Members, the delegation that had raised some concerns with the draft Decision in G/AG/32 had showed flexibility and had allowed the Committee to reach full consensus on this long-standing matter.

1.9. He stressed that the agreement reached was not insignificant, as it ensured that the underfill mechanism would be fully applicable to all WTO Members in the future, and that concerns presented under its procedure would effectively reach a closure, while providing for an appropriate special and differential treatment for importing developing Members.

1.10. In addition, even when the multilateral system was not at its brightest hour, this agreement showed that, when Members worked together in a spirit of flexibility and compromise, reaching consensual outcomes was possible at the WTO. He said that it was his hope that this contribution of the Committee on Agriculture, humble as it might be, would serve as an inspiration for WTO Members, particularly as they engaged in negotiations towards positive outcomes in agriculture and other important and complex issues at MC12.

1.11. As Chair of the Committee on Agriculture, he wished to sincerely thank all delegations for their contribution to this outcome, including the delegations of the United States, China, the European Union, Ukraine, Guatemala, El Salvador, Dominican Republic, Barbados, South Africa, Vietnam and India for the flexibility they had showed in different stages of the process.

1.12. In this vein, he said that, at the risk of being unfair to all the people that had made this collective outcome possible, he wished to personally acknowledge and thank two colleagues: Tayutic Mena, from the delegation of Costa Rica, who was the mastermind behind the proposal that was later taken up by the Committee, and Greg MacDonald, from the delegation of Canada, who had also played a decisive role and had worked closely with the Chair in the last part of the process that had led to this outcome. He further wished to acknowledge the work of the former Chairs of the Committee on Agriculture Debora Cumes (Guatemala), Christiane Daleiden (Luxembourg) and Maria Escandor (Philippines), who had played a key role in advancing this review from its early stages in 2017. Last but not least, he wished to personally acknowledge and thank the whole CoA team, and in particular the Secretary of the Committee, Diwakar Dixit, for his tireless work and support at all times.

1.13. The representative of India delivered the following statement:

1.14. India notes the proposal contained in document G/AG/32 to complete the review process as mandated in paragraphs 13 and 14 of the Bali Ministerial Decision entitled "Understanding of Tariff Rate Quota Administration Provisions of Agricultural Products" as defined in Article 2 of the Agreement on Agriculture. Specifically, the decision required a review of the future operation of Paragraph 4 of the Underfill Mechanism in Annex A by MC12. The decision also offered the right to select Members listed in Annex B of the decision to discontinue the application of Paragraph 4 should there be no agreement among Members on the future operation of Paragraph 4 of the Underfill Mechanism. We were concerned that the proposed text in G/AG/32 does not adequately provide special and differential treatment for the developing Members which is otherwise available in the Bali Ministerial decision's Underfill Mechanism in Paragraph 4 of Annex A. It was in this regard that India suggested some changes in G/AG/32 and tried to explore consensus in these changes. I do

agree that it was too late. During the meeting of CoA held on 29 March 2022, the Membership assured, and I get that reflected in the report of the Chair of the CoA also that special and differential treatment of the Ministerial Decision is preserved in the revised draft proposal contained in the document G/AG/32 even without the changes proposed by India. India believes in multilateral trading system based on consensus and hence India joins the consensus with the understanding that the draft proposal in G/AG/32/Add.1 for the Future Operation of Paragraph 4 of the Bali Decision for the Administration of TRQ Underfills has preserved special and differential treatment for developing country Members.

1.15. The representative of the Philippines delivered the following statement:

1.16. The Philippines takes the floor to appreciate the Membership, the delegations and the Secretariat in the Committee on Agriculture in delivering this positive result after four years of work. The Philippines, through its Chairmanship through Ms. Maria Escandor during the past year also contributed to the arrival of this work and consensus. With that, we thank the Secretariat and all those who have worked on this solution and all delegations who have cooperated in making today possible.

1.17. The representative of Egypt delivered the following statement:

1.18. Egypt would like to extend our thanks to the Committee on Agriculture and the Secretariat for the extensive efforts put into the process until we were able to reach such an outcome on the matter of the Review of the Operation of the Bali Decision on TRQ Administration. I would underscore that, despite the legitimate differences among the negotiating parties, Members were able to converge. We hope our discussions on other topics will be treated with an equitable level of flexibility and spirit of convergence. Allow me to seize this opportunity to remind that the world is facing a severe food security problem. Prices have increased dramatically and supply falling short of demand. Food supply chain has become in complete jeopardy – risking the lives of hundreds of millions in our region and around the world. Egypt is among the mostly affected by the current situation. We should be up to the challenge. In the run up to MC12, this organization should be able to deliver a workable solution that would contribute to mitigating what has become a most serious problem the world is now facing. There is no one size fits all. An envisaged solution for this problem should take into account the special case of net-food importing developing countries especially those in our region. As mentioned by the African Group in the last Informal GC meeting, 35 African countries are dependent on food imported from the Balkan Sea region. Egypt is by far the largest importer of wheat and grains from both Ukraine and Russia. Up to 85% of our wheat and grains imported are sourced from both countries. Our food import though is rapidly increasing by the day. Food prices increased 20% compared to a month earlier. The problem for us and for many other countries in similar predicament could have implications that go beyond our ability to handle. Egypt should continue to work on this issue in the relevant WTO Bodies as well as here at the General Council. The Ministerial Conference should gavel down concrete decisions in this regard. NFIDCs and LDCs should be given the policy space to preserve their own food security. There are several possible ideas that could be pursued in that regard – among them is reconsidering the establishment of a trust revolving fund and a global food reserve. Such ideas could be explored in coordination with other international organizations and based on donor's contributions or other resources to help affected countries meet their basic food needs and finance their increasing import bills before they become an insurmountable burden on the budget. It is time for us all to prove that this organization is relevant and capable enough to successfully address this very urgent matter that concerns the livelihood of millions of people.

1.19. The representative of China delivered the following statement:

1.20. China appreciates the effort and the contributions of the WTO Secretariat, Chair of the Committee on Agriculture and all Members particularly those with great concern on this issue for the constructive and cooperative spirit. China hopes today's positive result can set an example for subsequent negotiations on key issues through the principle of consensus and cooperation.

1.21. The representative of the Republic of Korea delivered the following statement:

1.22. We would like to express our deep appreciation to the CoA Chair and the Secretariat for their hard work on reaching consensus on this matter. This matter continued to be under discussion in

the Committee on Agriculture for several years. It was a very good news for the legitimacy of this organization. Considering the current circumstances, it may not be unlikely that there is a serious food crisis next year we all might be facing if the current Russia's invasion to Ukraine continues. This springtime is the sowing season for Ukraine and Russia. If the war persists for some time, the sowing would be inhibited. This would mean that there is no new harvest of wheat and other grains in Ukraine and some parts of Russia implying a serious shortage of grains supply in the world market. Currently, Ukraine and Russia contribute to some 30% of world grain production. In 2008, there was a food shortage resulting from drought in Australia and in some other producing areas. As a result, the global price of wheat went up to 75%. But this time, in 2021 and in 2022, the food shortage may not be comparable to one we faced in 2008. With 15% to 20% decrease in grain harvest this fall under the scenario I just described due to the current war, the global price of grains next year could go up by five to ten times compared to their usually prevailing level. This means that, in some developing countries and vulnerable countries in Asia and in Africa and also for the vulnerable section of the populations in developed countries, there could be serious food insecurity situation next year. Please consider the situation where some parents have to go to bed with no certainty on how to feed their children tomorrow. This kind of serious situation demands that we cannot afford to doing our business as usual at the WTO. This is a serious emergency situation. Therefore, I would like to ask the WTO Agriculture Community and the relevant WTO parties to take immediate action now so as to address and to prevent or suitably mitigate imminent crisis. There is a book which deals with necessary actions in case of an imminent pandemic written by a Belgian Microbiologist Mr. Peter Piot. The title of the book is "No time to lose." Considering the current situation of expected food shortage and crisis this fall and next year, we also do not have the luxury to lose any time. This is rather a moment where there is no time to lose.

1.23. The representative of Paraguay delivered the following statement:

1.24. We recognize the tireless work undertaken by the CoA Chair and the hours spent by Guatemala, the Philippines and Luxembourg throughout this process which has taken many years to conclude but which today we can say has been worth it. We are very satisfied by the outcome and the fact that today we have shown that it is possible to achieve multilateral outcomes on agriculture – albeit modest. We can continue to count on the system to improve these outcomes if we work together and exercise flexibility required to achieve them. We thank the fantastic group of agriculture colleagues for their dedication and their individual contributions representing their various delegations and for the flexibility they have shown. We hope that this will be just the first successful outcome on agriculture this year. In order to do this, if we continue making progress with a constructive and collaborative spirit that has brought us, we think it will be possible.

1.25. The representative of Costa Rica delivered the following statement:

1.26. Costa Rica congratulates the entire Membership for this collective success. The result today is important for the WTO due to its significance. After four years of negotiations and the three-month process that comes to fruition today, discussions and consultation have taken place on this subject. The Committee on Agriculture has achieved an agreement and filled the regulatory gap from Bali. With this, we can say that the final decision is universal in its application. Special and differential treatment has been completely preserved. The result is coherent with the spirit of the mechanism. We thank the CoA Chair, Mr. Uranga (Uruguay) for his persistence and hard work to lead this process to its conclusion. A special mention also goes to the previous Chairs – Ms Cumes (Guatemala), Mrs. Distefano (Luxembourg) and Ms. Escandor (Philippines) and the colleagues from the Secretariat who have always supported us throughout the process as well as the colleagues and delegates who have shown constructive and flexible approach to ensure that this topic can bear fruit. Special mention also goes to our colleague and friend Mr. Macdonald (Canada). It is not every day that we achieve consensus on agriculture in this house. Today we are enjoying a big victory for the multilateral trading system, and this should be a reason for celebration.

1.27. The representative of Chile delivered the following statement:

1.28. We congratulate everyone who has participated in this agreement particularly the four recent CoA Chairs. In the current unacceptable and sad circumstances, we can continue to discuss this. We believe in multilateralism particularly during these times. We need to keep open channels of

communication and conversation. We hope that this decision will be exemplary for other important negotiating processes currently underway in this organization also on agriculture.

1.29. The representative of Malaysia delivered the following statement:

1.30. My delegation would also like to express our deepest appreciation to all CoA Chairs, the WTO Secretariat and all Members who have worked in a constructive spirit and have exercised flexibility in making consensus happen.

1.31. The representative of Ukraine delivered the following statement:

1.32. We would like to echo the congratulations and acknowledge the work of the CoA Chairs and the Secretariat. We also acknowledge the contributions of several delegations including Costa Rica, Canada and others that Ukraine has worked closely with in the process. We welcome the adoption of the decision today. Ukraine is a strong supporter of the multilateral rules-based trading system. Even in times of crisis or especially in times of crisis, we think that the system and the WTO as its core can provide benefits and deliver solutions. Ukraine and its economy are integrated into the multilateral trading system in various global value and supply chains. In previous years, 10% of our wheat, 16% of our corn and 55% of the sunflower oil in the world was exported by Ukraine. More than 55% of Ukrainian wheat was exported to Asia and 40% to African States. However, the situation has drastically changed on 21 February as the Russian Federation launched a full-scale war against Ukraine in attack of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine in a brutal violation of norms and principles of international law as well as the purpose and principles of this very organization. As a result of Russia's actions, food export from Ukraine has been partially suspended. Nearly 30% of Ukraine's economy is already halted. Russia's blockade of Ukrainian ports in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov disrupts Ukraine export. Russian troops damage critical infrastructure as well as target agriculture equipment to prevent the start of the sowing period as had been mentioned by Korea. All these while the overall size of the agriculture area in Ukraine is expected to decrease by 30%.

1.33. The representative of the Russian Federation asked for the floor on a point of order.

1.34. The Chair said that the Russian Federation would be given the floor after Ukraine had finished its statement.

1.35. The representative of Ukraine continued the statement:

1.36. If the war continues, Ukraine will not be able to supply the world with 6 million tons of wheat and 15 million tons of corn left over the last harvest – and will not be able to fully sow and harvest this year. This will cause a largescale humanitarian crisis in the world in the near future as mentioned by the delegations of Korea and Egypt and also by Heads of numerous international organizations and other delegations in the course of the last month. 400 million lives in the Middle East, North Africa and Asia are at risk of unstable access to food, malnutrition and famine. According to the FAO-World Food Programme Hunger Hotspot Report, 18 out of 20 identified countries that are expected to face increased levels of food insecurity are NFIDCs as was referred to by our colleague from Egypt. The Russian war against Ukraine is a threat to global food security. Stopping the war immediately would protect the world from hunger and famine and would allow Ukrainian farmers and entrepreneurs to re-engage and deliver food to those in need. With this in mind, we would be very supportive of further discussions within this forum on the issues in order to find a sustainable and resilient solution to deal with this food crisis.

1.37. The representative of the Russian Federation delivered the following statement:

1.38. As a point of order, I would like to note that the intervention of Ukraine as well as some elements of the previous statements made by Egypt and the Republic of Korea, go far beyond the agenda of today's meeting. I kindly ask you to moderate today's discussion accordingly and prevent delegations from transforming the General Council into a political show. I also request that statements which do not correspond to the agenda of this meeting are not included into its minutes.

1.39. The representative of the European Union delivered the following statement:

1.40. We would like to join the previous delegations in expressing our satisfaction with the positive outcome. The EU welcomes the solution reached and we support the final text agreed in the regular Committee on Agriculture on the review of the Bali TRQ on TRQ management as contained in G/AG/32/Add.1. We would like to thank the Chair of the CoA as well as the WTO Secretariat for the relentless efforts in bringing the Membership towards consensus. It is a rare example of positions of all Members in agriculture coming together. We can all draw some lessons from this exercise for future discussions on more substantive issues in agriculture and elsewhere. Timely engagement and flexibility in reaching an outcome on the review contributed to this success. This positive outcome also demonstrates WTO Members' commitment to the multilateral trading system. I would like to add that we would also like to reiterate the EU and its Member States' full solidarity with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people. The EU condemns in the strongest possible terms Russia's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine which grossly violates international law and the UN Charter and undermines international security and stability. It is now more than a month that Russia continues to commit blatant act of aggression against Ukraine. These attacks have resulted in the suffering and losses of human lives. The Russian war against Ukraine also has implications beyond Ukraine borders. It has repercussions in terms of food security including effects on global food supply chains and price increases on agricultural commodities. The EU demands that Russia immediately cease its military actions, withdraw all its troops from the entire territory of Ukraine and fully respects Ukraine territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence within its internationally recognized borders. At all times, Russia must respect its responsibilities under international humanitarian law.

1.41. The representative of South Africa delivered the following statement:

1.42. We thank the CoA Chair who oversaw this process for his report including the report submitted today. We thank the Members for working hard to achieve consensus with regard to the TRQ Underfill mechanism. We believe in the importance of preserving S&DT which we believe must remain integral to all WTO decisions and this remains important in securing consensus in the WTO. We hope we can now work towards achieving the long-term objective of agricultural reform which remains a key priority especially as we work towards MC12.

1.43. The representative of the United Kingdom delivered the following statement:

1.44. The United Kingdom is grateful to colleagues who have worked so hard to reach an agreement on this. In particular, we are grateful to the efforts of the CoA Chair, the Secretariat and the delegation from Costa Rica. We are glad that we have reached agreement on this as it shows what we can do in this organization in terms of negotiating rules by which we can engage and trade with each other. In that context, we cannot sit by and ignore the egregious violations on international law and UN Charter committed by one Member against another. We have seen the direct consequences of Russia's actions here impeding Ukraine's ability to fully participate in the work of this institution and to fulfil its important role in agriculture trade and improving food security for all of the Members here. We heard so clearly from Egypt and Korea the impact this is having on food security and global trade. We too believe strongly that this organization needs to prove that it is not indifferent to this issue. We believe that immediate actions to help resolve it should be a priority for the discussions in agriculture. Let us be clear. This is a result of one Member's actions – Russia. It is a result of Russian tanks in Ukrainian fields, Russian ships blocking Ukrainian ports and Russian missiles destroying Ukraine's infrastructure. While Russia continues to violate international law, human rights and commit multiple offences to peace and security, we will work with our allies and partners across the multilateral system to condemn Russia's appalling actions and to isolate them on the international stage. Ultimately, the best thing that can be done to ensure global food markets function properly right now is for Russia to de-escalate and remove its troops from Ukraine immediately.

1.45. The representative of Guatemala delivered the following statement:

1.46. I echo other delegations and take this opportunity to express and leave on record the great satisfaction we feel at this tremendous result today. I take this opportunity to thank the four CoA Chairs who participated in this process including my colleague, Ms. Debora Cumes. At the same time, I would also thank the Secretariat who assisted us in this process.

1.47. The representative of Australia delivered the following statement:

1.48. Russia's invasion of Ukraine is exacting a catastrophic humanitarian toll – the impacts of which are only beginning to unfold. UN Agencies and others are increasingly warning of significant negative food security consequences of Russia's aggression against Ukraine noting the key role these countries play as major suppliers of key commodities such as wheat and rising global food and fuel prices. Stable, open and predictable markets are vital at such time as we have learned from previous experience. Australia therefore warmly welcomes the outcome of the Committee on Agriculture this week on the underfill mechanism of the Bali TRQ Administration Decision. The conclusion of the Bali TRQ Decision was an important achievement for WTO Members as part of the continuation of the reform process enshrined in Article 20 of the Agreement on Agriculture. Ensuring that TRQ methods are not responsible for quota underfill is an important aspect to market access commitments made in the Uruguay Round. In our view, the draft text recommended by the Committee strikes the right balance between resolving underfill concerns and ensuring sufficient and appropriate S&DT flexibilities for developing country Members. We also welcome the fact that under this outcome, Annex B will no longer exist and its Members would agree to the provisions of Paragraph 4 of the Underfill Mechanism. We particularly thank the CoA Chair for his patient and persistent efforts in reach this outcome and for the efforts of other WTO Members including in particular the technical advice of Costa Rica.

1.49. The representative of Barbados delivered the following statement:

1.50. Barbados joins others in applauding all WTO Members regarding the decision on Paragraph 4 of the Underfill Mechanism this morning. We would like to thank the CoA Chair and the WTO Secretariat for their tireless efforts. Today's decision is a win for multilateralism and for the rules-based multilateral trading system as embodied by the organization. It is a positive motivator for our work ahead towards MC12. We therefore hope that we can build on this momentum to achieve outcomes in other areas including on fisheries subsidies, agriculture, e-commerce, the WTO response to the pandemic as well as on development and special and differential treatment on crosscutting areas of the WTO. Barbados remains committed to playing its part to this end.

1.51. The representative of Argentina delivered the following statement:

1.52. Argentina would also like to thank the CoA Chairs who led us through this process. We thank the Secretariat and all delegations involved. We trust that this will be an inspiration. It provides an opportunity to address new challenges and advance agricultural reform as we head towards MC12 – as the only way of responding to the current and future challenges related to food security, among others.

1.53. The representative of the United States delivered the following statement:

1.54. We would like to join others in expressing our deep appreciation to the CoA Chair and to all Members including and notably the delegation of Costa Rica for their diligent efforts particularly over the last year and in the last several days to arrive at a balanced solution to amend the Bali TRQ Underfill Mechanism. Arriving at consensus took hard work, flexibility and considerable patience by all Members. Thanks to these great efforts, we now have an improved Bali TRQ understanding. The United States would also like to take the opportunity to reiterate its strong support for Ukraine during this unimaginably difficult time. The United States condemns Russia's premediated and unprovoked attack on Ukraine and we support and affiliate with the statements made by the EU, the UK, Australia and others calling upon Russia to immediately cease its use of force against Ukraine.

1.55. The representative of Nigeria delivered the following statement:

1.56. We thank Members, the Committee on Agriculture and the Secretariat for their tireless effort in reaching consensus on this issue. Nigeria is a believer of the multilateral trading system. We shall continue to support any positive action that will assist Members to have fruitful outcomes especially on agriculture being one of the most important issues to Members in the WTO. We urge Members to also consider reaching convergence in other areas in agriculture currently under negotiation. This will greatly help in making MC12 more successful.

1.57. The representative of Norway delivered the following statement:

1.58. Like others, Norway would like to congratulate Members on the agreement on the amendment of the Bali Underfill Mechanism. We appreciate the efforts of the current CoA Chair as well as previous Chairs who have worked diligently over the years to come to this point. We also thank the delegates involved in the process as well as the Secretariat who has done a wonderful job in supporting Members on this issue. Norway has also noted concerns raised by Members on the situation in the world affecting global food security. We share their concerns. Like other Members who have taken the floor before me, we are very clear about who is responsible for this situation. Russia is responsible through its actions with assistance Belarus. These two countries have created widespread destruction and human suffering in a horrendous scale. Millions of refugees have been displaced. Russia is also directly responsible for the impact in global food systems and the consequences that will be felt worldwide in particular by the poor people of the world. For these reasons, we appeal to Russia to immediately stop its war against Ukraine and take their soldiers home.

1.59. The representative of Japan delivered the following statement:

1.60. Japan welcomes consensus on the Bali TRQ Review. We appreciate the hard work on this important issue and tireless effort by the CoA Chair and his predecessors as well as the Secretariat. Let me also support the statement made by Ukraine and echo the previous speakers. Japan has condemned recent aggression against Ukraine in the strongest terms as it clearly infringes upon Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, constitutes a serious violation of international law prohibiting the use of force and is a grave breach of the UN Charter. Russian aggression to Ukraine also concerns us from the viewpoint of its impact on the global food security including severe effects on global food supply chains and the price volatility of agricultural commodities. We call on Members to keep their food agricultural market open and to guard against any unjustified export restrictive measures. What the WTO could contribute in this context is a pertinent issue that we have to tackle immediately including monitoring work in the regular bodies. Japan has strongly urged Russia to cease attack and withdraw its force back to Russian territory immediately. This is the only avenue to stop supply chain disturbances which many countries now started suffering from. Japan stands in solidarity with Ukraine and its people together with the international community.

1.61. The representative of Uruguay delivered the following statement:

1.62. Let me begin by thanking the four previous CoA Chairs for the tremendous efforts deployed to reach this decision today that we will soon gavel. We are also proud of having contributed in a modest manner to the achievement of this decision through the current Chair of this Committee. We would like to also thank the delegation of Costa Rica for their valuable contribution to reach this solution. We would like to particularly thank all delegations who participated in the consultations of the Committee on Agriculture for showing flexibility and a spirit of compromise to reach this point today. We hope that this will serve as an example and inspiration to produce a greater and broader result in this organization particularly in the upcoming Ministerial Conference.

1.63. The representative of Iceland delivered the following statement:

1.64. We welcome the positive outcome of today's meeting following the agreement by the Membership on the Review of the Bali Decision on TRQ Administration. It shows us that the WTO can deliver. But the circumstances under which we meet today are far from normal. One Member – Russia – has attacked another Member – Ukraine. The invasion is unprovoked, unjustifiable and brutal. This aggression by Russia is causing widespread destruction and unspeakable human suffering to the Ukrainian people. Russia's attack to Ukraine has further set in motion an economic shock on a global scale which is very much in today's discussion – caused by reduced global supply of food – creating enormous pressure on prices. The cost is already being felt as we have heard today and will disproportionately affect the developing countries. Iceland reiterates its unwavering support for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. We call on Russia to cease its aggression and withdraw its forces immediately from the territory of Ukraine.

1.65. The representative of Georgia delivered the following statement:

1.66. We note with great satisfaction the unanimous decision taken by the WTO Members on the issue of the operation of the Bali Decision on TRQ Administration. Georgia condemns in the strongest possible terms Russia's unprovoked, unjustified and premeditated military aggression against Ukraine which represents a blatant violation of key principles of the UN Charter and undermines international peace and security. We call on the Russian Federation to immediately and without any pre-conditions cease its military aggression against Ukraine and withdraw its military forces from the territory of a sovereign democratic State. In conclusion, we reiterate our unwavering support to the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its international recognized borders.

1.67. The representative of Chinese Taipei delivered the following statement:

1.68. We welcome the decision on the TRQ Underfill Mechanism and thank the Committee on Agriculture and its Chair as well as the Secretariat for their efforts in reaching consensus on the TRQ Administration. The success is much needed at this difficult time. This is an excellent example for WTO Members to reach consensus on other important matters and to deliver solid outcome. We join others in expressing serious concerns regarding the war which has seriously disrupted the food supply chain. The WTO is the proper forum to discuss such disruption of food supply chain and food security related issues.

1.69. The representative of Switzerland delivered the following statement:

1.70. Switzerland welcomes the agreement on the Bali TRQ Mechanism today. We would like to thank the CoA Chair and all delegates involved in finding this solution. This is an important sign towards our ability to still find consensus. Switzerland shares the concerns expressed by other Members today with regard to the current risk of global food insecurity. Switzerland condemns the Russian military aggression on Ukraine in the strongest possible terms. Switzerland calls on Russia to respect its international obligations and to reverse its actions as well as to withdraw its troops and contribute to de-escalation. Furthermore, to mitigate global uncertainty about international markets, we call upon Members to keep markets open and refrain from export restrictions and prohibitions wherever possible. Now more than ever, transparency and predictability are crucial.

1.71. The representative of Canada delivered the following statement:

1.72. First, I would like to make a brief statement supporting the adoption of this General Council decision – the first multilateral outcome on agriculture since 2015. I would like to thank the CoA Chair for his work in steering Members to a consensus decision on this issue. We like to note the hard work of previous Chairs and the contribution of many delegations including the delegation of Costa Rica. Overall, we would like to thank all Members for their pragmatism and constructive engagement over the past few years to lead us to reaching a balanced outcome on the future operation of Paragraph 4 of the Bali TRQ Underfill Mechanism. As we move towards MC12, I would encourage Members to continue to exercise similar pragmatism and exhibit a solution finding spirit of the sort we have exhibited in this situation. I would now turn to the very serious issue that many other Members have referred to. We consider it necessary today to reiterate that Canada strongly condemns President Putin's unjustifiable, unprovoked and illegal invasion of Ukraine. Russia's attacks are causing widespread humanitarian consequences and resulting in the senseless deaths of innocent people. This is not just an attack on Ukraine. This is an attack on international law including the UN Charter as well as democracy, freedom and human rights. We are discussing agriculture today. Therefore, I want to stress the importance of having a fact-based discussion on how the WTO can respond to the global food security crisis caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. No one should be blinded to the one and only reason that we are facing this crisis. Soldiers from the Russian Federation are now laying waste to civilian infrastructure in Ukraine including the farmland, factories and ports that support the production and delivery of a substantial proportion of the world's food supply. Absent this military action by Russia, this illegal action by Russia, that infrastructure would still be working. Absent this military action, cargo ships would still be transiting the Black Sea. Absent this military action, world food prices would not be rising as much as they are. The most effective step that could be taken to alleviate food security problems, to alleviate this crisis, would be for Russia to end its war and withdraw all its troops from Ukraine. Canada also rejects any suggestion that the measures applied by Canada to Russia in response to this illegal aggression limit the ability

of any other Member including Russia to export or import agricultural products or fertilizers. Finally, Canada remains committed to the WTO and to furthering our work here including on the appropriate collective trade policy responses to best ensure food security. We look forward to engaging with Members to ensure that agriculture markets remain open and predictable, and that Members avoid implementing unjustified export restrictive measures or other barriers to trade in response to this crisis.

1.73. The representative of New Zealand delivered the following statement:

1.74. Like other Members, New Zealand condemns in the strongest possible terms President Putin's unprovoked and unjustified attack on Ukraine. Russia's illegal invasion has caused widespread humanitarian consequences and has resulted in the senseless deaths of innocent people. We are now also beginning to see the serious impacts on food supply and prices around the globe. New Zealand welcomes the resolution of the Bali Decision on TRQ Underfill Mechanism today. This is no small feat and is the result of significant effort by Members and various Chairs of the Committee on Agriculture to close this longstanding chapter. Like many other colleagues, we would like to acknowledge and very much appreciate the hard work of all of those involved. Not only is this a momentous achievement for the Committee on Agriculture but also a significant win for the WTO and the multilateral decision-making process. It showcases that consensus is achievable. We hope to use this positive outcome to steer our engagement here at the WTO and see inspiration for the way forward.

1.75. The representative of the Russian Federation delivered the following statement:

1.76. My delegation appreciates the significant efforts invested by the Chairperson of the Committee on Agriculture, the interested WTO Members and the Secretariat to reach agreement on the issue of the future operation of Paragraph 4 of the Bali Decision on TRQ administration in WT/MIN(13)/39. The Russian Federation would like to express its support for the draft decision contained in the Annex to the report by the Chair of the Committee on Agriculture to the General Council in G/AG/32/Add.1. In our view, the current language provides appropriate S&D treatment for developing Members. We would also like to highlight that the consensus reached today demonstrates proper operation of the negotiating function of the WTO. We are looking forward to further achievements on the agricultural negotiating track. I feel pity for all participants of today's meeting who had to listen to numerous interventions which were clearly outside its scope. I assume those interventions to be just part of the informational war conducted by certain members against my country. Those members, unfortunately, think that the WTO is a relevant place for such actions. We don't believe so. However, as those interventions were made, I feel obliged to respond and deliver our views on the issues of food security, raised by other delegations, as well as reply to false allegations made by some Members.

1.77. First, Russia denies the blame for the disruption in the international agricultural market. It is worth remembering that the pandemic and related protectionist measures of some Members have already severely affected global food security efforts in the last two years. Thus, in 2021 wheat and barley have risen in price by 31%. Prices for rapeseed and sunflower oils rose by more than 60%. Prices for one of the main nitrogen fertilizers have tripled in the last 12 months. Against this already worrying background, in the course of the recent month my country has encountered an unprecedented economic aggression from certain WTO Members. Of course, this will to a certain degree reduce commodity supplies from the Russian Federation because of disruption of the traditional Russian import of seeds, agricultural machinery and tools, plant protection chemicals; increase in the cost of freight and insurance of goods from Russia; contractors' uncertainty because of possible repercussions due to the extraterritorial effect of the sanctions; threats of mass arrests of Russian cargo ships and planes; blocking of Russian financial institutions, transportation companies, export support agencies. Summing up, it is strange that the same Members who introduced a full-scale economic blockade against Russia are now accusing it of negatively influencing the markets. Are those members so naïve to believe that the risks of the global food crisis will disappear while their own restrictive and unlawful measures will stay in force?

1.78. Second, we would like to stress that the Russian military forces are acting under strict orders to exclusively target military installations while avoiding civilian casualties and damage to civilian infrastructure. Russian forces do not restrict the freedom of civil navigation and maintain efforts to facilitate the movement of foreign vessels from the Ukrainian ports. Moreover, Russia currently provides aid to the eastern regions of Ukraine, abandoned by the Ukrainian government, by

supplying grain crop seeds. We hope that this will help agriculture producers to sow cereals, corn and sunflower seeds this spring to alleviate the rising global demand. Third, Russia highly values its reputation as a trusted trade partner in the world. Our specialized agencies are working hard to mitigate the negative consequences of sanctions for trade with the MENA region countries and others. We draw Members' attention to the fact that the export of grain crops for international humanitarian assistance goals proceeds without any restrictions on the basis of decisions of the Government of the Russian Federation. Finally, since some Members are repeating the same political statements at every meeting, and we learn nothing new from them, I suggest that, in order to save our time, they present their views collectively and in written form.

1.79. The Chair thanked all delegations for their statements, which had been taken note of. He recalled that the matter at hand was the adoption of a decision on Paragraph 4 of the Decision on TRQ Administration. To respond to the Russian Federation's point, he said that, as usual at formal meetings, statements from all Members would be reflected in the minutes. On the basis of the report by the Chair of the Committee on Agriculture, and in light of the deadline that expired that day to take a decision on this matter, he proposed that the General Council adopted the draft decision contained in G/AG/32/Add.1.

1.80. The General Council so agreed.²

1.81. The Chair congratulated all Members for their pragmatism and constructive spirit – which facilitated arriving at a solution. This was the spirit that should characterize Member's work, and he was grateful to all for this positive action. Once again, on behalf of the General Council, he thanked everyone, in particular the Chair of the Committee on Agriculture who had worked tirelessly to bring this issue to a close.

² The decision was circulated in WT/L/1132.