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UZBEKISTAN

(Speaking as an Observer)

On behalf of the **Government of Uzbekistan** allow me to sincerely congratulate **Switzerland, Kazakhstan** and **WTO** Secretariat for the excellent organization of the **12th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (MC12)**.

For us **WTO** accession is an **absolute priority** and one of the main directions of the foreign economic policy.

We are living in a quite challenging time for multilateral trading system. In these difficult conditions **WTO** remains an important institution that **stimulates economic growth and employment**. In this regard the **MC12** has a very crucial role in building up **beneficial trade rules to all stakeholders**.

In our view, issues that are being discussed within the current **WTO Agenda** have a critical significance to preserve and strengthen the multilateral trading system. Among such areas, we would like to highlight the **Organisation's** response to the **COVID-19 pandemic**, food crisis, elimination of fisheries subsidies and Agricultural reform.

We welcome the new initiative within the **WTO** on **trade and environmental sustainability**. **Uzbekistan** pays a special attention to overcoming consequences of the **climate change, protecting the environment and biodiversity**.

We are determined to achieve the goals of the **Paris Agreement** and to double the **energy efficiency** of our economy by **2030**, increase the share of renewable energy to **25%** of the total generation.

Since **2017**, under the Leadership of the **President** of the **Republic of Uzbekistan H.E. Shavkat Mirziyoyev** we have launched comprehensive reforms towards **creating and enabling market based economy**.

Today we enforce the rule of law, fight corruption without compromise, encourage competition and categorically limit monopolies.

2022-2026 Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan initiated by the **President** clearly stipulates this political will.

Furthermore, creation of **comfortable and attractive conditions for foreign investors** became an important factor to ensure **accelerated development of all sectors and regions** of the country during post-pandemic recovery period.

In addition, I would like to emphasize that the ongoing reforms in **Uzbekistan** have gained an irreversible effect and the country will not deviate from its path of building a democratic society and a free market economy.

I would like to draw attention of **WTO** Members to the fact that since **2016** there were **no new accessions** by candidate countries to the **Organization**.

Moreover, due to the **negative consequences** of the **COVID-19 pandemic**, the **process of accession** to **WTO** has become **even more complicated** and requires serious efforts from the applicant countries to satisfy the requests of Member States within the realities of current challenges.

In this regard, **Uzbekistan fully supports the relevant Paragraph of the MC12 Outcome Document on accessions** and **urges distinguished WTO Members** to be more **flexible** in matters of new accessions, and give **special consideration to this effect**.

As a Coordinator of the **Informal Group of Acceding Countries (IGAG)** at **WTO**, **Uzbekistan** will do its best to promote interests of other acceding states during upcoming meetings.

We consider the process of Uzbekistan's accession as an integral part of the ongoing reforms aimed at further integration of our country into the world economic relations and the multilateral trading system.

At the same time, we build on the belief that liberalization of access to the market of goods and services **should not have a negative impact** on sectors of the country's economy, primarily those that are at the stage of formation or modernization and have a good development potential.

Uzbekistan is interested in becoming a member of the WTO as a developing country and making its effective contribution to the further development of the multilateral trading system.

We are committed to continue our cooperation with Member States and the Secretariat of the **WTO** on implementing technical assistance programs. In this regard, we will be hosting next **China Round Table** on accessions in **Samarkand** with the support of the **WTO** Secretariat and Government of **China** later **this year**.

For the past **two** years, we have intensified our efforts to become a full-fledged member of **WTO**. In **July 2020**, despite the global **pandemic** and after **15**-year break the **4th** meeting of the **Working Party** on **Uzbekistan's** accession to the **WTO** was held.

We also held a number of bilateral negotiations on access to the market of goods and services with interested **WTO** members.

Right after the **MC12** the next **5th** meeting of the **Working Party** on accession to **WTO** will be held on **21 – 22 of June 2022**. We are ambitious about our accession to the **Organization** and we intend to complete this process as quickly as possible.

In conclusion, I would like to thank Mr. **Suleimenov** and Director-General Dr. **Okonjo-Iweala** for all their work to produce a successful **MC12**.
