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**Ministerial Conference  
Twelfth Session  
Geneva, 12-15 June 2022**

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## TWELFTH WTO MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

### PROPOSAL BY BRAZIL

The following communication<sup>1</sup>, dated 7 June 2022, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of Brazil.

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The Ministerial Conference is the highest decision-making body of the WTO, usually meeting every two years. The last Ministerial Conference (MC11) took place more than four years ago, and a long interval was also observed between MC6 in 2005 and MC7 in 2009.

These delays (i) weaken ministerial oversight and guidance; (ii) generate unnecessary uncertainties on the work ahead; and (iii) add more pressure on Members to deliver meaningful results at Ministerials. As we have observed, these uncertainties are even more harmful and disruptive during times of economic crises, with an increased risk that particularly difficult issues generate gridlock.

In Brazil's view, the WTO membership should consider more frequent ministerial engagement. Ideally, as in so many other international fora, such as the OECD, ECOSOC, the IMF, the World Bank and the UNFCCC, WTO ministerial meetings could take place every year, not necessarily to make decisions or deliver on big packages, but rather to exchange views on world trade and the multilateral trading system, debate short and long-term issues and solutions, and provide complex ongoing negotiations, with guidance and political drive.

Brazil believes that yearly high-level meetings would provide the opportunity for the whole WTO membership to show their continued commitment to the rules-based multilateral trading system; bring fresh approaches to Geneva's long outstanding issues; and, also importantly, to address specific trade-related issues and urgencies in a timely manner, allowing the Organization to deliver results, as new challenges arise. The current situation regarding agricultural supply chains and food security and our efforts to articulate a timely WTO response certainly illustrate the potential for more frequent ministerial engagement with the organization.

As conjunctural, time-sensitive, challenges often impact disproportionately developing countries, especially LDCs, annual ministerial meetings would also contribute to improve developing countries' engagement with the WTO. Without failing to recognize that developing countries, especially LDCs, might need some horizontal flexibilities, it seems clear that not all developing countries face the same challenges or are endowed with the same resources or capabilities. More frequent interaction and enhanced debate and discussion among Ministers should lead, over time, to a better and more nuanced comprehension of specific developing countries' needs and expectations regarding the multilateral trading system. Trade must play a critical role in supporting sustainable development.

Finally, and for all the reasons above, Brazil believes that annual ministerial conferences would greatly contribute to rebuild much needed trust among WTO Members, increasing willingness to cooperate at the multilateral level. Strengthening high-level dialogue will contribute to enhancing effectiveness and responsiveness in all three pillars of the WTO, while shielding the multilateral trading system from a backlash of protectionism. With the full engagement of its membership, and

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<sup>1</sup> This communication was previously circulated in document JOB/GC/310 on 25 May 2022.

a better understanding of short and long-term trends and challenges, Brazil is confident that the WTO will deliver on the multilateral trading system's enormous potential for promoting gains of trade, economic growth and sustainable development for all.

In light of the foregoing, Brazil proposes the following draft for a decision by the Ministerial Conference at MC12:

### **DRAFT MINISTERIAL DECISION**

*The Ministerial Conference,*

*Having* regard to paragraph 1 of Article IX of the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization;

*Recalling* that the WTO Agreement provides that the Ministerial Conference shall meet at least once every two years;

*Recognizing* that long intervals between meetings of the Ministerial Conference may negatively impact on ministerial oversight and guidance for the work carried out in the WTO;

*Acknowledging* that trade-related urgencies and challenges often impact disproportionately developing countries, especially least-developed countries, and that more frequent meetings of the Ministerial Conference would contribute to a better understanding of the needs and expectations of specific developing countries regarding the multilateral trading system;

*Desiring* that the WTO respond in a timely manner to trade-related urgencies and challenges as they arise;

Decides as follows:

Following the twelfth Ministerial Conference, the Ministerial Conference shall meet once every year. Its next meeting shall be held in 2023.

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