Environment issues were always part of Israel's national agenda. As the years evolved the importance of those issues to all facets of modern life became much more evident and one might say part of a general consensus. This of course resulted in an increased involvement by parliament and government in environmental matters, and the enactment of new environment laws, by laws and regulations with an intention to preserve, maintain and secure the environment.

Israel's keen and growing interest in environment matters and the necessity to create efficient standards and regulations, and to maintain and enforce them, brought to the establishment a newly created Ministry of the Environment which is also responsible for inspection and surveillance as well as education and research in this area.

Israel, with its limited natural resources and its lack of water and other constraints, is not in a position to stand aside and avoid the issue. On the contrary, Israel is active in the international arena and has acceded to international environmental instruments or adopted and adhered to the principles and concepts decided in others.

The connection between trade and environment is an obvious one as is the importance of the subject. We therefore commend the EFTA countries for initiating the debate and advocating an open and free discussion of the subject in GATT. Israel is in favour of this initiative and for reactivating the GATT Working Group on this subject.

In this statement I will refrain from going into detail as to policy measures taken on environmental grounds or try to identify sectors of particular interest to us or others. As a general remark, I would like to state that in our belief there should not be an apparent contradiction between trade and environment. There is, of course, a strong relationship and wide areas of convergence between the two. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to find the necessary equilibrium between them so that on the one hand trade is not affected in an adverse way and on the other hand the issue of environment gets the proper attention and care it deserves.
In this process, consideration should be given so as not to hinder the economies and trade of those countries which are in the process of development.

Only continuous examination of the issues and points outlined in the Note by the Chairman of the CONTRACTING PARTIES and others, in the GATT as elsewhere, would help us in achieving our goal.