

JZ statement under Agenda Item 2  
71<sup>st</sup> Executive Session of the Trade and Development Board  
16 February 2022

Madam Chair, Madam Secretary General, Excellencies and distinguished colleagues,

JZ wishes to start by expressing its appreciation to Secretary General Grynszpan for her remarks. We also thank Director Kozul-Wright for his presentation and congratulate the Division on Globalization and Development Strategies on the 40th anniversary of the Trade and Development Report. There can be no denying the value that the Trade and Development Report has brought to the debate over these decades on how best to promote development from a developing country perspective. We acknowledge the intellectual and analytical effort that goes into preparing a report with as far-reaching breadth and scope as the TDR - from climate, to finance and debt, to trade. The Trade and Development Report 2021 similarly offers a number of useful insights, constructive critiques and interesting ideas such as the *climate-conscious developmental State*, particularly for developing countries. Furthermore, true to the occasion, the Report also stands out for its richness in terms of historical perspective. On a side note, the TDR subtitles contain a number great soundbites.

That being said, it is precisely that breadth and scope of the TDR that makes it more vulnerable to sweeping statements that may be unrealistic or are unsubstantiated. Because it is viewed as the flagship publication UNCTAD, the TDR should go the extra mile to ensure that this is not the case.

For instance, in reference to debt vulnerabilities, the report states that “requiring developing countries to enter bilateral or plurilateral trade and investment agreements is no solution” because “they are not negotiated in the WTO, the functioning of which at least allows developing countries to form a united front.<sup>1</sup>” Not only is the link between debt vulnerabilities and voluntarily trade and investment agreements questionable, it assumes that the WTO functions on the basis of a united front for developing countries - an assumption at odds with the fact that more than half of the WTO’ s LDCs are voluntarily engaged in plurilateral negotiations.

Another key argument in the report stresses the need for convergence between ‘special and differential treatment’ and ‘common but differentiated responsibilities,’ with the first step being to widen non-reciprocal SDT in trade and environment rules - a suggestion that would seem unrealistic in light of the realities in the WTO. It also suggests without substantiation that an alleviation of intellectual property rights protection may be the best way to ensure global dissemination of low-carbon technologies and uses this view as

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<sup>1</sup> p.IV.

a basis for calling for a multilateral arrangement including the expansion of TRIPS flexibilities for developing countries in relation to climate-related goods and services.<sup>2</sup>

Painting the stance of advanced economies on the TRIPS waiver as “as deference to corporate interests” and alleging that the debt burden on developing countries is unlikely to be eased because of “a general reluctance to pressure private creditors to the negotiating table”<sup>3</sup> are also similarly unsubstantiated.

JZ reiterates the importance of making sure UNCTAD’s publications are objective and consistent, based on clear and accountable evidence, and take into account the current economic and political context. We again highlight the need for systemic and regular peer review before the flagship publications are released, in line with the Bridgetown Covenant. JZ looks forward to the Secretariat making further progress in this area.

Thank you.

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IV<sup>2</sup> p.141

<sup>3</sup> p.II(Overview) and p.55