

Mr Chair,

Norway welcomes Israel's accession to the OECD, and we look forward to cooperating with Israel on a wide range of policy issues within the organization.

The accession process leading up to the invitation to join the OECD has been long and thorough, and Israel has been measured against the principles of the OECD Convention, standards and instruments in a wide array of areas. All together eighteen of the OECD's committees have carried out in-depth evaluations of Israel, and Israeli authorities have been challenged in the process. Norway has been among the countries actively participating, and raising issues where we saw the need for further adjustments or improvements. Israeli authorities have showed their commitment to the OECD by readily reacting to requests by OECD bodies along the way.

The OECD's main working method is the peer review, through which member countries regularly receive its peers' recommendations in key policy areas such as the financial sector, health, education and public governance. This approach often serves as a catalyst for constructive change and reforms – not least because results are presented publicly, and hence make it easier for the population to hold governments accountable. For Israel we have seen that the accession review process has sparked much debate on social issues and the situation of minority groups in Israel. We hope that the peer review mechanism will provide a positive impetus in this important matter in the future. We have also seen that Israel has become a party to the Anti-Bribery Convention, and that national legislation has been amended to increase market access in the financial services sector. Several other changes in legislation, regulations and policy have been undertaken to adjust to OECD standards, including in the area of environment and climate change policies. To us the accession process, building on the concept of peer reviews, demonstrates the value of the OECD, and the value of peer pressure in bringing about change in member countries. This is our main instrument to

uphold the fundamental values that all member countries are expected to share – among them a commitment to pluralist democracy, based on the rule of law and respect for human rights.

In a number of areas Israel already from the outset compared well with OECD best practices, and through the accession process member countries have also been able to learn from Israel's experience in areas such as innovation and scientific and technological policy.

When we now welcome Israel to join the OECD as a member, Norway would like to make it clear that we do so on the basis of the Israeli territory as it is recognized under international law. We understand the accession of Israel to the OECD to include only the territory that was under Israeli control on 4th June 1967. This definition is in accordance with the view of the International Court of Justice, as is made clear in its Advisory Opinion of 2004 on the Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

We also attach a special importance to the Exchange of Letters between the OECD and Israel on 29. April regarding the Post-Accession Footnote and to the other commitments by Israel related to the geographical scope of the statistics provided to the OECD. These commitments serve as a reassurance that Israel's accession will not affect the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli Settlements in the West Bank under international law.

Mr Chair,

Norway welcomes the many and positive commitments that Israel has made throughout the OECD accession process. We enjoy a long-standing and amiable bilateral relation with Israel and are looking forward to continuing this in the spirit of cooperation and friendship also within the OECD.

Thank you.