



Council of the
European Union

Brussels, 19 September 2022
(OR. en)

12459/22

LIMITE

MAMA 143
MED 42
ISR 8

'I/A' ITEM NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 2)/Council
Subject:	12th EU-Israel Association Council
	- Establishment of the EU position

1. With a view to the 12th meeting of the EU-Israel Association Council (to be held in October 2022, date and agenda to be confirmed), the Mashreq/Maghreb Working Party has, for its part, agreed the European Union's position (EU statement) as set out in the Annex.
2. Subject to confirmation by the Permanent Representatives Committee, the Council is therefore invited to approve the draft EU statement as set out in the Annex.

**TWELFTH MEETING OF
THE EU-ISRAEL ASSOCIATION COUNCIL
(XX Xxxxx 2022)**

Statement of the European Union

1. The European Union (EU) welcomes this 12th meeting of the EU-Israel Association Council. The EU attaches great significance to its close relations with the State of Israel and reiterates the importance of further developing our broad bilateral partnership through comprehensive political dialogue and cooperation to unlock the full potential of EU-Israel relations.
2. The EU trusts that the resumption of the Association Council will pave the way for the **resumption of other meetings** that are essential for further developing a fruitful and comprehensive relationship, notably the Association Committee as well as the EU-Israel Political Dialogue and the informal working groups on human rights and international organisations, which were last held in 2016. The EU notes with satisfaction the regular and numerous meetings of the **subcommittees which have been held under the Association Agreement and the cooperation in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plan**, whose validity has been extended by the Council in January 2022 for further three years to give the EU and Israel the full opportunity to take forward their cooperation, including through possible negotiation of partnership priorities.
3. The EU and Israel have close and mutually beneficial political, cultural, people-to-people, tourism, trade and investment relations, as well as significant economic, financial, research and innovation and security cooperation, including on crisis management and civil protection. The close partnership has also been reflected through an intensification of high-level visits, in particular the official visits to Israel of the President of the European Parliament in May 2022 and of the President of the European Commission in June 2022 as well as the meeting of the then Alternate Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Yair Lapid with EU Foreign Ministers in the margins of the Foreign Affairs Council on 13 July 2021. The EU welcomes the recent signature of a Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation related to natural gas between the EU, Israel and Egypt, which emphasises the importance of cooperation in the region. The EU underlines the importance of communicating to European and Israeli citizens about the mutual benefits of EU-Israel cooperation with a view to increasing the public awareness on both sides.

4. The EU reiterates its **condemnation in the strongest possible terms of Russia's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine**, which grossly violates international law and undermines European and global security and stability, and welcomes Israel's vote in the United Nations General Assembly on the relevant resolutions. The EU has responded in a united and resolute manner by adopting sanctions, holding Russia to account, and supporting Ukraine with unprecedented humanitarian, financial and military aid. The EU welcomes Israel's assistance to Ukraine and its citizens, including the supply of defensive military equipment and humanitarian aid. The EU appreciates Israel's commitment to avoid the circumvention of sanctions through its territory and will continue to work together with Israel on this issue.
5. The **COVID-19 pandemic** has demonstrated the importance of scientific, medical, humanitarian and political cooperation in addressing global challenges. The EU and Israel are important partners in this regard. Since 15 September 2021, digital COVID certificates have been mutually recognised between the EU and Israel. International cooperation and solidarity continue to be key to tackle the many facets of the pandemic, from health to the socio-economic impact. The EU welcomes the very active **EU-Israel cooperation in research, innovation and the medical sector** since the onset of the pandemic and will further build on this cooperation.
6. The significance that the EU attaches to its relations with Israel is also highlighted in the **Joint Communication by the European Commission and the High Representative on a Renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood – A New Agenda for the Mediterranean**, adopted on 9 February 2021. A democratic, more stable, greener and prosperous Southern Neighbourhood is a shared strategic priority and fundamental interest for both the EU and its Southern Neighbourhood partners.
7. The EU considers Israel as a key **partner for cooperation in the five priority policy areas that the Joint Communication identifies**, notably human development, good governance and the rule of law; resilience, prosperity and digital transition; peace and security; migration and mobility; green transition: climate resilience, energy, and the environment. The Joint Communication suggests that the EU steps up its existing cooperation with Israel in the digital, research and innovation areas and identifies opportunities to reinforce cooperation in related areas of mutual interest.
8. The EU welcomes Israel's commitment to, and engagement in, the **Union for the Mediterranean**, in which 43 partners from the EU and the Mediterranean engage with a view to effectively address common regional challenges notably climate change and water management. The EU appreciates cooperation with Israel in this forum as well as in other international fora. The EU welcomes the close cooperation between the Knesset and the European Parliament notably with regular Inter-Parliamentary meetings.

9. Under the new **Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument** for 2021-2027 multiannual financial framework, Israel continues to benefit from a yearly allocation in the form of institutional cooperation (Twinning projects and other forms of technical support). It also benefits from EU expertise through Technical Assistance and Information Exchange instrument (TAIEX) activities and from other thematic and regional programmes. The EU welcomes the successful completion of several Twinning projects and TAIEX activities in various fields in recent years. In 2021, Israel's public administration benefited from 19 projects within TAIEX, which focused on issues such as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, on cybercrime, digital policy, youth employment, electricity trade, sustainable production and consumption and the Green Deal and green recovery. The EU encourages further use of the instrument.
10. The EU reiterates its **fundamental commitment to Israel's security**, including with regard to threats in the region. The EU firmly condemns recent terror attacks in Israel as well as all forms of terrorism and remains committed to the prevention and fight against terrorism and violent extremism.
11. The EU welcomes the **normalisation of relations between Israel and a number of Arab states** in the region, which is beneficial to all countries involved and a fundamental step for the stabilisation of the region as a whole. The EU is exploring opportunities for regional and trilateral cooperation and joint initiatives opening up new perspective for business, people, trade, travel, research, the environment as well as in a number of other areas. The EU reiterates its commitment to a comprehensive and lasting peace for the entire region and stands ready to work to this end together with its regional and international partners. In this regard, the EU will seek to encourage and build upon the recent establishment of diplomatic relations between Israel and a number of Arab countries, with a view to enhancing the prospects to reach a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East Peace Process.
12. The EU reaffirms its long-standing position on the Middle East Peace Process, as set out in several Council conclusions. The EU is united in its **commitment to achieving a two-state solution** - based on the parameters set out in the Council conclusions of July 2014 that allows the State of Israel to live side by side in peace, security and mutual recognition with an independent, democratic, contiguous, sovereign and viable State of Palestine, with Jerusalem as the future capital of both states. The EU and its Member States will continue to respect the international consensus on Jerusalem embodied in the relevant United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions until the final status of Jerusalem is resolved. The EU is gravely concerned that the **occupation of the Palestinian territory that began in 1967** continues to this day. The EU welcomes the steps taken recently on both sides to improve cooperation within the framework of their signed agreements, including high level political meetings, and calls on Israel to take further steps to significantly improve the lives of the Palestinian people.

13. The EU considers that it remains of utmost **importance to restore a political horizon** towards a two-state solution, to witness real and tangible progress on the ground, develop confidence-building measures, improve living conditions for the people and open the path towards relaunching of the peace process. The EU deplores the increase in violence that not only results in tragic loss of lives, but also fuels tensions and animosity. It calls on all sides to genuinely recommit to reaching a two-state solution in order to enhance stability, increase prosperity and strengthen security for Israelis and Palestinians alike.
14. The EU recalls that a lasting solution to the conflict must be achieved on the basis of the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions, the Madrid principles including land for peace, the Roadmap, the agreements previously reached by the parties and of the Arab Peace Initiative. Securing a **just and lasting peace**, which resolves all permanent status issues, will require an increased common international effort. The EU is ready to fully support Israelis and Palestinians towards a renewed commitment to the peace process, and will work actively, including through the engagement and contribution of the EU Special Representative for the Middle East Peace Process, with all relevant stakeholders, including the United States, regional stakeholders and the United Nations. The EU expects the parties to demonstrate genuine engagement with the EU with a view to reviving the peace process.
15. The EU strongly **opposes all actions that undermine the viability of the two-state solution** and urges Israel and the Palestinians to demonstrate, through policies and actions, a genuine commitment to a peace process resulting in a two-state solution in order to rebuild trust and create a path back to meaningful negotiations. To this end, the EU will continue to closely monitor developments on the ground and their broader implications and will consider further action in order to protect the viability of the two-state solution, which is constantly eroded by new facts on the ground, including through settlement expansion.
16. Reaffirming its commitment to implement previous Council conclusions, UNSCR 2334 (2016), as well as the applicability of international human rights and humanitarian law in the occupied Palestinian territory, **the EU reiterates its strong opposition to Israel's settlement policy and activities**, including in and around East Jerusalem, and especially in sensitive areas such as E1. Such actions as evictions, forced transfers, including in Masafer Yatta, demolitions, including of EU funded projects, and confiscations of homes will only escalate an already tense environment and threaten the viability of a two-state solution. Settlements are illegal under international law. The EU will not recognise changes to the 1967 lines, unless agreed by the parties. The EU calls on Israel to halt continued settlement expansion, which have reached record highs in the past years, evictions,

demolitions and forced transfers. It calls on Israel to allow for a tangible improvement of freedom of movement and access for the Palestinians, to enable accelerated Palestinian construction, as well as social and economic development in Area C, and reverse the worsening of living conditions for Palestinians in Area C. The EU firmly condemns settler violence and calls for accountability.

17. The EU is concerned about the Israeli government's announcement to introduce new rules regulating access to the West Bank, which – if implemented – would result in further entry restrictions. The EU will continue to engage with the Israeli authorities and calls for the necessary adjustments to ensure fair treatment of EU citizens and other foreign nationals travelling to and residing in the West Bank.
18. The EU **recalls the specific significance of the Holy Sites** and makes a strong call for **upholding the status quo** put in place in 1967 for the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif in line with previous understandings and with respect to Jordan's special role. Underlining the necessity to respect the status quo also for the Christian holy sites, which are under increasing pressure, the EU reiterates the importance of maintaining peaceful coexistence of all three monotheistic religions and their practitioners.
19. The EU strongly condemns the **indiscriminate launching of rockets by Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and other terrorist groups** into Israel. The EU recognises Israel's right to self-defence and to protect its civilian population, while underlining that this right must be exercised in a proportionate manner and in full respect of international humanitarian law. The EU equally recalls the responsibilities of the de facto authorities in Gaza in this regard. The EU calls for the release of the two Israeli citizens held in Gaza and for the return of the remains of the two other Israeli citizens.
20. The EU deplores the loss of civilian lives during the **escalation in violence in and around Gaza in August 2022**, including a number of children and women. The EU calls for a timely and thorough investigation into these civilian casualties. The EU calls on all parties to take necessary steps to produce a **fundamental change to the political, security and economic situation in the Gaza Strip**, including the end of the closure and a full opening of the crossing points, while addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns. While welcoming the easing of some restrictions by Israel, the EU calls for further and structured lifting of restrictions to allow for early recovery and reconstruction efforts, basic service delivery, structural improvement of the lives of the millions of people living in Gaza under dismal conditions, as well as for full and unimpeded humanitarian access. The EU will continue to contribute towards the development of Gaza through investments in reforms, support to economic sector and key infrastructures, among others in water and energy sectors, while Israel is expected to facilitate such efforts.

21. The EU is concerned about the increasingly **high number of civilian casualties**, as a result of actions inter alia by Israeli security forces, and recalls that the use of force must be proportionate and in line with international humanitarian law and only as a last resort when it is strictly unavoidable in order to protect life. Maximum efforts should be undertaken to avoid putting children in harm's way. The EU reiterates its call for a thorough investigation that clarifies all the circumstances that led to Shireen Abu Akleh's death, and that those responsible are brought to justice. The EU remains gravely concerned by the high levels of incitement and provocation on all sides and across media platforms. The EU reiterates its call on all sides to jointly and resolutely fight incitement to violence and hate speech.
22. The EU will continue to call upon the Palestinian Authority to hold free, transparent, and inclusive elections without further delay. The EU will continue to urge all Palestinian factions to engage in good faith in the reconciliation process, to adhere to previous agreements, renounce violence and terrorism, and recognise Israel's right to exist and to commit to democratic principles, including the rule of law. The EU calls on Israel to fulfil its commitment to allow for **Palestinian elections** to be held also in East Jerusalem, and to facilitate election observation missions.
23. The EU and its Member States are committed to ensure continued, full and effective implementation of existing EU legislation and bilateral arrangements applicable to settlements products. The EU expresses its commitment to ensure that - in line with international law - all agreements between the State of Israel and the EU must unequivocally and explicitly indicate their inapplicability to the territory occupied by Israel in 1967. This does not constitute a boycott of the State of Israel, which the EU strongly opposes.
24. The EU reaffirms its proposal, as endorsed in the Council conclusions of December 2013, of an **unprecedented package of political, economic and security support to be offered to and developed with both parties** in the context of a final status agreement. The EU underlines that the future development of the relations between the EU and both the Israeli and Palestinian partners will also depend on their engagement towards a lasting peace based on a two-state solution. The EU is convinced that this support and partnership, by anchoring both the State of Israel and a future State of Palestine in an ever closer relationship with Europe, will provide a strategic framework for their stable, secure and prosperous development. The EU's continued support to Palestinian state-building requires a credible prospect for the establishment of a viable Palestinian state, based on respect of the rule of law and human rights. The EU will engage with other regional and international actors to explore new perspectives for a comprehensive regional peace process.

25. The EU notes the importance of the full implementation and updating of the **Paris Protocol**, including regarding full, timely, predictable and transparent transfer of tax and customs revenues. The EU is ready to support relevant measures, including the transfers of customs responsibilities, the full implementation of e-VAT and the creation of other trade-related infrastructures.
26. Promoting peace and stability and achieving de-escalation of tensions in the broader Middle East is a key priority for the EU. Any efforts to build and consolidate confidence should remain inclusive. **Iran** is central to security in the region, though its direct and indirect support to political and military proxies as well as the ballistic proliferation and transfer of missiles and weapons to state and non-state actors remain an important source of regional instability. The restoration and full re-implementation of the **JCPoA** has the potential to contribute positively to regional prosperity and security. It could further encourage a constructive approach in the region as well as offer a platform for further efforts to build and consolidate confidence.
27. The EU continues to be very concerned by the ongoing conflict in **Syria**, now in its twelfth year, and its regional implications, including for Israel. The EU remains committed to the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Syrian state, and recalls that any sustainable solution to the conflict requires a genuine and inclusive political transition in line with UNSCR 2254 and the 2012 Geneva communiqué negotiated by the Syrian parties within the UN-facilitated Geneva process. The EU commends neighbouring and other countries for hosting large numbers of Syrian refugees for more than a decade. The EU will continue to do its utmost to provide assistance to those in need inside Syria and also in refugee-hosting countries, until Syrians can voluntarily return home with safety and dignity according to UN standards. The EU hosted the sixth Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the region on 9-10 May 2022, where the international community pledged close to EUR 6.4 billion for 2022 and beyond. The EU remains very concerned about the security situation in the Golan Heights, and will remain firmly committed to pursue accountability for the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons, human rights violations and abuses and other violations of international law, including humanitarian law.
28. The EU reiterates its commitment to **Lebanon's** unity, sovereignty, stability, independence and territorial integrity. The EU also stresses the importance of the full implementation of all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions, including 1559, 1680, 1701 and 1757. The EU underlines its continued support to the role and mission of UNIFIL and commends the role of the Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL in maintaining peace and stability in South Lebanon. The EU welcomes the resumption of discussions between Lebanon and Israel on the delineation of their maritime boundary that are facilitated by the US and hosted by UNSCOL in UNIFIL premises. The EU encourages Israel and Lebanon to clear obstacles and make swift progress in this regard, bearing in mind the positive effects a successful outcome will have for both parties, for the peace and stability in the region and wider cooperation in the field of energy.

29. The EU reiterates its strategic interest in a stable and secure environment in the **Eastern Mediterranean** and the framework set by the European Council conclusions, aiming at promoting regional stability. Solutions to outstanding issues should be found through peaceful dialogue and in full respect of international law. De-escalation of tensions in the interest of regional stability and promotion of good neighbourly relations in a sustainable way is essential. Regional cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean, including on energy transition, must be developed in accordance with international law. Last year, the EU acceded the EastMed Gas Forum, to which the EU grants financial support, as an observer. Existing cooperation initiatives in the Eastern Mediterranean, including Projects of Common Interest (PCIs), can provide a basis for building wider regional partnerships. The EU also notes positively ongoing project-based cooperation between Israel and EU Member States, with the aim of advancing peace, security and stability in the region.
30. The EU is determined to win the **fight against antisemitism and to promote non-discrimination** in the EU and around the world. Given the significant rise of antisemitism across Europe, the Commission adopted in October 2021 its first-ever comprehensive strategy to combat antisemitism and foster Jewish life, to complement and support EU Member States' efforts. The Strategy sets out measures focusing on: (1) preventing and combating all forms of antisemitism; (2) protecting and fostering Jewish life in the EU; and (3) education, research and Holocaust remembrance. These measures are complemented by the EU's international efforts to address antisemitism globally. The strategy supports EU Member States' efforts in adopting national strategies and actions against antisemitism in line with the 2018 Council Declaration on combating antisemitism, the 2020 Council Declaration on mainstreaming the fight against antisemitism across policy areas and the 2022 Council conclusions on combating racism and antisemitism. Israel is a key partner for the European Union, including in the global fight against antisemitism. The EU will seek to further reinforce the EU-Israel High-Level Seminar on combating racism, antisemitism and xenophobia, co-organised annually, with a focus on operational follow-up. The EU Framework Decision on combating racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law provides a strong legal framework to combat antisemitic hate crimes and hate speech, including public condoning, denial or gross trivialisation of the Holocaust in a manner likely to incite to violence or hatred. The work of the European Commission Coordinator on Combating Antisemitism and Fostering Jewish Life further reflects the fight against antisemitism is a priority in the EU. The EU is determined to fight antisemitism online, in particular antisemitic hate speech, conspiracy myths, Holocaust denial and distortion. The EU will also promote, in accordance with the right to freedom of expression, a culture characterised by tolerance, inclusiveness and mutual respect, online and offline, in line with the EU Council Conclusions on combating racism and antisemitism of 2 March 2022. Since 2017, the Commission has been using the non-legally binding working definition of antisemitism of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), adopted in Bucharest (2016), as a practical guidance tool and a basis for its work to combat antisemitism and it encourages its adoption and use. The EU also cooperates closely with the IHRA on other Holocaust-related issues, including

through regular interaction between the European Commission Coordinator on Combatting Antisemitism and Fostering Jewish Life. The EU is committed to exploring further areas of cooperation on Holocaust remembrance, including through the European Holocaust Remembrance Infrastructure (EHRI), given the increasing importance of Holocaust remembrance and civic education in order to counter the development of antisemitic prejudices and stereotypes.

31. The EU remains resolute in its commitment **to promote non-discrimination and protect the right to freedom of religion or belief**. The EU will promote and protect **the right to freedom of religion or belief** and condemn any act of discrimination, violence or persecution on religious or belief grounds, including acts of antisemitism, in political and human rights dialogues and in broader cooperation. The EU is committed to continue to be active in the UN fora to promote and protect freedom of religion or belief, in particular in the Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly. The EU will continue to lead on resolutions on freedom of religion or belief at the UN, and will continue to engage and actively support the work of the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief. The EU reaffirms that freedom of religion or belief and freedom of expression are interdependent, interrelated, and mutually reinforcing rights.
32. The EU recalls that relations between Israel and the EU shall be based on respect for **human rights and democratic principles**, as enshrined in Article 2 of the EU-Israel Association Agreement. In this context, the values of democracy, respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, and the importance of a vibrant civil society stand central to the EU-Israel partnership, including as regards the people living under occupation in the Palestinian territory. In this context, the EU would highly welcome the resumption of a regular dialogue with the Israeli side on human rights issues.
33. The EU encourages Israel to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of all persons, including those belonging to **minorities**, notably the Arab minority, to enhance their integration into Israeli society, to protect their rights, to reduce economic and social disparities and to ensure that all asylum applications are treated in accordance with international law and international standards. The EU encourages Israel also to enhance the participation of all minority groups in policy and governance processes at all levels and to avoid any discrimination in law and practice. The EU calls for a comprehensive and equitable solution with regard to unrecognised Bedouin villages.
34. The EU promotes **gender equality** and the full enjoyment of all human rights by all women and girls and their empowerment as a priority across all areas of action, in line with international commitment. The elimination of all forms of discrimination and exclusion, and all forms of sexual and gender-based violence, and full and meaningful participation and leadership of women and girls are fundamental for sustainable development, economic growth, peace and security. The EU welcomes steps taken by Israel to increase participation rates in the workforce and improve the conditions of work for

Arab women, as well as to combat domestic violence and all forms of sexual and gender-based violence and discrimination.

35. The EU recalls its commitment to promote and protect the full and equal enjoyment of human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (**LGBTI**) persons. The EU has a major partner in Israel when it comes to addressing the inequalities, discrimination, and violence affecting LGBTI persons, including in international fora. The EU commends Israel for enhancing protection and promotion of the human rights of LGBTI persons, including by means of legislation.
36. The EU recalls that compliance with **international humanitarian law and international human rights law** by states and non-state actors, including accountability, is a cornerstone for peace and security. The EU calls on Israel to adhere strictly to the principles governing the use of force, including necessity, distinction and proportionality, as well as to promote impartiality and effectiveness of the investigatory mechanisms of alleged misconduct of law enforcement bodies or defence forces.
37. The EU is proud of its continued support to **civil society** that contributes to peace efforts and confidence building between Israelis and Palestinians. The EU is deeply concerned by the recent raids on six Palestinian civil society organisations, as part of a worrying reduction of space for civil society in the occupied Palestinian territory. A free and strong civil society is indispensable for promoting democratic values and for the two-state solution. The EU calls on Israel to refrain from any action that would prevent these organisations from continuing their critical human rights, humanitarian and development work in the occupied Palestinian territory. In case Israel makes convincing evidence available that would justify reviewing the EU's policy towards the six Palestinian civil society organisations, the EU would act accordingly. It is crucial to ensure a safe and enabling civic space, both online and offline, and that anti-terrorism legislation does not lead to undermining civil society and its valuable work and contributions to building fairer and more peaceful societies and to the pursuit of accountability. The EU reiterates its support for **human rights defenders, journalists and other media workers**.
38. The EU remains concerned about the extensive recourse by Israel to **administrative detention** without formal charge. Under international law detainees have the right to be informed about the charges underlying their detention and to have the legality of their detention determined without undue delay, as well as the right to legal assistance, due process and a fair trial. The EU calls for the full respect of international human rights obligations towards all prisoners, including in the context of arrest, interrogation and detention.

39. The promotion, protection, fulfilment and respect for the **rights of the child** are a priority for EU human rights policy. The EU calls on Israel to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of Palestinian minors faced with arrest and detention, in line with international obligations and standards regarding the detention of children, including in cases of security offences, and ending the practice of administrative detention. Israel should ensure children in Gaza can access specialised medical treatment outside Gaza without delay and that health and education facilities, ambulances and protected personnel are not targeted in security operations. The EU calls for the protection of children, including ensuring their right to education in a safe and secure school environment.
40. The EU strongly encourages Israel to cooperate fully with **United Nations** human rights mechanisms. The EU calls on Israel to reverse its publicly stated freeze in relations with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, including in relation to the issuance of visas for international staff. The EU welcomes Israel's ongoing cooperation with the Council of Europe and its willingness to further strengthen cooperation with this body.
41. The EU is Israel's largest trading partner and Israel is among the EU's biggest trading partners in the Mediterranean area with the most diversified structure of **trade**. Total trade in goods was close to EUR 37 billion in 2021 while trade in services was approaching EUR 14 billion in 2020. In spite of some remaining market access impediments, the overall conditions for bilateral trade are good. The EU welcomes the regulatory reform in force since June 1, which has simplified import procedures for a variety of consumer goods, abolishing dozens of national import standards and relying instead on compliance with EU and other international standards. The EU welcomes the progress in the modernisation of the Pan-Euro-Mediterranean (PEM) Convention and acknowledges the positive role that Israel is playing in the process. The EU expects that the new rules can be applied in the trade between Israel and the EU as soon as possible, before the end of 2022. The EU recalls the importance of the Technical Arrangement between the EU and Israel and of the Court of Justice's case law in case C-363/18 on products originating from settlements and stresses the mutual interest in ensuring its continued good and therefore also more efficient functioning.
42. The EU values Israel's close cooperation with the EU when trade irritants arise and particularly appreciates the pilot project put in place to address the long-standing import authorisation practice of the Israeli authorities for medical devices which discriminates among EU Member States. However, the EU continues to be concerned by some **market access** issues, notably by the lack of data exclusivity protection for biological medicines in Israel as well as cumbersome certification process for EU exports of kosher meat.

43. The EU is interested in continuing to work on trade-related issues under discussion with Israel and in **sharing practices** in different areas, including on standards for agricultural and industrial goods as well as the protection of geographical indications for agricultural products and other foodstuffs and discussions on trade defence procedures. It is interested in continuing cooperation on agricultural policy, rural development, and organic farming.
44. The EU recalls the commitment by Israel and the Palestinian Authority at the Trade Ministerial Conference of the Union for the Mediterranean of 11 November 2010 on a **Package of measures to facilitate the trade of Palestinian products with other Euro-Mediterranean partners**. These commitments have been recalled at the Trade Ministerial Conferences of 19 March 2018 and of 10 November 2020. On both occasions, the EU presented a Technical Progress Report on the progress on the Package of measures. The EU encourages Israel and the Palestinian Authority to progress on the facilitation of Palestinian trade, including in the Trade Trilateral Working Group. The EU stands ready to support these efforts and appreciates recent concrete progress in trade facilitation, notably containerised transport between the West Bank and Jordan via the Allenby/King Hussein Bridge.
45. The EU welcomes the successful **counter-terrorism** dialogues initiated with Israel in 2015. The last dialogue took place in April 2022. Terrorism is a constantly evolving threat which calls for enhanced international cooperation and improved counterterrorism methods for the prevention and fight against terrorism. Though faced with different challenges, the EU and Israel share the same determination to prevent and counter terrorism. The EU looks forward to taking the EU-Israel counterterrorism dialogue further in developing practical actions, from addressing root causes to establishing and sharing effective and gender-responsive counterterrorism methods, including in the area of non-conventional threats, such as Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) threats, transport and aviation security, counter-UAS (drones), as well as countering the promotion of violent extremism online and the financing of terrorism. The EU also welcomes the progress made in the negotiations with Israel to allow for the exchange of information between Europol and designated Israeli law enforcement authorities. All counterterrorism measures must comply with international law, including international human rights law and humanitarian law.
46. Building on a fruitful first exchange of views, the EU and Israel will also explore the possibility to further their cooperation on **cyber issues**, notably the promotion of the application of international law in cyberspace, including international humanitarian law, implementation of the voluntary norms of responsible state behaviour in cyberspace, notably through the establishment of a Programme of Action to advance responsible state behaviour in cyberspace and exchanging information and best practices, and Research and Development cooperation. The EU shares with Israel a common approach with regard to the UN negotiations on a possible new instrument on countering the use of Information and Communication Technologies for criminal purposes.

47. The EU welcomes the positive impact of the comprehensive **EU-Israel Euro-Mediterranean Aviation Agreement** which was signed in 2013 and was ratified by the European Parliament in June 2020. Before the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the agreement led to a substantial decrease in airfares, contributed to a significant increase in the number of passengers flying between the EU and Israel, as well as in the number of airlines offering services and the number of city-pairs being served generating considerable economic benefits and new opportunities. Encouraging early 2022 figures point to a likely resumption of these trends in the post-pandemic era. In this context, Israel's conclusion of a comprehensive agreement with the EUROCONTROL in 2016 is an important accompanying measure to ensure fully integrated coordination on all operational and technical aspects of air traffic management. The EU appreciates the concrete **cooperation with the European Maritime Safety Agency** based on Israel's participation in the relevant EU-funded programme (SAFEMED) on ship's safety, security and sustainability. In this context, the EU welcomes the upcoming ratification by Israel of the Annex VI to the MARPOL Convention and Israel's recent signature of the Conditions of Use for CleanSeaNet (maritime pollution surveillance by satellite service). The EU counts on the continued support of Israel to establish a **Sulphur Emissions Control Area in the Mediterranean Sea** in view of its adoption by the International Maritime Organization at the end of 2022 with an ambitious entry into force in 2025. The EU notes that exchanges are also underway on railway transport, the extension of TEN-T to the development of a Mediterranean network, transport security, the promotion of multimodal transport, sustainable urban mobility, (cooperative) intelligent transport systems and cooperative, connected and automated mobility.
48. The EU calls for active engagement of all partners to ensure that the international climate, biodiversity and environment commitments are effectively implemented, as a basis for achieving the United Nation's 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals and the objectives of the Paris Agreement. The EU welcomes Israel's engagement in the implementation of the Paris agreement within the UN framework convention on **climate change** and commends the progress on policies on renewable energies and adaptation to climate change, and in particular the submission of the revised nationally determined contribution (NDC) and the net-zero pledge by 2050 submitted ahead of the 26th Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow in November 2021. In this context, the EU invites Israel to draft and adopt long-term strategies for both mitigation and adaptation well in time for the 2023 global stocktaking, to give clear signal on the implementation trajectory towards the goals set. Furthermore, the EU encourages Israel to set a specific target for the provision of climate finance to reach developed countries' commitment to mobilise jointly US\$ 100 billion a year by 2020 through 2025 and to participate actively in the negotiations of the New Collective Quantified Goal as well as to participate actively in the Glasgow – Sharm El Sheikh work programme on the Global Goal on Adaptation as well as dialogue on loss and damage within United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The EU stands ready to engage in a dialogue to accelerate ambitious policies to drive the green transition and to enhance global ambition, to discuss voluntary

contributions to international climate and biodiversity finance and options to make finance flows consistent with the goals of the Paris Agreement and with the new global biodiversity framework. The EU welcomes the continuous dialogue with Israel on areas of mutual interest, with a special focus on climate neutral energy transition, waste management, air pollution, including the establishment of an Emission Control Area in the Mediterranean Sea, sustainable water management, circular economy measures, biodiversity protection and restoration.

49. The EU looks forward to strengthening its partnership with Israel on **energy**, based on the recently adopted REPowerEU Plan and the strategy for the "EU external energy engagement in a changing world". Our cooperation therefore will focus on energy security, by promoting energy supply diversification, as well as on the climate neutral energy transition, primarily promoting the increasing uptake and system integration of renewable energy, including through increased interconnections, technological innovation and deployment of safe and sustainable low carbon technologies, the wide uptake of energy efficiency measures and renewable hydrogen. Our cooperation was reinforced by the Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation related to Trade; Transport and Export of Natural Gas to the European Union, signed on 15 June 2022 by the EU, Israel and Egypt. Cooperation should promote the transition of the energy sector, while ensuring security and affordability of energy supplies, safeguarding the environment and implementing the Paris Agreement, also in line with the European Green Deal. The exploitation of gas resources in the Eastern Mediterranean in accordance with international law can strengthen energy security and resilience, and further enhance regional cooperation, such as the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum, and prosperity, contributing to long-lasting peace and regional stability. All lawful explorations of gas resources in the Eastern Mediterranean should be in full respect of international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the sovereignty and sovereign rights of the coastal states.
50. In the area of **science and technology**, the EU warmly welcomes the full association of Israel to the Horizon Europe programme for the period 2021-2027, made official by the joint signing of the agreement, on 6 December 2021. The EU looks forward to further reinforcing its cooperation with Israel, to address global challenges, facilitate green and digital transitions, accelerate the world shift to a secure and just food system and bring the EU and Israel's innovation systems closer together. Since 1996, Israel's association to the EU framework programmes for research and innovation has been a success story with clear mutual benefits across various priority areas including ICT, health, advanced manufacturing, climate change and energy as well as biotechnology. This cooperation contributes to stronger bilateral economic and trade relations and facilitates engagement in the region. In this context, the EU welcomes Israel's active participation in regional science diplomacy initiatives, such as SESAME, PRIMA and EMUNI.

51. In the field of **digital economy and society**, the EU welcomes Israel's commitment in the activities of the Euro-Mediterranean Regulators Group (EMERG), the EU initiative aimed at increasing EU-Mediterranean regulatory harmonisation and promoting cooperation among telecommunications regulation authorities, and is ready to work towards an ambitious partnership on digital issues. The EU also welcomes the fact that Israel is a full member of related OECD bodies, in particular the working group for Communications Infrastructure and Services Policy (CISP).
52. The EU recalls that the International **Telecommunication** Union's (ITU) Radiocommunications Conference, held in Sharm Al Sheikh in November 2019, passed Resolution 12. This Resolution called for a process to deploy 3G technology and establish an adequate timeframe for the allocation of 4G and 5G frequencies for Palestinian operators. The EU calls on Israel and on the Palestinian authorities to reach a timely agreement on the allocation of 4G and 5G frequencies for Palestinian operators, prior to the completion of the Israeli 5G deployments, and to cooperate with international actors working on this topic such as the Office of the Quartet.
53. In the area of **education**, the EU welcomes the participation of Israel in the international dimension of the Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027 and hopes that it will continue being very successful, as in the previous programming period between 2014 and 2020, which has also contributed to promoting mutual understanding by developing people-to-people contacts through cooperation between higher education institutions and student and staff exchanges, as well as through youth exchanges. The EU also welcomes the benefits brought by the programme to Israeli higher education, including its increased internationalisation, and looks forward to cooperating with Israel through the new Erasmus+ programme in other areas of common interest, such as Vocational Education and Training. In the field of **culture**, the EU looks forward to a successful conclusion of negotiations for the participation of Israel to the programme Creative Europe.
54. The EU looks forward to a fruitful and constructive meeting of the EU-Israel Association Council.
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