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INFORMATION

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	13th EU-Israel Association Council, Brussels, 24 February 2025 – Statement of the State of Israel

ISRAEL-EU ASSOCIATION COUNCIL
Brussels, 24 February 2025
Statement of the State of Israel

INTRODUCTION

1. The State of Israel welcomes the 13th Association Council Meeting of 24 February 2025 between Israel and the European Union. The State of Israel attributes great importance to the relations it fosters with the European Union and its Member States. The State of Israel also welcomes the creation of the new Commission for the Mediterranean and stands ready to cooperate in developing an effective strategy to enhance regional cooperation through a newly formed mandate.
2. This meeting is convened more than two years after the previous one, a period during which we have witnessed dramatic developments in the middle east region. On October 7th 2023, Israel was brutally attacked from seven different fronts, in an unprecedented assault — including by countries with which Israel shares no border. 1,200 Israelis lost their lives, 251 were abducted to Gaza. Since that day, the Hamas terrorist organization has continuously committed war crimes, launching thousands of missiles and rockets at Israeli population centers, holding innocent civilian hostages in inhumane conditions, using them as human shields and subjecting them to torture and starvation. As we rejoice with the hostages who have been released and reunited with their families, we are once again confronted with the ruthless cruelty of Hamas, which underscores the absolute urgency of ensuring that Gaza becomes fully demilitarized and that Hamas and all other terror organizations and infrastructure there, are completely dismantled.
3. Israel was forced to go to war in Gaza to dismantle Hamas' military and governmental capabilities, free the hostages, and restore security to its citizens. At any moment, the war in Gaza could have ended, but only under the following conditions: the release of all hostages held in Gaza and the complete destruction of Hamas's military and governing infrastructure. Despite Hamas's unimaginable brutality and its disdain for the law and for human life — whether Israeli or Palestinian — Israel has remained committed to conducting its military operations in accordance with international humanitarian law, as Israel's senior political and military leadership repeatedly affirmed. Hamas and other terror organizations cannot continue to exist in Gaza. As long as Hamas remains in power or holds any role in Gaza, the threat to Israel persists.
4. Since October 7th, Israel has been under constant attacks and existential threat. By sheer determination and resilience, rooted in our unwavering will to live, we defeated our enemies. The attacks, orchestrated and backed by Iran, were not just acts of terror; they were part of a broader goal - the elimination of the State of Israel. The evidence of Iran's genocidal aspirations toward Israel, whether directly or via its proxies, are abundant. Iran's Supreme Leader has repeatedly stated his country's intention to bring about the elimination of the State of Israel. The leaders of Hamas have openly expressed this will as well, and the Houthis bluntly state 'Death to Israel' and 'Death to the Jews' on their flag.
5. Iran stands on the brink of acquiring nuclear weapons. These are the final moments before it crosses that threshold, and the consequences for the region and the world would be catastrophic. A nuclear-armed Iran would not only endanger Israel and its neighbors but also embolden terror groups, threaten global stability, and trigger a dangerous arms race. Now is the time to act—before it is too late. Iran poses a threat not only to Israel but also to Europe and the entire world, as it is part of an axis seeking to undermine global stability.

6. Unfortunately, the justified war Israel has launched against Hamas and the Iranian proxies in the region, following the murderous attack carried out by Hamas, served as a catalyst for a rising wave of antisemitism across Europe. It is crucial to understand that this is not just old rhetoric in a new guise - it is a direct attack on the very existence of the Jewish people in their own state. When movements and various entities call for the destruction of Israel "from the river to the sea" and deny its right to defend itself, it goes beyond legitimate criticism. Sadly, this campaign found echoes of support in Europe, which has failed to eradicate growing antisemitism. This occurred due to an unprecedented onslaught of fake narratives promoted on social networks, which fueled dormant antisemitism. This is especially evident in biased decisions by the International Criminal Court (ICC) that seek to undermine Israel's right to protect its territory and its citizens and to exist in peace and security - constituting pure antisemitism. Criticism of the Israeli government's policies is legitimate, but when standards that are acceptable for every other country are denied to Israel alone, it constitutes dangerous discrimination. Israel deeply appreciates the EU and its Member States' commitment to combating antisemitism. However, one cannot truly fight antisemitism without recognizing that anti-Israel hate is a form of antisemitism, as defined by the working definition of IHRA. Opposition to the very existence of the State of Israel is not a political dispute, it is modern antisemitism in every sense. Eighty years after the Holocaust, Europe must uphold its responsibility by taking decisive and concrete actions to combat antisemitism.
7. Since its establishment, Israel has successfully faced significant challenges and built a strong and stable state, grounded in the values of democracy, the rule of law and pluralism. Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East, where Jews live alongside Muslims, Druze, Christians, and members of other faiths, all enjoying equal rights.
8. Over the past six decades, Israel-EU relations, rooted in our shared history and common values, have consistently deepened. The EU has become Israel's primary trading partner, and a broad spectrum of cooperation has developed and strengthened over time.
9. Through numerous Twinning projects, ongoing R&D collaboration within the Horizon Europe program and ERASMUS+, as well as many other joint funds and initiatives, Israel and the EU have forged a powerful partnership for change and the common good. Israel is among the few nations pioneering critical emerging technologies, including AI, quantum computing, cyber defense, bio-convergence, and green technologies to combat climate change. All of this underscores the importance and mutually beneficial nature of EU-Israel relations for both Israeli and EU citizens.
10. All of these demonstrate the importance and mutually beneficial nature of EU-Israel relations for the lives of Israeli and EU citizens. Israel's goal remains to expand and deepen multifaceted cooperation in a practical and professional manner, based on an honest dialogue of mutual respect, in which Israel's strategic contributions to Europe are recognized.
11. Unfortunately, there are still voices within the European Union that continue to create an artificial linkage between our bilateral relations and Israel's policy towards the Palestinians. Not only is this an incorrect approach that harms the interests of both sides, but it also stands in complete disconnect with recent regional developments. The moderate Arab countries have chosen to normalize their relations with Israel and free themselves from the constraints of the Israeli-Palestinian issue, driven by a shared desire to cooperate and by recognition of Israel's geopolitical, technological, economic, and moral value. We hope that the EU will follow this path as well.

12. Looking ahead, Israel remains committed to expanding and deepening its multifaceted cooperation with the EU, based on honest dialogue and mutual respect, where Israel's strategic contributions to Europe are fully recognized. It also expects to see an upgrade in all aspects of Israel-EU relations, including through the adoption of Partnership Priorities.

IRAN

13. Israel views the threat originating from Iran as multi-layered and multi-fronted, encompassing both unconventional threats – first and foremost nuclear, and conventional threats including the use of proxies and cyber warfare.
14. Iran's nuclear program has reached its most advanced stage ever, with sufficient quantities of High-Enriched Uranium at its disposal to build a large nuclear arsenal. Recently, an increasing number of senior Iranian officials have publicly declared their intention to re-examine the country's nuclear doctrine. Furthermore, Israel is witnessing additional alarming developments that support Iran's military nuclear program.
15. The Iranian nuclear crisis requires decisive and immediate action by the international community. Israel will not accept a nuclear Iran. Iran must understand that its military nuclear program is a liability rather than an asset, and it is the role of the international community to ensure they understand this. An effective pressure campaign on Iran must be conducted, and Israel commends the EU leaders for their support of the BoG resolution on Iran at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Board of Governors meeting on November 21, 2024, assigning the agency to present a comprehensive assessment of Iran's nuclear program. This resolution came after Iran has been failing to provide satisfactory explanations to sites and materials related to its illicit nuclear program and demonstrated a growing lack of cooperation with the IAEA.
16. Given the growing concerns over Iran's nuclear advancements, it is imperative that the international community takes all necessary measures to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear capabilities. We call on the EU to support the swift invocation of the UNSCR 2231 Snapback mechanism to uphold international safeguards and prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons.
17. Iran is violating UN Security Council resolutions, yet since October 7th, no Security Council resolution has condemned Iran or given it the attention it deserves. Israel would appreciate an EU demand that the Security Council address the Iranian issue and not turn a blind eye. Ignoring every international norm, Iran is developing a chemical weapons industry based on pharmaceutical-based agents (PBAs). It is developing methods to use those agents as weapons, including grenades, mortars, and other means, and is also proliferating these weapons to its proxies. Israel calls on the EU and Member States to take action to stop Iran's illegal chemical weapons industry.
18. Israel welcomes the EU's actions against Iran's financial and proliferation activities, as demonstrated by the designation of 27 entities and 19 individuals, most recently on November 18, 2024. As the primary state sponsor of terrorism and the most destabilizing actor in our region, maintaining pressure on Iran—both economic and otherwise—is of utmost importance.

19. Iran tirelessly invests its efforts to destabilize the Middle East - both directly and through proxy terrorist organizations. The regime praised the murderous October 7th attack by Hamas and fueled the conflict by pushing its proxies in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen to launch attacks against Israel. Although Iran's proxies have been weakened at this moment due to Israel's successful operations, and the Assad regime toppled - Iran continues unfettered on its path of supporting Hezbollah and other terrorist organizations through funding, training and providing advanced weaponry including the transfer of missiles and UAVs. In 2024, Iran conducted two direct, massive missile attacks on Israel (April 13th and October 1st) - the largest ballistic missile attacks in world history. Israel commends the EU's adoption of an extended sanctions regime on the Iranian missile industry in April 2024. Additionally, Iran supports and encourages terror in Jordan, as well as in Judea and Samaria.
20. Iran's terror activities have expanded to the global stage, introducing subversion across continents, proliferating offensive military hardware, and threatening maritime freedom of movement. In recent years, we have witnessed a sharp rise in Iranian terrorist activity in Europe, ordered directly by the Supreme Leader. This is a systematic, national effort, involving military, civilian, and intelligence agencies, using locals and non-Iranian foreigners, including members of organized crime. The targets are diverse, including Israeli businessmen, Jewish communities, diplomats, Israeli citizens, and Western targets. The brutal crackdown on protests in Iran is yet another reminder of the dark nature of the Iranian regime and its core opposition to the fundamental values we share. It is a regime that must be isolated, not legitimized and emboldened.
21. The Houthis: The Iranian backed Houthi terror group in Yemen has become a significant destabilizing force in the region and in the world. They disrupt the freedom of navigation and hurt trade and shipping, increasing prices globally, including in Europe. Their attacks against shipping lines, merchant ships and direct attacks against Israel are significant violations of international laws and norms. These attacks affect European owned ships, ships sailing with European flags as well as European sailors and seamen. Israel welcomes the actions of the EU Operation Aspides to promote safety and security in the Red Sea, but more must be done to stop the Houthi destabilizing activity. Israel is interested in cooperating with the EU to designate the Houthis (Ansar Allah) and list them as a terrorist entity in the EU to impact their fund raising and economic capabilities. The Houthis are a radical terrorist organization and threat to global order. The goal of Western countries must be to eliminate them.
22. Israel looks forward to continued dialogue with the EU to add more entities and individuals — especially those involved in sanction evasion, directing attacks on Israel, and arms proliferation - to the EU sanctions list. Israel will also cooperate with Member States, as needed, to assist in the process of designating the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps as an EU-listed terrorist entity. Additionally, Israel would like to see stronger enforcement of sanctions on those already designated. This constitutes a priority for Israel, for our region, and should be a priority for Europe as well.

SYRIA

23. Israel has no territorial ambitions in Syria but will act according to its security imperatives. The current situation in Syria is unstable, allowing terrorist organizations to establish themselves in the southern part of the country, adjacent to the border. Israel will not allow security threats emanating from Syria to be left unchecked on its border, just as Hamas and Hezbollah posed threats to Israel's borders prior to October 7th. Israel closely follows the recent developments in Syria, including violations of the 1974 Disengagement Agreement by armed groups and attacks on UNDOF. Considering the immediate and imminent threat to the security of Israel and its citizens, the IDF has taken control of strategic areas near the border for security reasons. Israel maintains close contact with UNDOF.
24. Israel closely follows the recent decision by EU foreign ministers to ease sanctions on Syria. The new Syrian regime includes elements which hold extremist Islamic ideologies. Some were previously affiliated with Al-Qaeda and ISIS. Since 2015, under the control of al-Julani, HTS has sought to suppress the religious practices of various minority groups, including the Druze and Kurds. Therefore, the new regime must be scrupulously scrutinized, even if its leadership tries to rebrand itself under different names or portray a more moderate image.
25. Israel stresses that any policy change towards the new Syrian regime must be gradual, reversible, and conditioned on concrete actions by the regime to uphold the following fundamental parameters: A peaceful transition in Syria requires a political process that is both peaceful and democratic, including free and fair elections, without resorting to the use of force against the civilian population; The incoming government must demonstrate an unwavering commitment to combating terrorism and religious extremism, while safeguarding fundamental human rights, including the rights of women; Additionally, the new government must ensure fair representation for all ethnic groups and minorities in Syria through dialogue, and ensure that this representation is reflected in national institutions such as the army and security forces. Minority rights must be enshrined in a new constitution, including regional autonomy, educational independence, religious freedom, personal status laws, and linguistic rights. Importantly, minorities should not be compelled to disarm unless they consent, within an agreed framework for institutional development, to prevent bloodshed. The new Syrian regime must also foster peaceful relations with neighboring states, renounce expansionist ambitions, ensuring that its land is not used to facilitate the illicit transfer of arms or funds to Lebanon or to support hostile activities against other states. Finally, the regime must fully cooperate with international organizations to eliminate weapons of mass destruction and prevent these weapons from falling into the hands of extreme jihadist groups.
26. It should be noted that such rapid strategic changes in the regional dynamics of the Middle East, as reflected in the Syrian arena, give rise to renewed aspirations of power by regional actors such as Turkey, seeking influence and control beyond its territory. Turkey has maintained an active presence in Syria for many years. Currently, approximately 15 percent of Syrian territory is under the control of Turkish-backed forces, including the Syrian National Army (SNA). Turkey supports the SNA and other militia attacks against the Kurdish minority and civilian infrastructure in the autonomous region of northeastern Syria, including by use of UAVs. Israel calls for the immediate cessation of these attacks. The EU and members of the international coalition that fought alongside the Kurds against

ISIS must now stand by them and protect them from severe attacks by extremist Islamic militias, to prevent further bloodshed.

27. The European Union should demand from the Syrian regime to guarantee the security, safety, and rights of minority groups in Syria, especially the Kurds, Druze and Christian and communities, as well as the safety and security of refugees should they return to the country. In its dealings with the new regime, the EU should also consider Israel's security and the security of its borders. Iran must not be allowed to reestablish its presence and smuggling routes for funds and arms within Syria. We also stress the importance of preventing Islamist elements from reestablishing themselves near the southern border of Syria. The EU, together with the international community, should ensure that all residual WMD capabilities are destroyed and removed from Syria.

LEBANON

28. Israel remains committed to the ceasefire in Lebanon. Israel has no territorial ambitions in Lebanon and intends to proceed with the understandings reached on the reinstatement of control to the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF). This process must take place gradually, in accordance with the progress of deployment made by LAF. The IDF has already withdrawn from southern Lebanon - this, despite the continued presence of Hezbollah south of the Litani River and additional violations of the agreement, which endanger the ceasefire. Due to this situation, and to prevent a security threat to Israel and its citizens, Israel remains in five points in southern Lebanon. Further redeployments of the IDF will be conducted based on the situation on the ground, ensuring the safety and security of Israeli citizens. It is important to remember that LAF began its operations nearly a month later than planned due to a delay in receiving instructions from the Lebanese political leadership, exacerbated by the absence of a president. This delay has led to setbacks in implementing its tasks.
29. However, the LAF requires strengthening to increase the pace and effectiveness of its operations in addressing violations. At this stage, LAF is not yet strong enough and still has connections with Hezbollah. Additionally, it lacks the capacity to effectively address the situation on the ground. We call on the EU to continue its efforts to bolster LAF so that it can fulfill its mission of dismantling terrorist infrastructures in southern Lebanon in line with the agreements made.
30. The weakening of Hezbollah, due to Israel's successful operations, has created an opportunity for Lebanon to free itself from Iran's grasp, particularly following the election of Michel Aoun as president and the appointment of a new prime minister. However, Iran's tremendous efforts to restore Hezbollah through financial support -some of which is being carried out in cooperation with Turkey - are impeding Lebanon's opportunity to break free from Iranian control.
31. Israel hopes these developments will contribute to greater stability in Lebanon and the region. We must act to ensure Lebanon transitions from the axis of evil to the moderate axis, for the sake of peace and a brighter future for all Lebanese. Israel welcomes the efforts of the European Union to avert the collapse of the Lebanese state and its conditioning of financial aid to the Lebanese government on the adoption of the structural reforms necessary for its long-term viability. It is imperative that any reconstruction process taking place in Lebanon does not include or empower Hezbollah.

GAZA

32. Since Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip in June 2007, its governance has destabilized the region and contributed to significant human rights violations, including gender-based persecution, suppression of freedoms, and the use of capital punishment. Hamas and other militant organizations have continued to carry out attacks against Israel, including rocket fire, cross-border raids, and various other acts of violence.
33. The brutal attack of Hamas on October 7th 2023 resulted in the murder of nearly 1,200 Israelis, the abduction of 251 hostages, and widespread destruction. In response, Israel initiated a military operation aimed at dismantling Hamas' military and political chokehold on Gaza, as well as securing the safe return of all the hostages.
34. Israel asserts its right to protect its territory and its citizens against terrorism, emphasizing Hamas' blatant disregard for international law, including the exploitation of civilian infrastructure for military purposes. Despite Hamas' lawless tactics, Israel has conducted its operations in accordance with international law and has made significant efforts to allow and facilitate the provision of humanitarian aid to Gaza, including food, medical supplies, and fuel, and has facilitated field hospitals and humanitarian corridors under international supervision. Israel urges the EU and the international community to support its efforts to combat terrorism and to help secure a peaceful future for the region.
35. In January, Israel has reached an agreement on a framework for the release of hostages and a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. This agreement follows negotiations led by the U.S. and other mediating countries and has been approved by the Israeli Cabinet and Government. The deal that has been reached comes at a heavy price, but the State of Israel has a moral obligation to do everything it can to secure the return of all our hostages, both the living and the deceased. Israel is determined to achieve the objectives of the war in Gaza: bringing all hostages home, dismantling Hamas' military and governing capabilities, and ensuring that Gaza will never again pose a threat to Israel. Israel will not settle for anything less than the complete demilitarization of the Gaza Strip. We call on the EU to continue its support for the release of the hostages and to ensure their safe return.
36. The hostages held by Hamas and other terrorist organizations were kept in inhumane conditions, in some cases in tunnels, in complete isolation. They were subjected to severe torture, sexual abuse, starvation, and other war crimes. The torture by Hamas continued even after the release of the hostages, as they were humiliated in public, forced to go on stage before bloodthirsty audiences, and compelled to deliver speeches dictated by their captors. Israel calls on the EU to firmly condemn Hamas's barbaric behavior and to exert maximum pressure on Hamas to release the hostages and uphold humanitarian principles.
37. **UNRWA:** Israel has proven that Hamas systematically infiltrated the ranks of UNRWA in Gaza to the point where it is beyond repair. The money transferred to UNRWA by donor countries ultimately reaches terrorists in the form of salaries. Considering UNRWA staff involvement in terrorism and the legislation in the Knesset, Israel is successfully working to create more diversity and expand the activities of additional international actors (UN agencies and NGOs) operating in the Gaza Strip. The international community should focus on improving Gaza residents' living conditions rather than perpetuating politically motivated situations. Israel expects the EU to support these organizations and to stop the

continued funding of UNRWA in Gaza so that the funds do not reach terrorist entities or serve to strengthen Hamas.

38. For years, UNRWA's education system has incited hatred against Israel and Jews, and glorified terrorists. This incitement took place through hate-filled content in textbooks and the employment of terrorists as teachers and school principals. This must stop. Education in the Gaza Strip must change and promote tolerance. Israel is ready to cooperate with the EU and other partners in this effort.

ISRAEL'S HUMANITARIAN EFFORTS IN GAZA

39. Israel is committed to providing humanitarian aid to the civilian population in Gaza. It supplies water, facilitates the entry of aid by land, air, and sea, and coordinates the establishment of field hospitals. There are no restrictions on the volume of aid, and Israel has worked tirelessly to establish new delivery routes and implement alternative solutions to facilitate its transfer. This includes collaboration with the UN, foreign governments, and international NGOs to ensure the needs of the civilian population are met. Since the start of the war, over one million tons of aid have entered Gaza.
40. The Israeli government has made significant efforts and allocated extensive resources to expand the delivery of humanitarian assistance to Gaza. There are no restrictions on the volume of aid, and Israel has worked tirelessly to establish new delivery routes and implement alternative solutions to facilitate its transfer. This includes collaboration with the UN, foreign governments, and international NGOs to ensure the needs of the civilian population are met. Israel has established multiple aid corridors by land, sea, and air. Land routes include the Kerem Shalom, Erez, and the Kisufim crossings. Additionally, trucks from Jordan transport aid through Kerem Shalom and Erez into Gaza. At sea, a maritime corridor has been launched, including operations through Ashdod Port, where aid is inspected and loaded in Cyprus before being transported to JLOTS for direct distribution in Gaza. Aerial deliveries are conducted in partnership with international allies through coordinated air drops. In September-October 2024, Israel conducted a polio vaccination campaign in Gaza, coordinated with WHO and UNICEF, which was successfully completed in October. As part of the campaign, over 559,000 children were vaccinated.
41. Since the beginning of the ceasefire, Israel has facilitated unprecedented amounts of aid to the Gaza Strip, exceeding the amount to which it committed in the framework of the deal: at least 4,200 trucks per week, out of which at least 50 are fuel and gas tankers arrive daily via all border crossings, mainly from Israel, Jordan and Egypt. 80% of the humanitarian assistance is food and the rest is tents and shelter equipment, sanitation and water equipment, etc. Unlike the former situation, agencies and NGOs keep an efficient process of collection and distribution of the goods from the Gazan side of the border, regularly. Considering the volume of trucks currently entering Gaza and the increasing activity of UN agencies and other humanitarian organizations, a humanitarian crisis is not expected. Despite Israel's efforts, distributing aid within Gaza remains a challenge due to Hamas's looting, which creates shortages for the local population. Moreover, Hamas has exploited and profited from humanitarian aid, amassing an estimated half a billion dollars - funds that have bolstered its military capabilities.

ANTISEMITISM

42. 131 years ago, the antisemitic atmosphere surrounding the Dreyfus affair led Theodor Herzl to realize and envision the urgent need to establish a state in which the Jewish people could freely practice their right to self-determination. Unfortunately, antisemitism remains a serious threat to Jewish life and to Jews as individuals. It remains on the rise around the world, as in Europe to this day. Recently, we have witnessed with deep concern a skyrocketing surge in antisemitic incidents, both in physical and virtual spheres, including in non-European languages. Following the October 7th massacre, Europe is experiencing an even more dangerous and violent tsunami of antisemitism. Left unchecked, it will pose a serious challenge to the safety and security of Jews as individuals and to Jewish life as a whole.
43. The Holocaust has left a deep scar on the communal memory of the Jewish people and the rest of humanity. It did not start with concentration or death camps. It began with words. It took root in the fertile ground of Jew hatred, cultivated for many generations. Combating antisemitism and preserving Holocaust remembrance is a core value of the State of Israel. It is a fundamental moral duty of every humane liberal society both in Europe and elsewhere around the world. As the recent events of the October 7th massacre make evident: Never Again is still very much here and now.
44. The EU Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life in Europe is an important step in the right direction. It is essential to work together to ensure the effective implementation of this valuable strategy. Facing this challenge requires a coordinated large-scale response, strong cooperation between governments, and other stakeholders, at all levels. However, it also requires a willingness to act firmly, as demonstrated by the new U.S. administration, which took decisive steps to combat antisemitic incitement.
45. Israel appreciates the strong EU commitment to combating all forms of antisemitism, fostering Jewish life, and promoting Holocaust remembrance. Israel looks forward to continuing its collaboration with the EU, through education, inter-religious dialogue, and law enforcement—combating antisemitism, xenophobia, hate speech, and incitement. Israel encourages the EU and Member States to continue promoting legislation that may serve as an essential tool in addressing both antisemitism and Holocaust denial, as well as the purposeful distortion of historical narrative. Israel calls on the EU to continue promoting the adoption of the IHRA working definition of antisemitism, and to imply stronger enforcement regarding antisemitic incidents.
46. Fostering Jewish life means protecting access to its essential cultural and religious practices. Initiatives that risk the continuity of Jewish life, such as legislation that bans or limits circumcision and kosher slaughter, pose serious challenges in this area. Israel will work with the EU to address these challenges.
47. As time goes by, fewer and fewer Holocaust survivors live among us. We must prepare for a world without first-hand witnesses. In this sense, preserving Holocaust remembrance is a critical goal, reflecting not only our commitment to the memory and lessons of the Holocaust but also to our shared commitment to democratic values and to the need to confront racism and extremism without compromise. It is imperative to continue supporting fact-based Holocaust research, taking strong action to allow access to archives, investing in education to embed the lessons learned and prevent Holocaust denial, and combating alternative narratives.

48. **BDS:** In recent years, demonizing and delegitimizing the State of Israel has grown as a phenomenon. Israel sees widespread expressions of antisemitism taking a unique form, crossing from legitimate criticism into bigotry and hatred. These attempts coincide with others seeking to deny Israel its rightful and legitimate place among the family of nations. The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, is a clear manifestation of this phenomenon. Under the guise of human rights and other universal democratic values, it regularly singles out Israel, discriminates and seeks to deny its legitimate right to exist, including through the regular use of antisemitic rhetoric and motifs. As well articulated in the IHRA definition, there is a clear line that distinguishes between legitimate criticism and antisemitism. double standards, demonization and discriminatory policy denying Israel the rights afforded to others - clearly cross this line.
49. One such recent manifestation, has been the outrageous attempt by certain politicized NGOs to accuse Israel of the crime of Apartheid. This accusation is ludicrous, but it reveals a deeply concerning trend to camouflage antisemitic accusations in the language of law and human rights. It demands a forceful response.
50. Israel calls on the EU to firmly reject the BDS movement and to oppose any boycott or call for boycott against the State of Israel as well as efforts to delegitimize it. Specifically, Israel calls on the EU to reject the reprehensible attempt to refer to Israel or Israeli policies as associated with 'Apartheid'.

ICC & ICJ

51. The State of Israel is a democracy with a robust and independent legal system, governed by the rule of law. It remains committed, as it has repeatedly reaffirmed and demonstrated, to upholding its rights and obligations under international law, including International Humanitarian Law. Accordingly, Israel firmly rejects attempts to cynically exploit international courts and tribunals for political purposes, intended to undermine Israel's inherent right and obligation to protect its citizens from attacks committed by terrorist organizations.
52. We must recognize the widening gap between the principles of justice and the reality of international legal institutions, which have been hijacked by political agendas. When these institutions abandon their impartiality and become tools of political warfare, they undermine their own legitimacy. This harms not only Israel but also the ability to hold true violators accountable - particularly brutal dictatorships that have no commitment to human rights or international norms. If international law is to remain meaningful, it must be applied fairly and consistently - not weaponized against democracies while turning a blind eye to regimes that systematically oppress their own people. The ICC undermines international law. Israel is only the beginning – the sovereignty of all law-abiding democracies is being jeopardized by the court's unprecedented actions, which may soon be turned against America and European countries.
53. Israel strongly condemns the decision by the International Criminal Court to issue arrest warrants against Prime Minister Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Gallant. This outrageous decision was issued despite the lack of jurisdiction and the Prosecutor's wrongful breach of the Court's Statute, and manifest disregard to the principle of Complementarity. Israel utterly rejects the rushed and baseless accusations made by the Prosecutor in his request for the warrants. Moreover, this decision equates the democratically elected leaders of Israel, a country committed to international law, with the heads of Hamas, a terrorist organization that cynically abuses international law by

using the civilian population in Gaza as human shields. Israel expects the European Union, as part of its commitment to international law, to also reject the Court's shameful and absurd decision, and not to cooperate with the ICC with respect thereto and uphold its obligations to respect immunities under customary international law.

54. The European Union must take a firm stance against the abhorrent attempts to cheapen the horrific crime of genocide, which was conceptualized following the atrocities of the Holocaust against the Jewish people. It is unacceptable that the European Union has not taken a definitive position regarding the most outrageous allegations of genocide leveled against Israel at the International Court of Justice by South Africa. Similarly, Israel expects the European Union to actively oppose any politicization of the advisory function of the International Court of Justice and to safeguard its integrity. The highly politicized use of international courts not only undermines their credibility but also in no way contributes to peace in the region. Israel expects the European Union to reject such attempts.

THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY

55. Israel has taken numerous steps - including financial and other measures - to contribute to the stability of the Palestinian Authority (PA). However, while we do not see a better alternative at this time than security cooperation with the PA, Israel has no trust in the PA and cannot engage in any meaningful dialogue unless it addresses three fundamental issues.
56. First, the 'Pay for Slay' policy, where the PA financially rewards convicted terrorists and their families, must end. One prominent example is Abdullah Barghouti, a Hamas commander and bomb-maker responsible for multiple deadly attacks, including the 2001 bombing of the Sbarro restaurant in Jerusalem, which killed 15 people and injured over 130. Barghouti has reportedly received approximately \$64,000 from the Palestinian Authority. Another example is Hakim Awad, who, along with his cousin, was convicted of the 2011 Itamar attack that resulted in the murder of five members of the Fogel family in their home. He was sentenced to five consecutive life terms. Reports indicate that he receives an annual stipend of about \$14,000 from the Palestinian Authority. Regrettably, despite clear conditions set by the European Union, funds continue to be transferred to the PA, even though it fails to implement the requested reforms as stipulated by the Commission. The recent statements by the PA regarding the abolishment of this practice are misleading. The PA has continued its 'Pay for Slay' payments through January 2025, and its officials have openly stated that they will sustain these payments to the dependents of terrorists through alternative mechanisms in the future. This not only hampers any chance of a reformed PA that could be seen as a reliable partner, but also harms the EU's credibility and, ultimately, encourages the PA to persist in its detrimental practices, including this deplorable policy.
57. Second, incitement must be eradicated from Palestinian society. The glorification of terror is deeply embedded in textbooks, media, public institutions, and political discourse. The PA promotes not just anti-Israel rhetoric but also open calls for antisemitism, the destruction of Israel, and the murder of Jews. A society raised on hatred and violence cannot be a partner for peace. The PA's failure to condemn the October 7th attack is shameful evidence that it is not upholding its commitment to the international community to combat incitement and firmly reject terrorism. The EU, as one of the biggest donors to

the PA, must demand that the PA undergo comprehensive and deep reforms and ensure their implementation.

58. Third, the PA must cease its legal warfare against Israel - an orchestrated campaign to delegitimize our country and deny our fundamental right to self-defense. Instead of working toward coexistence, the PA invests its resources in attacking Israel in international forums, weaponizing the legal system against us while turning a blind eye to real human rights abuses in its own backyard.

JERUSALEM

59. For thousands of years Jerusalem has been the political and spiritual center of the Jewish people and has never been the capital of any other state. It was the seat of King David's Kingdom as well as of his successors'. It was the home of the Holy Temple and has been the subject of countless Jewish texts and prayers. Indeed, Jews worldwide have prayed daily, for centuries, facing the holy city and called out on our holiest holidays, "Next year in Jerusalem."
60. Jerusalem is the eternal and undivided capital of Israel. Ever since the establishment of modern Israel in 1948, it has been the recognized political and functional capital of the State of Israel, the seat of its parliament (the Knesset) its supreme court, and all its central government ministries and institutions, as well as its social and cultural epicenter.
61. Israel will continue to develop all parts of Jerusalem for the benefit of all its residents, taking into consideration the special needs of each community and modern urban planning principles.
62. Israel remains committed to upholding the status quo on the Temple Mount and ensuring the rights of adherents of all faiths in Jerusalem - Christians, Muslims, and Jews. This includes guaranteeing freedom of religion, the right to peaceful worship, tranquility in daily life, and the welfare of all the city's inhabitants.

ABRAHAM ACCORDS AND NORMALIZATION

63. Israel has recently marked the fourth anniversary of the Abraham Accords. These accords continue to transform the Middle East and reflect the commitment of moderate countries in the region to advancing peace, normalization, prosperity, stability, and security. The State of Israel remains steadfast in its dedication to these goals.
64. The Abraham Accords, which include peace and normalization agreements with the UAE, Bahrain, and Morocco, have significantly contributed to regional peace, stability, and prosperity. Since their conclusion, Israel has entered into numerous bilateral agreements with these nations in areas such as aviation, trade, innovation, finance, energy, and health, fostering economic and security partnerships while strengthening people-to-people connections.
65. Even after the brutal attacks of October 7th and the subsequent events, relations with the Abraham Accords countries remain strong, underscoring their strategic importance and resilience. These countries have made a clear and realistic decision: not to let the Palestinians hinder their development, regional integration, and security. They have

eliminated the false linkage between their bilateral ties with Israel and the Palestinian issue. We hope the EU will do the same.

66. Connectivity initiatives like the India-Middle East Economic Corridor (IMEC) play a crucial role in fostering regional stability and economic growth by enhancing infrastructure, facilitating trade, and promoting integration. Similarly, ongoing regional initiatives such as the I2U2, and Prosperity Blue & Green are vital for strengthening peace, stability, and economic development in the Middle East.
67. Israel welcomes increased European engagement in these initiatives, recognizing such collaboration as critical to achieving long-term peace and prosperity in the Middle East. The State of Israel also welcomes the creation of the new Commission for the Mediterranean and stands ready to cooperate in developing an effective strategy to enhance regional cooperation.

EGYPT AND JORDAN

68. Israel's peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan are pillars of regional stability and security, contributing significantly to cooperation in the Middle East. These agreements exemplify the potential for fostering mutual interests and addressing shared challenges in the region. Israel remains committed to expanding the circle of peace by engaging with moderate nations that share its vision for security, prosperity, and coexistence. These regional developments align with the shared interests of both the EU and Israel in promoting stability and broadening the circle of peace. Israel looks forward to deepening its relations with Arab and Muslim neighbors and collaborating with the EU to achieve a more secure and prosperous Middle East.

MULTILATERAL ARENA

69. **UN:** The structural discrimination against the state of Israel in the UN arena, received an additional boost after the October 7th massacre. The Palestinians are exploiting the UN platform for their benefit and have increased the politicization within UN organizations. More than 20 UN resolutions were adopted against Israel in the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, and the professional agencies. None of these, especially the Security Council resolutions, condemned Hamas, recognized Israel's right to defend itself, or condemned Iran and its proxies. The numerous initiatives Israel faces include one-sided accusations and a complete disregard for Hamas's activities and other terrorist organizations in Gaza, such as ignoring the militarization of hospitals in Gaza by WHO officials and their use for terrorist activities. Recently, we are also seeing initiatives to harm Israel regarding its participation in the work of the professional agencies.
70. Israel expects the EU not to play into the hands of anti-Israel elements, to vote against anti-Israeli resolutions in UN institutions, and not to support initiatives that harm Israel's participation in the activities of the professional agencies. Every resolution and initiative against Israel provide support to Hamas, hardens its positions in negotiations for the release of hostages, and gives a green light to Iran and its proxies to continue attacking Israel.
71. **OCHA:** The false OCHA data, which relies on Hamas's Ministry of Health figures, aids the Palestinians in their efforts to turn the Israeli - Palestinian conflict from a political issue to

a legal one. The organization's data serves as the basis for publications by various international forums (ICJ rulings and the last CAAC report). Israel expects the EU, some of whose members contribute to this organization, to demand an examination of OCHA-OPT's reporting mechanisms and condition financial support on OCHA fulfilling only its humanitarian mandate as required, and refraining from reporting and activities related to advocacy and politics.

72. **HRC:** Israel is the only country in the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) with a specific agenda item dedicated to it, Item 7, and the Special Rapporteur on the occupied territories is the only one whose mandate is permanent and not subject to review. Likewise, the COI (Commission of Inquiry) has no expiration date. The Human Rights Council adopts four annual resolutions every year, and in total, it has passed over 109 resolutions against Israel, compared to approximately 165 resolutions condemning various countries, including some of the most severe violators of human rights. Israel expects the European Union's support in the fight against discrimination in the Council, including through the complete rejection of Item 7 on the agenda and the excessive number of resolutions against Israel.
73. Currently, the activities of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights are renewing its approach to Israeli and international companies, requesting information on businesses in the occupied territories. This is with the aim of updating the database of such businesses, first published in 2020, which led Israel to sever ties with the Commission. Israel expects a condemnation of this decision, which discriminates against only one country and whose purpose is not to uphold human rights, but rather to demonize Israel and support the global BDS movement.
74. **SDGs:** Israel remains committed to advancing the UN's development goals. Israel's expertise in areas such as water management, climate, innovation, and food technologies offer significant potential to address global challenges, including climate change and extreme weather. In this context, Israel actively participated in COP29 in Baku. Recently, the General Assembly adopted an Israeli resolution on 'Entrepreneurship for Development,' and in April, the Human Rights Council adopted a consensus resolution on 'Cyberbullying,' led by Israel alongside other nations.
75. Israel is also engaged in global initiatives such as the SOGI 'GoF Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity' working group in Geneva, where it has supported the expansion of the group's activities to other agencies. Additionally, Israel is a member of the corresponding LGBT group in New York. Israel plays an active role in the Emergency Response Coalition (ERC) and is dedicated to promoting gender equality through initiatives like its special envoy for gender equality and the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325. Furthermore, Israel is a member of the Friendship Group for Feminist Foreign Policy at the UN.
76. Israel is willing to join forces with the EU to advance the global development goals by expanding cooperation also in the multilateral arena.

ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

77. In 2023, the European Union remained Israel's largest trade partner, with a total trade volume of \$42.8 billion, accounting for 26.2% of Israel's total trade in goods with the world. Preliminary trade data for 2024 indicate that EU continues to be Israel's primary trade partner, with a total trade volume of \$27.3 billion, representing 29% of Israel's overall trade. Israel's exports of goods to the EU totaled \$17.4 billion, making up 30% of Israel's total exports for that year. Exports to the EU grew by 3.4% compared to the previous year. Israel's imports of goods from the EU amounted to \$24.2 billion, representing 28% of Israel's total imports.
78. Israel's trade relations with the EU are governed by the Association Agreement (1995 and as amended in 2010 to further liberalize market access for agricultural products). Additional key trade-related frameworks include the pan-Euro-Mediterranean (PEM) Convention, which provides for origin accumulation, and the Conformity Assessment and Acceptance of Industrial Products Agreement (ACAA), which covers Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) for medicinal products.
79. Under this framework, Israel-EU Subcommittee on Industry, Trade and Services was last convened in Brussels, February 2023. The subcommittee focused on the following topics: general trade overview, multilateral and regional developments, trade and environment (CBAM regulation), agriculture trade related aspects, Israel's import reform, trade in dual-use, market access of medical device and on public procurement. The subcommittee is due to meet again in Q1 2025 along with the subcommittees on Agriculture and Customs.
80. On December 7, 2023, the PEM Contracting Parties agreed to amend the Convention with the aim of implementing a new set of more flexible and modernized rules of origin. Following this decision, Israel and the EU have worked together to update Protocol 4 under the Association Agreement and link it to the amended PEM Convention. This step is expected to be completed via a decision of the Association Council by written procedure in Q1 2025, after finalization of internal procedures in Israel.
81. The import reform, also known as "What is good for Europe, Good for Israel", was approved by the Knesset in July 2024 and formally entered into force on January 1st 2025. It presents a significant gradual alignment with EU technical directives and regulations encompassing roughly 90% of consumer products, such as chemicals for domestic use, machinery, electrical appliances etc., as well as food and cosmetics. This regulatory alignment is a significant step towards harmonization of Israel with European and international technical standards.
82. This initiative entails those products deemed safe for consumption or use in the EU would not require separate testing in Israel if importers can demonstrate their legal market status within the EU. Moreover, the legislation aims to encourage parallel imports to compete with importers with exclusive arrangements. By that, the reform is expected to streamline the import process, reduce bureaucratic costs and delays for importers, expand product variety, and foster increased competition, thus ultimately reducing the cost of living in Israel.
83. In this context, an Israel-EU dialogue on technical regulations and enforcement is crucial to ensure a smooth implementation of the reform. The Ministry of Economy and Industry (Standardization Administration) has applied for a Twinning Light Fiche project regarding enforcement in January 2024 and is awaiting progress under this initiative.

84. Given the unique scope and depth of the unilateral regulatory alignment with the EU and increasing market access to EU exporters via multiple routes, Israel strives to enhance its access to EU regulatory information through databases in areas such as consumer products, food safety, cosmetics and medical devices. Israel also seeks to receive greater access to training for regulators, to participate as an observer in regulatory committees and to consider together with the EU possibilities for Mutual Recognition Agreements.
85. The EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) regulation is set to come into effect on January 1, 2026, following a three-year transition period. The regulation is expected to impact Israeli manufacturers exporting various goods to the EU, as specified in the CBAM guidelines. The Ministry of Economy and Industry is working to ensure that Israeli exporters are well-aware of the CBAM regulation and its reporting mechanisms.
86. Having amended the Fuel Excise Order and other relevant legislation, the Israeli government will implement a new Carbon Tax mechanism starting from January 1, 2025, differentiated by types of fuel and due to be increased gradually till 2030. Under this new regulation, the Israeli government will rise direct taxation on fossil fuels used in the production of manufactured goods, among other applications, leading to a gradual internalization of the environmental external costs of carbon emissions.
87. Considering the new Carbon Tax, Israel seeks the formal recognition by the EU of Israel's Carbon Tax scheme as deductible in future CBAM payments for Israeli exports. It also strives to cooperate with the EU on procedural aspects of the mechanism, to ensure that the implementation of the mechanism is carried out in the most effective manner and to minimize administrative burden on Israeli exporters.
88. Israel is interested in enhancing and deepening its cooperation with the EU on digital matters such as AI, cybersecurity and emerging technologies, due to the rapid developments in these fields both on the technological and the policy & governance sides, including legislation in the EU that may impact trade in digital products and services. In this regard, Israel is interested in exploring mechanisms for promoting such cooperation with the relevant agencies and offices within the EU, with an emphasis on the AI Office and ENISA. Such a dialogue may include the exchange of information, sharing best practices and developing further opportunities to promote trade in related sectors. In addition, Israel is also interested in establishing a direct dialogue channel with its EU counterparts to address several topics, including the use of AI in digital public services, deployment of cloud infrastructure for hosting digital public services and digital transformation for local public administrations. The proposed dialogues aim to foster collaboration and knowledge-sharing in the digital sphere, a critical area for both Israel and EU.
89. Over the years, the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission in Israel has successfully collaborated with the European Union across various fields. One notable initiative was the Equal Pay Project, funded by the European Union, aimed at reducing gender wage gaps in the Israeli labor market. The Equal Employment Opportunities Commission wishes to continue its collaboration with the EU, including opportunities to learn about best practices for narrowing gender wage disparities.

ECONOMIC COOPERATION

90. Israel seeks to strengthen its cooperation with the European Union in the field of financial services, recognizing the increasing significance of financial markets, regulatory frameworks, and technological developments. Considering these evolving dynamics, Israel proposes initiating a dialogue with the EU financial regulators to promote collaboration on several financial regulation and supervision matters including market supervision issues, financial stability, and the integration of innovative financial technologies. To facilitate this collaboration, Israel offers incorporating this topic into the existing sub-committee framework on economic and financial sectors, as defined under Article 43 of the EU-Israel Association Agreement. This session would be guided by the principles outlined in Article 48 of the Agreement, which underscores the importance of cooperation on adopting common rules and standards in areas such as accounting, banking, insurance, and other financial sectors.
91. Israel appreciates the European Investment Bank's engagement in Israel and looks forward to continuing our fruitful collaboration. Israel hopes to see further successful projects supported by the EIB in Israel and supporting regional economic ties in key strategic areas, including transportation, water, clean energy, and other significant sectors.

INNOVATION, SPACE, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

92. Israel has been a member of European framework programs since 1996 and is proud to be part of the European research and innovation community with the purpose of sharing and contributing to the vision and the goals of research and innovation. Israel and the EU share a similar vision for research and innovation, and the framework program serves as an excellent platform to enhance and promote this vision.
93. The Israeli research community continued to take part in the program since the beginning of the war on 7 October 2023, despite many challenges. Israel highly appreciates the European Commission's decision to postpone calls and deadlines at the beginning of the war, helping Israeli researchers and companies to continue submitting their proposals. In addition, Israel had expressed its deep gratitude and satisfaction with the clear and strong voice of the European Commission, against calls to boycott Israel. With a strong hope that the program remains open to all participating states for all relevant TRL's, Israeli R&I community in academy and industry are looking towards opportunities in second part of HE programs, as well as in preparations taking place towards FP10.
94. **AI:** Leveraging Israel's extensive eco-system, fostering multi-disciplinary collaboration between academia, industry, and government, Israel's goals range from advancing AI research and development, to nurturing a thriving AI ecosystem, promoting ethical AI practices and ensuring Israel's global leadership in AI innovation. In this context, Israel has also signed the Council of Europe's framework convention on artificial intelligence and human rights, democracy and the rule of law, and will be happy to further promote these topics with the EU and Member States.

SPACE

95. Israel values its partnership with the EU and especially in Horizon Europe as key to advancing space research and innovation. This collaboration has led to significant research and development achievements, including the VENμS scientific mission and the upcoming C3IEL satellites with France, asbestos detection technology with Germany's ENMAP satellite, contributions to the European Space Agency's JUICE mission through research and technological advancements, as well as upcoming collaborative research and innovation projects with Italy.
96. Israel remains committed to opening its civilian space research to EU participation in all technology areas while aligning its practices with EU standards. Looking ahead to years 2025-2027, Israel seeks to deepen existing partnerships, explore new opportunities for collaboration, and actively engage with the European Space Agency (ESA). Furthermore, Israel aims to enhance dialogue with EUSPA and advance a shared agenda, solidifying its role as a strategic partner within the EU space community.
97. Israel was pleased with its results in the H2020 program, although participating in consortia is still a great challenge. Israeli participants in the program were able to raise grants of more than 1.2B Euros in all the framework parts. Israel is participating in all HE pillars and in part of the 49 new partnerships, as well as H2020 partnerships (EraNets) that are still running.
98. On December 2021, Israel signed the Association Agreement with the EU's Horizon Europe (HE) program for the years 2021-2027. Israel wishes for full participation in the program. The new regulations and especially article 22.5 of HE and Annex IV(11a) challenge Israeli participants. Israel provided the requested assurances to the Commission for both 2021-2022 and 2023-2024.
99. Israel also participates in international scientific infrastructures and organizations across Europe. These organizations allows both Israeli and European researchers to collaborate together in the most prestigious scientific infrastructures in the world. Among the various organizations in which Israel participates are CERN, EMBL, COST, HFSP, IIASA. Israel highly appreciates the efforts of these organizations and others in countering attempts to boycott Israeli researchers, as they continue to foster inclusive and collaborative opportunities for them.

CYBER SECTOR

100. Israel has strengthened over the past few years its cybersecurity cooperation with several EU Member States. These relationships bring value to both sides. Considering the increased importance of cybersecurity and the increasing operational, methodological, and technological bilateral cooperation between Israel and its partners in Europe - Israel wishes to establish formal working channels with the relevant institutions of the EU.
101. Israel hopes to examine the initiation of cooperation regarding ENISA methodologies, regulations and schemes; CSIRT and Cyclone Operative and threat intelligence capabilities, ECCC and Digital Europe Cybersecurity capacity building with relevant EU cyber institutions. Israel further wishes to discuss enhancing the cyber dialogue, operational cooperation and strategic planning that will elevate cyber resilience.

JUDICIAL COOPERATION

102. Israel stresses the importance of judicial cooperation between the parties in the fields of justice and home affairs, recalling the successful collaboration between Israel and the EU in the framework of the Sub-Committee on Justice and Home Affairs. Israel would appreciate the ongoing assistance of the EU also via cooperation tools such as Twinning and TAIEX.
103. Israel welcomes the continued cooperation with Eurojust, including negotiations on an EU-Israel agreement on judicial cooperation. In the area of data protection, in January 2024 the European Commission reaffirmed Israel's status as a country which provides an adequate level of protection for personal data (Adequacy Decision). This, following a successful dialogue between the parties which took place throughout recent years, and a thorough examination process by the European Commission of Israel's data protection framework. Israel appreciates this decision. Consequently, throughout 2024 Israel has taken an active part in a forum of adequate countries led by the European Commission. Israel welcomes this ongoing dialogue between the parties, in a variety of fora on privacy and data protection, with a view to globally enhance data protection. In the area of prevention of money laundering and terrorist financing, Israel stresses the importance of continuing to share financial intelligence and other relevant information, knowledge and expertise in this field, both bilaterally between Israel and EU Member States, and multilaterally in the appropriate fora, including meetings under the auspices of EUROPOL.
104. Israel stresses the importance of continuing to cooperate in combatting international organized crime, including the sharing of experiences and best practices in asset recovery. Israel stresses the importance of the ongoing collaboration in the area of cybercrime, both cyber-enabled offences and cyber-dependent offences. Israel welcomes the continuation of the EUROMED JUSTICE Program by Eurojust and will continue to play an active role in this framework.

SECURITY COOPERATION

105. Israel is looking forward to the deepening of cooperation and the exchange of knowledge, information and experience in the framework of the Subcommittee on Justice and Home Affairs, in the fields of money laundering and the prevention of terror financing, cybercrime, securing personal information, fighting terrorism and international organized crime, radicalization and online incitement prevention, drugs and cannabis policy, crime prevention among teenagers, and online protection of children. Israel looks forward to the completion of negotiations towards signing the agreement with Europol on exchange of personal data for fighting major crimes and terrorism. Israel is looking forward to seeing the continuation of the Israel Police Partnership in project EUROMED5 by CEPOL, while overcoming standing issues, as well as participation in the EUROPRIS platform by the Israeli Correctional services.
106. In the areas of policing, correctional services, firefighting and security administration - Israel wishes to enhance cooperation and participation in technological cooperation platforms such as Horizon Europe as well as the enhancement of cooperation through EPE. Israel also wishes to explore potential cooperation in the fields of: UAV/CUAV, AI, VR/AR and recognition software for the combating of 'Deep fake' in the use of law enforcement.

107. **PNR:** The State of Israel seeks to promote a PNR (Passenger Name Record) agreement with the European Union (EU), and there is a requirement under Israeli law that as a condition of entry to Israel, airlines must transfer PNR information. Failure to transfer information contradicts the provisions of the Aviation Agreement between Israel and the EU, according to which each side shall respect the entry requirements of the host country. Therefore, it is necessary to advance negotiations on an agreement regarding the transfer of PNR as soon as possible.

LABOR

108. Israel recognizes the European Union as a key partner in its international relations. The Ministry of Labor of Israel highly values the Israel-EU relationship and its potential to develop improved solutions for future labor market challenges. The Ministry eagerly anticipates the 2025 Sub-Committee meeting, where it will address several crucial areas of cooperation: trends and developments in diverse population inclusion; foreign labor issues, including foreign workers' rights; and workplace safety, with a particular focus on the construction industry. The Ministry places great importance on European instruments such as TAIEX and Twinning, as well as study visits aimed at enhancing the efficiency of government mechanisms. Furthermore, the Ministry is actively working to strengthen cooperation through bilateral channels and our partnership within the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) framework. The Ministry of Labor remains committed to fostering a robust and mutually beneficial relationship with the European Union, as we jointly strive to address the evolving needs of our respective labor markets.

TRANSPORT

109. The EU-Israel Subcommittee for Transportation, Energy and Environmental Protection meets annually. The last meeting took place on 26 June 2023 in Jerusalem. The Ministry of Transport and Road Safety of Israel (hereinafter – MOT) maintains a continuing relationship with the European Union in Transport sectors on land, at sea and in the air. The cooperation includes discussions, international agreements and support on professional topics.
110. MOT closely followed the preparation and outcome of the WP.15 group meeting, which took place in Geneva in December 2024 and continues its work to define and suggest the necessary changes to Israeli laws to facilitate further discussion on whether and how to promote affiliation with the ADR agreement.
111. MOT continues to endeavor on cooperation with the EuroMed Transport Support Project. It has implemented a pilot program using a digital CMR system, to transition to mandatory e-CMR for all freight companies. Progress has also been attained on AETR and the EUMed Rail Project. Israel engages in collaboration with the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA), through the Israeli Administration of Shipping & Ports (SPA). Under the SAFEMED IV project, Israel has participated in various bilateral and regional training activities. Israel also collaborates with the Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC). In this regard, Israel has been actively supporting the designation of the Mediterranean Sea as a SOx Emission Control Area,

pursuant to MARPOL Annex VI. MOT cyber units wish to promote cooperation on various cyber security issues in the transportation sector – Aviation and Drones, Maritime, Rails, Smart Infrastructure, autonomous vehicles (AV), electric vehicles (EV) and other public transport cybersecurity threats. The Civil Aviation Authority of Israel (CAAI) has been actively engaged in the EuroMed Transport Aviation Project since 2022.

112. Israel is interested in promoting cooperation on this issue, including in the field of implementing ADAS systems in vehicles, including legal issues regarding liability, ongoing maintenance issues, periodic test inspections, etc. IMS has continued to foster a strong collaboration with JRC for improving flood forecasting in the Mediterranean basins. The National Road Safety Authority (NRSA) will maintain its collaboration with the European Traffic Safety Council (ETSC) by contributing road accident data to ETSC PIN reports, sharing insights from local experience, and actively participating in ETSC meetings. In addition, the NRSA aims to continue its involvement in the activities of the UNECE Global Forum for Road Traffic Safety (WP.1).

HEALTH

113. Israel and the EU enjoy enduring health cooperation, as demonstrated through mutual visits and meetings, shared training programs, the execution of joint projects and exchanges of data and information. Since the last Association Council convened, Israel has been engaged in the current conflict, initiated by Hamas on 7 October 2023. The conflict has regrettably posed challenges to this collaboration, in addition to obstacles regarding visits to Israel it catalyzed boycotts of Israeli health projects and institutions, both explicit and silent. Also, some organizations are unwilling to partner through the Horizon 2020 framework. The ministry has even encountered some EU Member States seeking to remove Israel from existing collaborative projects.
114. **Emergency Preparedness:** The ongoing war has unfortunately enabled Israel to sharpen, test and prove the effectiveness of its emergency preparedness doctrines, including in matters pertaining to CIV-MIL cooperation, mass casualty event management, and coordinating national resources as part of a disaster response. In the shadow of the ongoing war in Europe, Israel has shared its experience with its European partners including Germany, Italy, Romania, Switzerland and Montenegro, and stands ready to collaborate further with others.
115. **Pandemic Response and IHR/INB Processes:** As we embark on a new phase of global health following the COVID-19 Pandemic, Israel has engaged with the EU delegation in Geneva on the IHR and INB processes and has conducted consultations with EU member states.
116. **ECDC:** ECDC participation is an important matter for Israel. However, when the framework fell under the auspices of WHO, Israel enjoyed full membership as part of WHO European Region. Since the framework was transferred to the EU, Israel and its European partners have yet to establish a suitably in-depth level of cooperation and information sharing, befitting Israel's status as a leading country in health and its close geographic proximity to EU member states.

117. **Medicine and Technologies:** Israel attaches great importance to its partnership with the EMA, both on a bilateral level and as part of the international Generic Drug Cluster and Project Orbis. Israel looks forward to finalizing the Confidentiality Arrangement with EMA in 2025 and would appreciate updates. Israel is also grateful for collaboration with colleagues from DG SANTE in the framework of the IMDRF.
118. **TWINNING and TAIEX Cooperation:** The Ministry of Health is deeply appreciative of the opportunity for its National Food Service to participate in the EU's TWINNING program. The Ministry has put forward an additional TAIEX proposal on food safety regulations and practices in the retail sector.
119. **Legislative and Regulatory Reform:** Israel is pursuing significant reform in harmonizing regulation on food and cosmetics with EU practices. Comprehensive food and cosmetic reforms established a three-year transition period to reach full compliance with European regulation in Israel for food imports and local production. Israel's ministry of health hopes to appoint an Israeli representative in Brussels who would actively participate in committee discussions and remain updated and contribute to emerging legislative and regulatory developments. Israel welcomes Europe's guidance in facilitating this.
120. **Future Collaboration on Cosmetics:** Israel seeks to advance an information sharing and cooperation agreement that facilitates observer participation in Commission committees on regulation and raw materials; joining the ICSMS regulatory cooperation system; and cooperation in information regarding marketing in Europe and data on adverse event reports.
121. **Moving forward:** Expanding joint projects, enhancing Israel's integration in health frameworks like the ECDC, finalizing agreements, and supporting regulatory reforms in Israel will serve to further strengthen the EU Israel collaboration in the fields of Health.

CULTURE AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

122. Israel's future participation in Creative Europe will enable cultural institutions and artists from Israel and European countries to promote the cooperation and ties in the field of culture and arts.
123. Israel has been taking part in EU research projects for the past thirty years, concentrating on topics of cultural heritage management, the development of new methodologies in archaeological excavations and big data processing and storage, as well as the conservation of archaeological sites and artifacts. In recent years, the focus of research includes the impact of climate change on historical periods and the development of micro-archaeology as a major research tool. Since 2017, Israel has participated in the following EU projects: European Research Infrastructure for Heritage Science (**E-RIHS**), **Ariadne Plus** the extension of the previous ARIADNE Integrating Activity, **IPERIONHS** determined to take up the challenge outlined in the Horizon 2020 for European research infrastructures, **EDICULA**: "Educational Digital Innovative Cultural heritage related Learning Alliance".

ENERGY

124. Israel and the EU have established robust cooperation in energy and water, including significant collaborations within the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF). Key Joint Projects:

Natural Gas Export MOU (2022): Collaboration between Israel, Egypt, and the EU, with decarbonization and value chain groups in progress.

East-Med Gas Pipeline: Bi-directional pipeline between Israel and Cyprus, supporting natural gas and hydrogen transport. IGI Poseidon, jointly owned by Greece's DEPA and Italy's Edison, is advancing the IGI-EM1 pipeline segment between Israel and Cyprus

The Great Sea Interconnector: Connecting electricity grids of Israel, Greece, and Cyprus. Work teams are conducting cost - benefit analysis and synchronizing transmission models. The project has received recognition and funding support from the EU, as it is listed as a Project of Common Interest (PCI). It should be emphasized that it is imperative to ensure that a grant is secured for the Israel-Cyprus segment of the project to support its advancement.

Twinning Project starting Q1 2025: Aligning Israel's energy efficiency policies with EU standards, in partnership with Italy's Eutalia, an Italian agency specializing in energy efficiency and EU-funded programs.

Horizon Europe: Israel's participation in the CETP for advancing clean energy transitions.

The GER-IL Energy Partnership: The 3rd consecutive working program was signed for 2025 during COP 29.

Mediterranean Energy Transition Framework: The EU is actively promoting its connectivity agenda to the MENA area, the "Mediterranean energy transition framework". This collaboration aims to enhance regional energy security and align efforts with the EU's goals for sustainable development. **Israel sees high importance to be a part of this significant plan.** Israel recognizes the strategic importance of this initiative and is committed to active participation. By leveraging energy infrastructure, knowledge-sharing, and partnerships, Israel and the EU can foster a resilient, innovative, and sustainable energy ecosystem.

CUSTOMS

125. Since the last Association Council Meeting in October 2022, bilateral cooperation between Israel and the EU has primarily focused on the AEO agreement, aligning with a broader objective to strengthen and expand our partnership. Additionally, several other areas of mutual interest are being explored, alongside ongoing cooperation in e-commerce. Israel reaffirms its commitment to deepening its strategic partnership with the EU through enhanced trade and customs cooperation, recognizes the mutual benefits of strengthening frameworks like the AEO agreement, advancing paperless trade processes, and fostering data-sharing initiatives.

TAX AUTHORITY

126. The process of exchanging information between the ITA and the EU member states is carried out efficiently and in a timely manner contributing to a mutually beneficial relationship with the EU member states. We hope to maintain this strong relationship and keep working with the EU member states in the future. Israel signed the Mutual Administrative Assistance in Tax Matters (the Multilateral Convention) on 24 November 2015 and deposited the instruments of ratification on 31 August 2016, bringing the Convention in to force on 1 December 2016. Currently, Israel has EOI network covering more than 140 jurisdictions, including all EU member states and all OECD members.
127. In addition to exchange of information on request, Israel is committed to the AEOI Standard since 2018. First exchanges under the Common Reporting Standard took place in 2019 and first exchanges under the country-by-country reports are in place for the 2021 tax year (CbC filing in Israel is mandatory since 2022 reports). In this regard it is worth mentioning that Israel has also signed the CARF MCAA declaration November 2023.

COMMUNICATIONS

128. Israel collaborates with the EU on a range of projects and activities in communications, aligned with the Barcelona Process and the EU Neighborhood Policy. These include digital transformation, 5G and 6G networks, AI, Internet Governance, and enhancing market competition through regulatory best practices. Notable achievements since the 2022 Association Council include the successful completion of the TWINNING project, which enhanced Israel's regulatory capabilities, particularly in establishing a new licensing regime based on the EU directive; and strengthening ties through the EMERG platform, where Israel played key leadership roles. The Israeli Ministry of Communications (MoC) has also actively sought opportunities for growth through the TAIEX initiative, aiming to align consumer protection regulations with global standards and learning from EU expertise on the Digital Services Act, disinformation (fake news), and social media regulation.
129. Looking forward MoC plans to restart the TAIEX study visit on enforcement and regulation of consumer protection and further aims to expand its involvement by submitting additional TAIEX requests. These requests will focus on critical areas such as the regulation of digital platforms and services, mapping of broadband and mobile networks, closure of copper network, emerging technologies, and the development of resilient communication networks, including 5G infrastructure.
130. Multilateral cooperation remains a cornerstone of Israel's approach. Through the EMERG platform, MoC seeks to deepen partnerships with the EU and other regional and international bodies, leveraging EU tools like regional TAIEX and specialized training programs. In addition, the EU's decision to resume funding for EMERG in 2025 underscores a renewed commitment to regional cooperation.
131. MoC also proposes the joint development of comprehensive training programs with the EU. These programs aim to address topics vital to the digital future, including models for ultra-high-speed broadband deployment, innovative 5G ecosystems, artificial intelligence (AI), and the integration of emerging technologies. Resilience in telecommunications networks during emergencies will also be a priority focus, ensuring robust and secure infrastructure.

132. By advancing these initiatives, Israel and the EU aim to position themselves at the forefront of global digital transformation, setting benchmarks for innovation, regulatory alignment, and international collaboration.

ENVIRONMENT

133. Israel and the European Union have significantly expanded their environmental cooperation in recent years, through bilateral initiatives and the TAIEX and Twinning instruments, as well as through Israel's participation in regional EU programs, leading to improved regulatory tools and adoption of advanced environmental standards in Israel.
134. Israel looks forward to additional exchanges with the EU as we implement the recently approved Integrated Industrial Licensing Law. Israel also proposes to further strengthen policy and regulatory dialogues with an emphasis on climate mitigation and adaptation, abatement of air pollution, and waste management and circular economy.
135. In the field of climate change, Israel wishes to focus on life cycle management of F-gas refrigerants, exploring hydrogen as an alternative fuel, implementation of Article 6 of the UNFCCC, and the need to adapt infrastructures and ecosystems to climate impact, including extreme weather events. On air pollution, Israel suggests an exchange on abatement of emissions from urban transportation and waste treatment processes, measurement of Black Carbon and reduction of Ozone concentrations. Regarding waste management, Israel wishes to focus among other issues on improving EPR schemes for packaging waste and e-waste, including treatment of used Lithium batteries. In addition, Israel would be interested in consultations in the framework of developing the international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution.
136. As we explore ways to create closer contact between Israel and the EU, the Ministry of Environmental Protection would like to join the IMPEL Network (European Union Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law), as well as enhance cooperation on environmental standardization, possibly by joining working groups or other fora on this issue.
137. Israel also wishes to explore possibilities for trilateral collaboration on urgent issues of climate adaptation and prevention of environmental degradation, based on Israeli experience and expertise in policy and technology development, including in fighting drought and desertification.

CONSTRUCTION AND HOUSING

138. Israel is currently working with the European Union (EU) in the field of construction, housing, and sustainable urbanism via the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). Over the last six years, Israeli authorities have been participating in two working groups of the Transport and Urban Development Department of the UfM on the topics of Affordable Housing and Urban Transformation. Israel has suggested a TAIEX on new construction methods which is currently under review.

139. Israel takes note of other potential fields of cooperation with the EU such as exploring global trends of rent, cross-border regional planning, engineering, energy and economic projects around the Mediterranean Sea, rise in sea levels and proper preparations for floods, models of multi-generational housing, housing assistance and urban regeneration.

AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES

140. Israel and the EU have maintained a strong and robust partnership in agriculture and fisheries, underscored by mutual trade, collaborative research and development, and regular engagements such as the Subcommittee on Agriculture and Fisheries. This close relationship is further exemplified by the presence of a dedicated Agricultural Attaché at Israel's Mission to the EU and NATO in Brussels, as well as numerous joint activities.
141. Both Israel and the EU face common challenges arising from climate change and the imperative to ensure food security. Reflecting its evolving priorities, Israel recently renamed its Ministry of Agriculture to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security. A dedicated unit has been established within the ministry to focus on this issue, spearheading inter-governmental efforts to formulate a comprehensive national food security plan through 2050. In this context, Israel anticipates strengthening its cooperation with the EU in addressing food security and related challenges.
142. Agricultural research highlights the depth of this collaboration, with Israeli academia, research institutions, and R&D stations working alongside EU counterparts through joint initiatives such as Horizon 2020 (H2020), Horizon Europe, PRIMA, and other programs.
143. The most recent EU-Israel Subcommittee on Agriculture and Fisheries meeting took place in February 2023. Although the next meeting was initially scheduled for early 2024, it has been postponed to the first quarter of 2025 and will be held in Israel. The agenda includes discussions on new agricultural policies, electronic certification systems, bilateral cooperation, food security, the resumption of the Sustainable Food Systems dialogue, specific SPS issues, and ongoing negotiations on the updated organic agreement, following revisions to the EU's "organic package."

TOURISM

144. Israel and the EU share a strong mutual interest in the tourism sector. The EU is a major source market for Israeli tourism, and the value and potential for further collaboration is undeniable. While existing bilateral cooperation with EU Member States is fruitful, there remains significant potential for enhanced collaboration at the EU level. Israel is committed to working closely with the EU to address common challenges, such as the impact of geopolitical events and economic fluctuations, and to seize emerging opportunities. Through joint initiatives and collaborative efforts, Israel and the EU can explore opportunities to enhance tourism infrastructure, promote cultural exchange, and develop innovative tourism products. By working together, we can create a more resilient, sustainable, and inclusive tourism sector that positions both Israel and the EU as leading destinations.

EDUCATION

145. Israel continues to promote the establishment of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). As part of this effort, a TAIEX activity was held with representatives and inspectors from Israel's Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labor. The TAIEX activity focused on learning outcomes of official qualifications - how they are defined and implemented within the system. The TAIEX activity was highly successful and was conducted to the full satisfaction of the Ministries' staff who participated in it. The Ministry of Education is planning another TAIEX on quality assurance and the follow up for the first TAIEX on learning outcomes.
146. The Council for Higher Education (CHE) and its Planning and Budgeting Committee (PBC) remain committed to strengthening ties with the European Union in research and higher education, guided by a broader vision of global collaboration that bridges disciplines and institutions to address pressing societal challenges. The CHE/PBC will continue supporting outstanding faculty members in their applications for Horizon Europe's European Research Council (ERC) grants and aims to increase Israel's participation in consortia calls through a dedicated internal initiative that addresses existing barriers, recognizing potential for improvement. PBC flagship programs – such as Sustainability and the Climate Crisis, AI and Data Science, and the new International Research Infrastructure – further reinforce EU policy priorities by joining forces to confront current and future challenges. At the same time, the CHE/PBC acknowledges the essential role of the Erasmus+ Program in fostering international cooperation through educational mobility, language acquisition, and professional development while promoting European values. In light and best practices.
147. The Ministry proposes exploring a variety of topics related to holistic, community-aware developments. The CHE/PBC notes that research and academic ties between Israel, and EU Member States and Associated Countries, have occasionally been affected by the political reality. Nevertheless, the CHE/PBC underscores the importance of open dialogue, sustained investment, and a mutual pursuit of excellence. Israel remains confident that these efforts will strengthen partnerships and enrich both the European and the Israeli research and education landscape.

WELFARE AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

148. Israel is looking forward to fortifying, renewing, and expanding its relations and cooperation with the European Union especially in these challenging times. The Israeli Ministry of Welfare strongly urges the advancement of returning to a normalized flow of projects, thus enabling continued fruitful, mutual learning and enrichment of knowledge and emergency/contingency-aware social welfare interventions and services through continued and new projects, addressing a broad spectrum of society's in-need populations. Practically, the renewal of the three existing, approved TAIEX study visits as soon as possible, given their multiple postponements.
149. Furthermore, the Ministry expresses interest in engaging in additional TAIEX study visits and/or professional multi-country workshops, focusing on the following topics of interest: Media, communication, PR, and awareness; Social mobility and prevention ("Impact"); Quality service to the public; Services for youth and teenagers at risk; LGBTQI+ people and services; Poverty and social exclusion; and correctional services (e.g., probation, youth at risk). By engaging in these collaborative efforts, the Ministry aims to strengthen its relationship with the European Union and contribute to addressing the evolving needs of our respective labor markets and social welfare systems.