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**Statement by the Ms Tanuja Garde,
Director, Intellectual Property,
Government Procurement and
Competition Division, World Trade
Organization, made at the opening
ceremony of the 142nd Session of the
Council**

Thank you, Mr Chairman. Excellencies, Ambassador Germann, Minister Mbarga Atangana, Executive Director Nogueira, Deputy Executive Director Tembo, distinguished delegates and observers,

It is an honour to speak at the opening of the 142nd Session of the International Coffee Council on behalf of WTO Deputy Director-General Johanna Hill, who has asked me to convey her greetings to all of you and her appreciation for our partnership with the International Coffee Organization.

Coffee is one of the most traded agricultural products in the world. The journey of coffee, from farms in tropical regions to consumers' cups around the world, touches every area of the WTO's work. For years, discussions had focused on market access for goods, trade facilitation and standards. More recently, we are seeing growing evidence of how services, intellectual property and digital technologies are reshaping the coffee value chain as well.

Let me put some numbers behind that. The value of green-coffee exports has grown almost sixty times since 1988, reaching 28 billion US dollars in 2024, with exports growing steadily since the WTO's creation in 1995. Brazil, Viet Nam and Colombia remain the leading exporters of green coffee, while the United States, Germany, Italy, Japan and Switzerland are among the largest import and consumer markets.

Switzerland, our host country, is an excellent illustration of how value is created along the chain. In 2023, it imported around 1.2 billion US dollars of green coffee and exported some 3.6 billion dollars of processed coffee, highlighting the important role that innovation, branding and intellectual property play in the value chain.

Coffee producers are increasingly navigating sustainability and traceability requirements in their export markets, from deforestation-free supply chains to pesticide residue limits. For millions of small farmers, meeting these new standards depends on knowing the rules early and having a

voice in how they are designed. This is where WTO transparency can help: Member governments notify new measures, our online system – ePing – alerts exporters as soon as notifications are made, and WTO Committees offer a forum for interested members to raise concerns before these measures take effect. And this is why I think it would be useful for coffee producers to continue to engage with the WTO.

If you allow me, I would like to spend a moment on the area I work on every day: intellectual property. The coffee value chain is one of the best examples of how intellectual property can turn the knowledge, quality and reputation embedded in a cup of coffee into a real business opportunity. Intellectual property is a tool that supports branding and differentiation, incentivizes innovation, facilitates partnerships, and helps producers and businesses capture more value from what they grow and make.

The TRIPS Agreement provides the multilateral framework for protecting and enforcing intellectual property. Its disciplines matter for coffee in many ways: from the development of pest-resilient varieties to the creation and enforcement of geographical indications and trademarks that can shape how a coffee experience is branded.

Data from the World Intellectual Property Organization shows that annual coffee-related patent and trademark filings have risen sharply since TRIPS entered into force in 1995. This reflects investment across the whole chain, from cultivation and processing to roasting and retail. We are witnessing how intellectual property and emerging technologies are reinforcing each other: intellectual property encourages the development and deployment of new technologies such as artificial intelligence, and in turn, artificial intelligence and other tools can help rights holders protect and enforce their rights.

The sheer scale of global coffee trade is precisely why we should engage across a range of WTO disciplines. It is a single supply chain where trade in goods and services, IP-driven value creation, and frontier technologies meet, turning quality, origin and innovation into added value. At its core, this is what the WTO is about, and what trade can do: support people and families turn what they produce, know and create into real opportunity and better livelihoods. At the WTO, we are delighted to partner with the International Coffee Organization on this agenda.

As this Council opens its deliberations, in the run-up to International Coffee Day on 1 October, we would like to reaffirm the WTO's readiness to support Members and the ICO wherever multilateral trade rules can help coffee thrive.

Thank you and I wish the Council a most productive 142nd Session.