

June 7, 2012

**Joint Statement on the visit of Deputy Prime Minister Verhagen
and Minister Rosenthal to Israel**

The Netherlands and Israel look back on a fruitful visit of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation Maxime Verhagen and Minister of Foreign Affairs Uri Rosenthal to Israel in the week of 4 June 2012. The visit underlines the friendship and long lasting partnership between the two countries.

The two countries enjoy excellent governmental relations. Fruitful cooperation already exists in the fields of business, trade and investment, technical cooperation and science. Both governments confirm once again their intention to set up a Netherlands-Israel Cooperation Council that will further strengthen the bilateral relations between both countries in a comprehensive manner. A decision will be taken once a newly elected Dutch government is in place.

The following topics and initiatives have been discussed:

- Foreign Affairs and Regional Developments

The two countries discussed all aspects of their bilateral relations and exchanged views on the MEPP, Iran and other regional and international developments of mutual interest. They underlined their common desire to achieve sustainable peace in the Middle East, based on the two State solution, through direct negotiations between the parties. They reconfirmed the existing bilateral cooperation on foreign relations through regular bilateral foreign policy consultations at the level of senior officials from both Ministries of Foreign Affairs.

Both countries shared their concern about unresolved issues regarding the possible military dimension of the Iranian nuclear program.

- International development cooperation

The two countries emphasized the importance of international development cooperation in third countries. Both countries are willing to further explore the sharing of best practices and

possible alignment of strategies and agreed that trilateral cooperation in this field will be explored with regard to specific countries.

- Academia

The two countries express their satisfaction over the academic exchanges already existing between researchers and academic institutions of the two countries, and will look into the possibilities of expanding them in other areas of interest to both countries.

- Culture

The two countries will strive to enhance cultural relations and exchanges, by way of participation in festivals, artist exchanges, and joint cultural projects.

- Trade, Investment and Technological Cooperation

The two countries took note of their stable trade and investment relations and underlined their common desire to promote bilateral trade, investment and technological cooperation. In this context, they attach great importance to several Dutch economic missions that visit Israel either at the time of the visit – including ten innovation-oriented companies active in the Dutch top sectors agri-food, energy, high-tech, IT, logistics and water – or thereafter.

Three Dutch private sector missions visited Israel at the same time:

- 1) a Gas Mission, which has as its goal to present and promote Dutch knowledge and expertise for further development of the natural gas industry in Israel.
- 2) a Metropolitan Food Security Mission, which seeks cooperation with Israeli business and academia to further develop and use Dutch and Israeli knowledge, technology and experience with a view to providing demand-driven integrated and generic system solutions for food security issues in emerging markets and developing countries.
- 3) a Food & Retail Mission, which seeks to secure and extend its network, with special interest in retail concepts in Israel.

Other Dutch private sector missions are expected later in 2012:

- 1) a Water Mission in September, which has as its objective to seek cooperation with Israeli counterparts in the definition, design and implementation of ambitious water projects, as well

as complementary activities in the areas of access to water, sewage & sanitation, discharge waste & service water, and scarcity.

2) a Microtechnology Mission from 7 to 11 November.

3) a Renewable Energy Mission from 25 to 29 November.

- Innovation

The two countries noted the importance of entrepreneurship and innovation in their countries and the good match between their business societies and research institutes. They agreed to explore possibilities for further mutual cooperation in the area of innovation – in particular in the sectors agrifood, civil space technology, (renewable) energy, high-tech, ICT, life sciences & health, and water - and, in this respect, consider the organization of a joint innovation day. In this context, they further agreed to consider activities that help encourage Israeli-Palestinian cooperation.

- Cyber Security

The two countries emphasized the vital importance of cyber security for their societies and economies in the light of their increasing dependence on ICT. Safe and reliable ICT is of fundamental importance for their prosperity and wellbeing and acts as a catalyst for further sustainable economic growth. Both countries strive to reinforce the security of their digital societies with a view to increasing confidence of their peoples, business society and governments in the use of ICT. The two countries agreed to explore possibilities for mutual cooperation in this field.