



## **POST-ACCESSION FORUM**

### **OPENING KEY NOTE REMARKS BY AGAH YONOV FREDERICK, DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL, WTO**

*Nairobi, Kenya, 19 July 2016*

Honourable Ministers

Your Excellencies

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. On behalf of the WTO Director-General, Roberto Azevêdo, I would like to warmly welcome you to this Post-Accession forum, which has been jointly organized by the WTO and UNCTAD to celebrate the WTO membership of Afghanistan and Liberia.
2. This morning, we are happy to have with us H.E. Mr. Humayoon Rasaw, Minister of Commerce of Industries of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, and H.E. Mr. Axel Addy, Minister of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Liberia. I heartily welcome and commend both of you for the leadership and energy that you have provided to drive the respective accession of your countries to successful conclusion. Let me also pay special tribute to Deputy-Secretary General Joakim Reiter who served as one Chairman of the working party during the final three years; and has passionately advocated the need for post-accession support to LDCs.

3. Ladies and gentlemen, this Forum is symbolic in many ways. First, last December, in this same city, and indeed, in this very same room TSAVO 2, the Protocols on the Accession of Liberia and Afghanistan were formally approved by WTO Ministers during the Tenth Ministerial Conference held in KICC. As many of you may recall, the decisions on the two LDC accessions provided inspiration, and generated positive momentum for the historic outcomes which were achieved at the Nairobi WTO Ministerial Conference.

4. Second, today, seven months after, we are again gathered here in this same room, to celebrate the membership of Liberia, which became the 163rd Member of the WTO, on July 14, just five days ago. Afghanistan will also become the 164th Member of the WTO on 29 July. All this would not have been possible but for the intensive hard work undertaken by these governments and their parliaments, especially with respect to the enactment of one remaining legislation; and one ratification and submission of the Accession Protocols within the set timelines.

5. On behalf of the WTO Director General, I would like to congratulate Liberia and Afghanistan for their achievements in using WTO accessions to pursue their domestic reforms, based on the WTO core values of non-discrimination, market opening, the rule of law and good governance. Their achievements were particularly remarkable, given the very challenging

circumstances in which they had to negotiate, and they had to make tough decisions. Let me pay special tributes to President Ellen Sirleaf Johnson of Liberia and President Ashraf Ghani of Afghanistan, without their leadership, personal commitment and direct involvement, these accessions could not have been done.

6. Ladies and gentlemen, this Post-Accession Forum has two objectives. First, it provides a platform for Liberia and Afghanistan to outline their WTO Post-Accession Strategies, highlighting their expectations for WTO membership; and the plans they have developed to prepare for their membership. Second, the Forum provides an opportunity for the international community to discuss how they can continue to support the two LDCs in the post-accession phase, so that they can maximise the benefits that the WTO can offer in advancing their domestic reforms, and trade and development agenda.

7. For the WTO, a dialogue of this nature is highly desirable based on one recognition that the completion of an accession does not lead automatically to trade-related development and growth, as the realisation of the benefits of WTO membership is dependent on sustained domestic reforms and implementation of WTO commitments. Consequently, to assist newly acceded Members, the WTO secretariat has, since 2014, developed

an integrated approach for post-accession implementation support, which is structured into three different but complementary pillars, in response to the specific needs of new Article XII Members, especially LDCs.

8. First, is the Best Practices on WTO Post-Accession. The best practices have been drawn from the experience and lessons learned from 36 completed accessions since 1995, in the transition from long years of the accession negotiations to their operational membership. Many acceding governments have said that this transition would require not only the policy and institutional preparedness, but also a "mental shift", to take advantage of WTO membership. The first dialogue on post-accession was held at the Third China Round Table, held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan in May 2015, under the sponsorship of the China's LDCs and Accessions Programme, commonly referred to as "the China Programme". Building on that discussion, a paper has been developed and issued by the WTO Secretariat entitled "Best Practices on WTO Post-Accession, which is available on the WTO website. A brief description of the Best Practices is available in the brochure of this Forum available in this room. The Best Practices on WTO Post-Accession are structured into seven areas, including: (i) Policy Framework for Implementation; (ii) Institutional Structural Adjustment; (iii) Legislative Framework for Implementation; (iv) Transparency; (v)

Technical Assistance and Capacity Building; (vi) Outreach; and (vii) Participation in the work of the WTO.

9. The second pillar is the Country-Specific Post-Accession Strategy, developed on the basis of the accession commitments undertaken by the Acceding Governments. This strategy outlines both the specific and broad needs that are required to implement their accession commitments, including technical assistance and capacity building from the international community.

10. The third pillar of Post-Accession is specialised training activities. Two of these training activities are delivered to Liberia and Afghanistan before their membership dates, but after the deposit of the Instruments of Acceptance. WTO organized a National Workshop on Post-Accession in Monrovia, Liberia, For Liberia, just three weeks ago, from 27 to 29 June. The workshop was attended by 70 participants from different line Ministries, the parliament, the private sector, academia and media. Just last week, a Policy Dialogue on Post-Accession was organized for Afghanistan, by the WTO and the UNESCAP, in Bangkok. This dialogue was attended by senior government officials from various Ministries, including Commerce and Industries; Foreign Affairs; Agriculture, Irrigation and



Livestock; Public Health, as well as the Afghanistan National Standards Authority and the Export Promotion Agency of Afghanistan.

11. The objective of these post-accession training activities is to prepare the two LDCs for their WTO membership, including the preparation of initial notifications to be submitted to the WTO regular committees, the identification of priority areas for their participation in the work of the WTO as Member, and the exchange of post-accession experiences with Article XII Members. On behalf of the WTO Secretariat, let me express special appreciation to the Government of China for their financial support under the China Programme, which has recently increased its focus on Post-Accession support for LDCs.

12. Today's Post-Accession Forum builds on the outcomes from the two post-accession activities for Liberia and Afghanistan. And on that note, it is useful to recall what an accession negotiator said to an acceding government: "if you think that accession is tough, you don't understand how tough WTO Membership can be". Let me therefore, underscore that, notwithstanding your LDC status and the associated challenges as WTO Members, you have become important players in the global trade arena. As Members, you enjoy all the benefits conferred by the covered agreements,



including global trade benefits and a transparent rules-based method to resolve disputes. You. However, as members, also assume the corresponding responsibilities in all these areas. And as you seek to achieve this intricate balance between rights and obligations, the WTO secretariat remains fully prepared to support you. As LDCs, I encourage you to take full advantage of the TRTA of the ITTC and the technical support of the Development Division.

13. I would therefore like to appeal to the international community, including WTO Members to sustain this momentum as you embark on your post-accession endeavours. On that note, let me conclude by thanking our key partners notably China, EIF, the World Bank, the Swedish National Board of Trade, EU, USAID and the DFID to name a few, but there are many others.

14. I hope that **by working** together, we would all be able to solidify the integration of Liberia and Afghanistan in the Multilateral Trading System through well-established post-accession support programmes. WTO Secretariat is ready to do its part, together with our long standing partnership with you all.

15. I thank you all for your kind attention.