

**REMARKS BY  
H.E. HUMAYOON RASAW  
MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRIES OF  
THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN  
AT THE  
POST-ACCESSION FORUM: MAXIMISING THE BENEFITS  
OF WTO MEMBERSHIP  
WTO MEMBERSHIP OF AFGHANISTAN AND LIBERIA  
14<sup>th</sup> MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE  
Nairobi, Kenya  
July 19, 2016**

Your Excellency Mr. Chairperson,

Your Excellency, WTO Director-General, Roberto Azevêdo  
Your Excellency UNCTAD Secretary-General, Mukhisa Kituyi  
Distinguished Ministers,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to speak at this significant Post-Accession forum. I would like to thank WTO Director-General H.E. Roberto Azevêdo and UNCTAD Secretary-General H.E. Mukhisa Kituyi for their invitation.

I wish to extend my profound gratitude to WTO Director-General H.E. Roberto Azevêdo for his exceptional leadership during Afghanistan's WTO Accession process and express my sincere appreciation to the WTO Accessions Division.

In addition, we are enormously grateful to WTO Ministers for their unanimous approval of Afghanistan's WTO membership and for their continued support and understanding regarding our development needs as a post-conflict, landlocked, and least developed economy.

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

Tenth Ministerial Conference in Nairobi was indeed a historic milestone in Afghanistan's aspiration to integrate into the multilateral trading system.

As you are aware that our National Assembly has ratified the Protocol of Accession and the Instrument of Acceptance has been signed by our president H.E. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani. We are looking forward to becoming the 164<sup>th</sup> member of the WTO.

We have come along way since 2004 when Afghanistan first applied for WTO membership. Since then, we have implemented significant policy, legal and institutional reforms in alignment with WTO rules, principles and agreements. During this process Afghanistan has received support from bilateral development partners, multilateral and regional institutions that have been instrumental in negotiations under challenging circumstances and capacity constraints. It has been a fulfilling and accomplishing experience for our country.

However, there is more to be accomplished and the immediate post-accession support would be critical to maximize the benefits of the WTO membership and engage in a productive and constructive manner in the work of WTO.

WTO membership has always been an integral part of our overall strategic objectives to achieve economic stability, improve regional security and cooperation, and achieve everlasting peace.

We recognize the importance of creating a predictable, stable and cost-efficient business environment through adopting effective environment and legislation, and strengthening our institutions. We realize it is equally important to develop human capacity within our public and private sector and as well as secure access to international markets.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen:**

Afghanistan has embraced and is committed to uphold WTO values and principles including the rule of law, good governance, transparency, and non-discrimination. We need your support to advance and cement these values in our society and business environment. We believe with unanimous approval of our membership, the first major step toward this objective has been taken.

We have identified eight key elements for our Post-Accession strategy. I am pleased to share five of the key elements with you today.

**First**, we have strong resolve to build on achieved reforms to further modernize the business environment in Afghanistan. We are committed to fulfill our WTO obligations in a timely fashion and pursue reforms aimed at greater trade facilitation including acceptance and implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. We will also be seeking to join the WTO Government

Procurement Agreement (GPA) as soon as practically possible and to harmonize our procurement legislation with the revised GPA.

Institutional development will remain a priority in areas of intellectual property, geographical indicators and patents. This requires significant assistance including capacity building, procedural guidelines, and automation.

**Second**, we plan to actively participate in the work of the WTO. We are in the process of establishing a representative office in Geneva. We plan to regularly participate in the work of various technical committees and councils. We are keen to play an important role in the work of Least-Developed Countries subcommittee and Land-Locked Developing Countries group and support the development of reasonable proposals for consideration in multilateral trading rounds to increase exports of LDCs and strengthen their participation in the global economy. In addition, we plan to support and facilitate accessions of our neighboring countries including Azerbaijan, Iran, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. We believe that the WTO rule based platform can serve to promote greater regional trade with our regional partners and facilitate transit for our landlocked economy.

**The third** element of our post-accession strategy is to attract foreign investment in our country. Our proximity to large markets such as China and India presents investors with tremendous opportunities including exploration, extraction, and processing of natural resources and as well as added-value industry. We are seeking donor support to develop a sound investment attraction and promotion strategy emphasizing as a core element the benefits investors will gain from our WTO membership.

**Fourth**, We have started the development of an export promotion strategy in cooperation with the International Trade Centre to implement during the next five years. In the meantime, we will increase awareness of our private sector about opportunities and challenges resulting from WTO membership. This will include capacity building to meet import requirements in WTO markets, particularly those related to product and food safety standards.

**Fifth**, human capacity building within the public sector and private sector is essential for the long-term development of Afghanistan. We are determined to build capacity of public sector officials on administering, enforcing, and adhering to WTO commitments and private sector understanding of WTO related laws as well as their rights within the WTO system. Equally important is building the capacity of the judicial system and private lawyers, particularly concerning the WTO dispute settlement process. Benefiting from existing programs offered by the WTO Secretariat and its partners including the Advisory Centre on WTO Law will also serve to strengthen our trade capacity.

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

Afghanistan is committed to maximize the benefits of WTO membership by sustaining modernization and reform of the economy, enhance growth and development, secure stable and non-discriminatory access for Afghan exports, improve our business environment, and integrate to the rules-based global economy. We understand that the continued post-accession support will remain critical in the process.

I would like to reiterate Afghanistan's determination and commitment to play by the rules of the multilateral trading system. We view adherence to WTO agreements as critical for strengthening the rule of law, increasing transparency, and building the foundation for sound economic development in Afghanistan.

Thank you for your support and attention!