



(FINAL)

Opening Statement by His Excellency
His Excellency Eng. Joaquim Amaral
Coordinating Minister of Economic Affairs,
and Chief Negotiator
of The Government of The Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste
as an Acceding Government to
The World Trade Organization

Geneva, Switzerland, 29 July 2021



Your Excellency Chairperson of the Working Party Ambassador Rui Macieira;

Your Excellencies Representatives of WTO Members and Observer Governments;

Distinguished Officials of WTO Secretariat;

Your Excellencies, Members of the Timor-Leste Government Members

Honourable Dr. José Ramos Horta, Former President and Nobel Peace Prize

Laureate;

Honourable Estanislau da Silva , Former Prime Minister and State Minister and

Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs and Minister of Agriculture and

Fisheries;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Good morning in Geneva and Good evening in Timor-Leste. First of all, please allow me to bring you warm and cordial greetings from the Government and the people of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste.

Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the members of my delegation, and on my own behalf, I wish to thank you, and all the members of the Working Party, for the warm reception accorded to us here in Timor-Leste and to our Mission in Geneva. I would also like to express our profound gratitude and appreciation to the WTO Secretariat for providing a virtual platform that has made this Working Party meeting possible, as well as for their endless assistance and support during Timor-Leste's accession process.

Mr. Chairman, we also greatly appreciate the presence of all the distinguished participants, both in person in Geneva and virtually from capitals. Please accept my sincere words of gratitude. I am also grateful for the distinguished presence of the members of the Cabinet here in the capital. Our presence is also highlighted by His Honourable Dr. José Ramos-Horta, Former President and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate,



and **Honourable Estanislau Da Silva, Former Prime Minister and State Minister and Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs and Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries..**

Mr. Chairman, please allow me to start by emphasizing Timor-Leste's commitment to WTO membership that is continuously reflected through our strong political will, across all partisan lines, to support the implementation of domestic structural, legislative and policy reforms required to comply with our future WTO commitments, as part of Timor-Leste's domestic economic and foreign trade policy objectives enshrined in Timor-Leste's Vision for 2030. Ever since obtaining the WTO observer status in 2016, we are convinced that the accession to the WTO will be the key ingredient for achieving Timor-Leste's development goals by enabling us to diversify economy, to become part of value chain of global economies, bring about more cross-border business opportunities and align legal and regulatory system with international standards and WTO rules. Our commitment to the WTO, that is also matched by our parallel endeavour on ASEAN membership, has also been precisely articulated in the 1st Working Party meeting that took place on 1 October 2020, as well as domestically in the lead up to the 2nd Working Party meeting that we are having today.

On behalf of my Government and my team, please accept our sincere appreciation to the Members of the Working Party for the wide support that they extended to our accession effort and their constructive contributions to further advancement and expedition of this process, in line with the Government's vision to finalize the WTO accession as early as possible in accordance with our established indicative Accession Roadmap.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to inform the distinguished participants on the state-of-play and developments since the 1st Working Party meeting. Following the 1st Working Party Meeting, Timor-Leste continued to progress in its accession by developing and providing the negotiating inputs requested by Members, including the initial Market Access Offers on Goods and Services, which were circulated to the Members of the Working Party in May-June of this year.



I am pleased to update that Working Party that Timor-Leste has initiated bilateral consultations on market access with interested Members based on the circulated offers. These consultations commenced in the week of 19 July and will after the today's meeting. I would like to thank Members – namely, Australia, Canada, the European Union, Indonesia and the United States of America – for their requests for bilaterals and will be happy to elaborate on this process under the respective agenda item.

Alongside submission of the offers, we have updated a number of negotiating inputs, whereby these inputs have been consolidated in the Factual Summary of Points Raised document, *inter alia*:

- Responses to Members' additional questions on Timor-Leste's foreign trade regime;
- Questionnaire on Import Licensing procedures;
- Action plan for the implementation of the TBT Agreement;
- Action plan for the implementation of the SPS Agreement;
- Checklist of illustrative SPS issues;
- Action plan for the implementation of the TRIPS Agreement;
- Domestic support and export subsidies in the agricultural sector; and
- Updated Legislative Action Plan (LAP) alongside several translations of the newly adopted legislations;

The submission of these documents once again reflected our robust dedication to WTO accession as a tool for economic reforms and trade integration, despite the continuing struggle with the COVID-19 pandemic and the recent flood that took place in April.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, having said that, as a Least Developed Country (LDC), we would like to bring to your attention the continuous challenges to push for economic reforms considering our lack of human resource and basic infrastructure to attract foreign direct investment and develop domestic production as we are trying to diversify our economy beyond the petroleum and gas sector. These challenges will



continue as the COVID-19 pandemic persists to exist, as also currently being faced by all the nations globally.

Taking this opportunity, Timor-Leste recognizes the critical role of technical assistance-capacity building and donor support in advancing our WTO accession process. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to Members and International organizations that have provided their assistance to Timor-Leste to help progressively advance with the accession process. At the same time, as the accession negotiations intensify, Timor-Leste continues to be open to the necessary assistance from Members and Development Partners, to accelerate and bring closer Timor-Leste's membership in the WTO.

Mr. Chairman, on this note, allow me to once again thank everyone involved in delivering this meeting. Please accept our highest appreciation and consideration of your warm welcome as well as for the encouragements and support from Members, the Deputy Director General and the Accessions Division of the WTO Secretariat. While the recent challenges intervened in the pace of our accession process and resulted in a slight adjustment of our Accession Roadmap, I am confident that, with your support and the commitment of my Government, we will be able to follow through the revised Roadmap as planned, to meet the target to become a WTO member by the end of next year. We will work hard to make this happen.

Thank you very much for your attention and we would be very pleased to respond to questions and comments from the Members of the Working Party.
