

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful;

Mr. Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCAP, Representatives from WTO and WTO Institute, China.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Thanks for inviting and welcoming the Afghan delegation to this remarkable event of Post-WTO accession policy dialogue hosted by UNESCAP in collaboration with WTO and financed by the People's Republic of China.

It is a great honor for me to speak today as we have gathered here in Bangkok to start policy level dialogue and discussions, and to train and equip with latest knowledge the brains who will be playing leading roles in moving Afghanistan forward as an active and responsible WTO member. Our participation today in this event is highly in tune with Afghanistan's dire need to create and develop human capital.

Human capital formation is core to the process of sustainable economic development. This is precisely an area in which WTO and ESCAP has helped us a lot. Over a decade and a half, ESCAP and the international institutions houses has played a major role in Afghanistan's human capacity development. On behalf of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, I therefore take this opportunity to express my deep sense of gratitude to Thailand Government for facilitating this process.

I also thank the UNESCAP team here in Bangkok for their highly generous support.

Let me in particular pay tribute to Ms.Mika. As a director of the accession divisions, Ms.Mike extended full support for Afghanistan's WTO accession and provided diligent guidance. Her pragmatic approach turned the aspirations of our nation for global economic integration into a reality.

I would also like to thank Ms.Anna for her continue efforts which are highly valued with a deep sense of appreciation. I want to specially commend your support in facilitating the negotiations between WTO members and Afghanistan during the accession process by encouraging our integration into the multilateral trading system through the effective liberalization of the trade regime in goods and services.

On July 29, 2016, Afghanistan will become the 164<sup>th</sup> member of the World Trade Organization – This is a milestone for a country that took nearly 11 years to join the Multilateral Trading System. Afghanistan commenced its accession process in 2004 and the process gathered momentum in 2011 when the first Working Party meeting was held in January, 2011.

I would like to acknowledge that ESCAP has closely collaborated with Ministry of Commerce & Industries (MoCI), provided guidance and expert support in our Trade Facilitation, and in conducting studies and moving Afghanistan's WTO Accession process forward. MOCI looks to ESCAP as a source of knowledge and experience which can be crucial to our active and beneficial engagement at the multilateral trading system.

This WTO post-accession strategy/road map dialogue will serve to be a major session which will result in a clear road map for the implementation of Afghanistan's WTO commitments and obligations.

Afghanistan must promote trade facilitation, implement customs reforms and attract investment in trade support activities and strengthen institutions and promote the interests of our small and medium sized businesses.

We need to put together all these in a post accession plan and mobilize government and donor resources to support the critical process of putting in place the trade programs that support the above mentioned areas.

Afghanistan takes its membership in the WTO seriously. And a new member, Afghanistan ensures other members that it will play a constructive role to advance the goals of a multilateral trading system represented by the WTO.

Trade is an enabler of growth and is considered to be a key element of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). With our WTO membership we have taken a major leap forward to reviving the role of trade as a truly inclusive engine for shared prosperity, economic growth, and poverty reduction in Afghanistan.

Thank you for your attention.