

**As delivered**

**Introductory Remarks by Ambassador Dr. ZHANG Xiangchen  
at the 7<sup>th</sup> China Round Table**

Astana, 26 September 2018

Distinguished Ambassador Zhanar Aitzhanova,  
Distinguished DDG Ambassador Alan Wolff,  
Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning.

I would like to thank, on behalf of Chinese government, the government of Kazakhstan and the WTO Secretariat, for their good preparation and careful organization of the 7<sup>th</sup> China Round Table, and welcoming all the participants for your coming.

I am very pleased that Kazakhstan has taken this positive step, coming at a critical moment in global trade. This clearly shows Kazakhstan's commitment and engagement to the multilateral trading system. As a matter of fact, Kazakhstan has been an active member since its accession nearly 3 years ago. Ambassador Zhanar Aitzhanova and her team in Geneva have been actively engaged in various occasions. Zhanar is capable, and a good friend to me. We two Missions have kept close cooperation and mutual support in many areas.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Starting from the year of 1995 when the WTO was founded, we have had 36 newly acceded members, most of which are developing economies, and 9 of them are LDCs. For the time being, there are still 20-plus countries outside the WTO, some of which are in the process of accession. Most of them are LDCs that need timely and effective capacity building.

I am of the view that, the capacity constraint, or the capacity gap between developing countries – including LDCs, and developed countries, is the fundamental aspect for (1) the accession to the WTO of developing countries – especially LDCs, (2) their further integration into the multilateral trading system, and (3) ultimately the Development issue within the organization.

In terms of the capacity building of LDCs' accession, the following three areas may be strengthened:

First, WTO members should spare no efforts to encourage and facilitate LDCs' accession to the WTO, aiming at enhancing the inclusiveness of the system. In particular, during the accession process, members may not make going-too-far requests, or not make any requests at all.

Second, the WTO Secretariat may invest more, or put particular emphasis on the capacity building and technical assistance for LDCs, such as training opportunities, workshops and seminars, etc.. Further, graduating LDCs need special attention so that the graduation process needs to be well prepared, and there is no sudden disruption of their economic development after graduation.

Third, LDCs themselves may gradually open the market and conduct economic reform in accordance with each country's own situations. In this regard, self-capacity building is of great importance, in the area of institutional, human and social changes.

Ladies and gentlemen,

China has always attached great importance to LDC's accession to the WTO. We have provided support of various kinds in line with our own capability. China remains the only member that promises not to ask market access requests for LDCs application of the membership. Today's Round Table is a good example, which is one of the five pillars of "China Programme", with the other 4 pillars being the internship programme, increasing participation of LDCs in WTO meetings, South-South dialogue on LDCs and development, and LDCs' trade policy review follow-up workshops.

We hope these efforts will facilitate and accelerate the process of LDCs' accession, and further help them to complete the transition from accession negotiations to fulfilling the rights and obligations as WTO members as soon as possible.

That being said, I would wish a great success of the Roundtable, and look forward to hearing your insightful views in the following two days.

Thank you.