

Opening Remarks at the High-level Session:

Future of LDC Accessions

H.E. Mr. Wang Wentao, Minister of Commerce of
People's Republic of China

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Honorable Director-General Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala,
Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear friends,

Good afternoon. At the outset, I'd like to thank Director-General Okonjo-Iweala, Deputy Director-General Zhang Xiangchen, and the Secretariat for the efforts of organizing this round table. 2021 marks the 10th anniversary of the China Program and the 20th anniversary of China's accession to the WTO. The China Round Table, held at this special moment, is therefore of extraordinary significance. Now I would like to share three points.

First, China supports LDCs' accession to the WTO as we always do. LDCs are the most vulnerable countries in the

global trading system, and also the most urgently help-needed ones. China, as a developing country, spent 15 years on its accession process. We know too well the complexity and difficulty of the process, and recognize the importance of both integrating into the multilateral trading system and speeding up opening-up and development. That is why over the past 20 years, China has spared no efforts in helping the LDCs integrate into the multilateral trading system, promote productivity, and enhance export competitiveness.

The China Program was jointly launched by China and the Secretariat in 2012. We are inspired by its positive effects in the past decade, during which six LDCs gained membership, benefited significantly from accession to the WTO, and leapt forward in their trade and economic development. The well-received TPR workshops, the South-South Dialogues, and the internship programme that funded 39 interns in the Secretariat, have in all cultivated professionals familiar with the WTO rules, for LDCs and other developing Members, enhanced alignment between their trade policies and overall development strategies, and facilitated trade policy coordination among the LDCs and developing Members.

Second, China has been sharing the benefits of its own development with the LDCs. On 4th November, 2021, in the keynote speech at the opening ceremony of the fourth China

International Import Expo, President Xi Jinping announced that over the last two decades, China has fully delivered on its accession commitments and opened its door wider to the rest of the world. China's overall tariff rate has been cut from 15.3% to 7.4%. Compared to liberalizing 100 service sub-sectors in our accession commitments, now nearly 120 sub-sectors have been opened up. Twenty years on, China has actively shared its development opportunities with the world, serving as a major stabilizer and driver for the world economy. Through its own opening-up and development, China brings to the world including the LDCs a broad market and development opportunities. China has offered zero-tariff treatment to 97% of tariff lines for 42 LDCs. With 25% of the LDCs' exports flowing to China, China has become the largest exporting market for the LDCs. China has also encouraged the LDCs to participate in the China International Import Expo and other exhibitions to expand business in China and the world.

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, China has vigorously promoted international cooperation against the pandemic and supported waiving intellectual property rights for COVID vaccines for developing countries. China has announced that it will strive to provide 3 billion US dollars in the next three years to support COVID-19 response and economic and social recovery in other developing countries. China is honoring its commitments and fulfilling its responsibilities with concrete

actions.

Third, China will stay committed to South-South cooperation within the framework of the multilateral trading system. At the UN General Assembly in September 2021, President Xi Jinping proposed a Global Development Initiative, calling for efforts to build a global community of development with a shared future and steer global development toward a new stage of balanced, coordinated and inclusive growth. Such a proposal is of great significance in speeding up the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As we speak, the pandemic is still sprawling across the world, resulting in a wider gap between the south and the north and mounting risks of a greater digital divide. Developing members, LDCs in particular, are confronted with graver challenges. China stands ready to work with all parties on the China Program, to support developing Members, especially the LDCs, in pursuing greater economic resilience and recovery, take concrete actions to implement the Global Development Initiative, and build a global community of development with a shared future.

China will continue to support capacity building. China will enhance cooperation with the Secretariat for a greater role of the China Program in helping developing Members, LDCs in

particular, accede to the WTO and integrate into global economy.

China stands ready to work with all parties to accelerate LDCs' accession process. China calls on all parties to genuinely carry out the General Council's decision to facilitate and accelerate the accession process of the LDCs, and to pragmatically promote LDCs' early accession.

China looks forward to positive outcomes of the MC12. We would like to work with other members to reach greater consensus on LDCs' accession and development agenda. We expect a more open, inclusive and beneficial for all multilateral trading system for win-win results and common development.

Ladies and gentlemen,

2021 marks the centenary of the founding of the Communist Party of China. The recent Sixth Plenary Session of the 19th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China reviewed the Party's major achievements and historical experience over the past century, and clearly pointed out that we must choose openness over seclusion and mutual benefit over zero-sum games, and stand on the right side of history and the side of human progress. China would like to join hands with all Members to practice true multilateralism, uphold the multilateral trading system with the WTO at its core, and support the

inclusive development of the multilateral trading system, so that the spring breeze of openness and development will bring warmth to every corner of the world.

In closing, I wish this round table every success. Thank you.