

Panel Discussion
His Excellency Mr. Humayoon Rasaw, Minister of Commerce and Industries at the
Public Dialogue meeting on the g7+ Panel Discussion
10th of December 2017
Hilton Hotel, Room Atlántico B, Argentina

Ladies and Gentlemen!

The launch of g7+ WTO Accessions Group is indeed a historic milestone in LDC's aspiration to integrate into the multilateral trading system, and I am very hopeful the 11th WTO ministerial conference will be another high point for all LDC WTO members to add on the functioning and achievements and underscore the important role played by this great institution.

The g7+ WTO Accessions Group is launched with the following two broad objectives. **First:** to facilitate the integration of post-conflict and fragile economies into the multilateral trading system through WTO accession-related reforms, including the establishment of credible economic and trade policy frameworks and institutions, and the promotion of transparency and good governance, based on international best practices. And **second:** to support the efforts of the WTO acceding governments in the Group, including through information and experience sharing.

In this regard, we believe implementing WTO provisions provides a predictable and stable legal framework for LDCs that supports important national economic goals, such as achieving sustainable growth, promoting high-tech industry, attracting foreign investment, raising living standards, and asserting national trade interests.

I believe, this work produces results in practice, not just in theory. The Secretariat consistently notes in the Director General's annual report that Article XII Members outperform the rest of WTO Members in trade growth, even when China is excluded from the calculations.

In addition, for many Article XII Members, including LDCs, FDI flows in the five years after WTO accession were significantly higher than FDI flows in the five years before WTO accession.

In this respect I also recall a 2008 study by the National Bureau of Economic Research, which concluded that, "relative to other developing countries, countries that became WTO members did generally grow faster than before, and the increments in their ratios of investment to GDP were greater as well." The same study concluded that "accessions tend to raise income, but only for those countries that were subject to rigorous accession procedures."

Speaking for Afghanistan, the provision of better economic opportunities, especially for the youth who have been trapped in conflicts, was one of the main reasons for my government, to decide to pursue WTO accession. Similar reasons have been resonated among other post-conflicts LDCs, including Liberia, who is Afghanistan's accession "mate" from Nairobi MC10

Ladies and Gentlemen!

At the end I would like to make this clear that the purpose of establishing the g7+ WTO accession Group is not seeking to launch a new negotiation, it will not be for rule-making, and it has no intention to replace existing groups and committees, rather it aims to better structuring and strengthening our work to facilitate the integration of post-conflict and fragile economies into the multilateral trading system through WTO accession; and to support the efforts of the WTO acceding governments in the Group, including through information and experience sharing.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

I would like to reiterate Afghanistan's determination and commitment to play by the rules of the multilateral trading system. I sincerely wish this Ministerial Conference all the success it deserves, and hope that we can accomplish the sought after outcome, with development dimension and concerns of LDCs at the heart of its results.

Thank you!