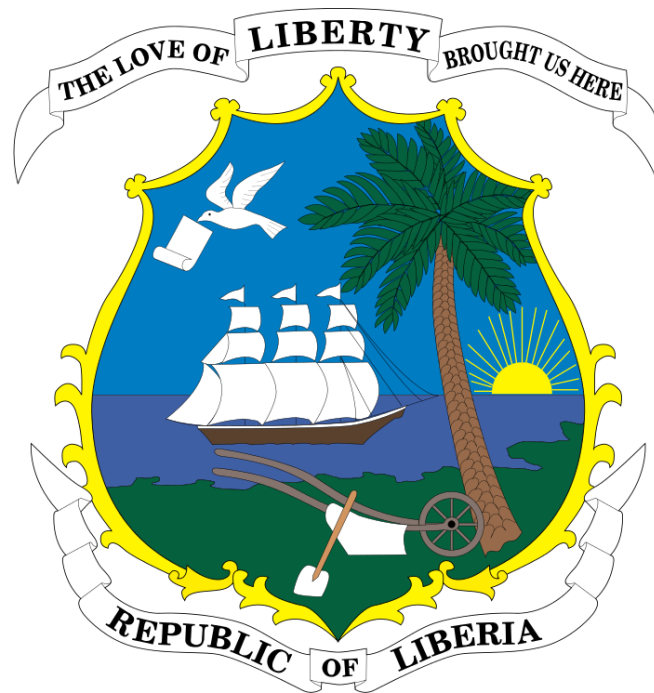

Launch of the g7+ WTO Accessions Group



***WELCOMING DEVELOPMENT FOR POST-CONFLICT AND FRAGILE
ECONOMIES THROUGH WTO ACCESSIONS***

REMARKS

DELIVERED BY

H.E. AXEL M. ADDY

MINISTER

Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Republic of Liberia

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10:45 AM

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Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Good morning.

1. Let me first of all extend congratulations to the g7+ Group for organizing this forum. The g7+ group has been an extraordinary opportunity to learn from countries similar to us, and to seek solutions, together, to the many challenges we face. It is my hope that through this smaller, more focused g7+ WTO Accessions group, we can engage in even more mutual learning and dialogue between those countries that have recently acceded and those that are seeking to join the multilateral, rule-based trading regime.
2. In 2016, Liberia became the 163rd member of the World Trade Organization. Our journey to accession truly started only a few years earlier, on the 5th of December 2013, on the margins of the 9th Ministerial Conference in Bali. During this first official meeting, I met with Liberia's Working Party Chair, Ambassador Joakim Reiter, Permanent Representative of Sweden to the WTO, the Executive Director of the International Trade Center, Ms. Arancha Gonzalez, and then Director of Accessions Division of the WTO, Dr. Cheidu Osakwe. The meeting highlighted the level of inactivity and led to renewed commitments that would serve as the blueprint for the Liberia Accession strategy, a clear roadmap for an early harvest in 18 to 24 months. Critical in this initial meeting was the conclusion that a united commitment and sense of camaraderie was needed to achieve Liberia's ambition.
3. The meeting therefore felt like a meeting among old friends regarding a family problem that was all of ours to solve. This spirit would serve as the engine that drove the accession process to its conclusion, and it is what brings me to speak in front of you today. Sound advice from both individuals who knew the subtle adjustments our country had to make in order to join the WTO, as well as hands-on experience from Article XII Members that overcame difficulties during their accession negotiations, was crucial to Liberia's fast-tracked process.
4. It is nothing but common sense for countries who recently acceded to facilitate accession for their peers. We are not in a competition for accession; on the contrary, the more countries become part of the global trading regime, the greater the benefits for all of us. The advice I received to fast track Liberia's accession was invaluable to our success; acknowledging the importance of knowledge sharing and cooperation is the reason we are



here today. Today, we gather to ensure that this process of knowledge, experience and best-practice sharing not only lives on, but becomes institutionalized.

5. Distinguished colleagues, today trade matters more than ever in the history of our world. Healthy competitive, predictable and transparent trade ensures that everyone has an opportunity to showcase their innovation. This matters particularly for our countries since too many of our innovators operate in an invisible, informal economy. We can only achieve truly inclusive economic growth, employment, and development by facilitating the transition of these very innovators into the formalized sector. Our greatest gift to a fragile and transforming nation are the tools to unlock the potential of businesses; for true economic transformation, sustainable development, peace and stability, can only be realized through the growth of a vibrant and job-generating private sector.
6. For this reason and to strengthen our efforts to establish a more transparent, more enabling trade environment in our countries, we highly welcome the Ministerial Declaration of this First Meeting of Trade Ministers of the g7+ WTO Accessions Group. Liberia fully supports the establishment of this platform for targeted facilitation and tailored support of the WTO accession and post-accession efforts for our countries. As trade ministers, negotiators and as technicians, we need to be more connected to build on our mutual experiences and successes. As the WTO accession process represents a most important tool for structural reform and inclusive economic growth, we need this platform to benefit from each other during throughout accessions and post-accessions efforts.
7. It is also my hope that through this forum we can facilitate a quick integration of the three states that are currently undergoing their accession process into the multilateral trading system. For this, we need technical support for trade capacity building efforts and we call on the WTO Members and our development partners to assist our group in this regard.
8. Your continued support to foster growth remains critical to unlocking the potential of our countries. To all of those that have helped us in the past and continue to support us, let me say a big thank you for being here and taking time away from your lives to make this a priority.
9. I want to conclude by thanking Afghanistan for coordinating the activities of this new group and Argentina for its support to inaugurate the Group on the margins of this Ministerial Conference. Let us now continue to indulge in fruitful and healthy dialogue and create new friendships, partnerships, and opportunities.
10. I thank you for your kind attention.

