



*High Level WTO National Workshop on
Implementation Plan*

Accession



13. Modernization through domestic reforms undertaken and under

entrepreneurs. Simplified rules will make it possible for these economic actors to compete with other bigger players in the market.

The Way Forward

18. Since 2005 we have focused on rebuilding our hard infrastructure, so that we could return to a base level of roads, ports and energy capacity that are needed to spur broad based and inclusive growth.

19. However, prior to being able to invest in our infrastructure, we had to secure the necessary debt space. Following our qualification for IDA (in 2004) and HIPC (in 2008) under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries Program, when our gross debt was reduced from

diversification through agriculture, agro-processing and manufacturing as key to creating sustainable and equitable employment for our people.

25. To achieve economic diversification, large-scale job creation and economic spillovers, we must focus on a mix of trade facilitation (particularly for local value addition businesses; improving the investment climate; and focusing on the targeted development of sectors in which we know we have a comparative advantage in an increasingly globalized economy.

Trade Facilitation

26. We have already started to embark on this journey. In keeping with Executive Order 74, the WTO Liberia Post-Accession Plan (LPAP) has been developed with a structure of coordination in place. It has already identified a number of critical trade facilitation reform projects, such as the adoption of the ECOWAS Common External Tariff, a single window platform for the automation of trade transactions at the ports, a trade information portal, pre-arrival processing, improved risk management by our ASYCUDA system, improved cross border management, simplification of customs procedures, electronic business registration, automation of tax procedures, security screening and visas on arrival, a streamlined work permit system, the establishment of a sanitary and phytosanitary framework and the planned accreditation of the National Standards Laboratory. Support is now needed in taking these programs forward.

Investment Climate

27. While we recognize that we must continue to invest in soft infrastructure, we have invested significantly in making it easier to start a business. As per the Doing Business Index, it now takes a maximum of 4.5 days (and most-often less than 2 days) to register a business compared to 8 days in OECD High-Income countries and 27 days in Sub-Saharan Africa. Now, help is needed in other areas of the Index, particularly Trading Across Borders, Construction Permits, Credit Registries and Paying Taxes.
28. To increase opportunities for the growth and formalization of SMEs, we have also established the Department of Small Business Administration at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, in order to provide a better eco-system of support services for our micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. We believe they are major drivers of our economy operating mostly in the informal sector. The provision of business

development services is critical to help us ensure sustainable, profitable MSMEs in Liberia, for the development of priority value chains.

Sector Development

29. Ladies and gentlemen, recognizing the diverse potential of the agriculture sector, under the strategic guidance of the Her Excellency the President through the Agricultural and Manufacturing Task Force, and in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Finance and other key Ministries and Agencies, we have developed the Liberia Agriculture Transformation Agenda, which focuses on the development of value chains in which we have a comparative advantage where we have the potential to compete in ECOWAS and in wider international markets, as per our National Export Strategy.
30. These critical value chains include oil palm, rubber, cocoa, fisheries, cassava, rice and light manufacturing. These value chains, plus support sectors like logistics and energy, have the potential to eventually generate thousands of new sustainable jobs and livelihoods for Liberians, while driving the widening of our tax base and
31. The LATA is a program that enables us to fix major binding constraints in these strategic value chains, in an export-oriented, market friendly yet targeted way, such that we may ensure local value addition and the export of agricultural produce and high-value downstream products. This is critical for our capacity to create jobs at scale, to manage our trade deficit, to finance our debt and to enable government revenues to grow so that we can continually invest in our infrastructure, our healthcare system, our schools and our social protection programs.
32. At the heart of the LATA and the National Export Strategy, are a number of flagship investment projects, which includes:
 - a. World Bank fish landing facilities at Robertsport;
 - b. The development of oil palm farms, mills and outgrower schemes at Golden Veroleum, Sime Darby, EPO and Maryland Oil Palm;
 - c. The development of five rubber processing facilities for ribbed smoked sheet production and value addition and the development of rubber wood factories
 - d. The investment in cocoa value chains

e.

